



PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

30th Of June 2005,
Gaza Strip,
OPT.

Dear Mr. President,

and assembled members of the International Board,

I want to thank you for this opportunity to address you in this unconventional manner. Unfortunately due to circumstances beyond my control I can not be with you in Paris today. Nonetheless I want to use this opportunity to address, briefly, my key concerns about the forthcoming Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip.

For me the most important thing to consider is the human rights context and why it is that we, as human rights activists, need to address what is about to happen in the OPT. The Gaza disengagement plan is part of a comprehensive strategy by the Israeli military which aims to institutionalise the suffocation imposed on the Gaza Strip during the *Intifada* while at the same time distracting the world in order to establish so-called “facts on the ground” inside the West Bank through the expansion of settlements and the completion of the Annexation Wall.

As a consequence of this policy human rights are likely to be effected in a number of fundamental ways.

- Firstly - the continued policy by the Israeli military of ignoring and sacrificing international humanitarian law will be continued. The Israelis will continue as the occupying power in the Gaza Strip (this, after all, is not withdrawal but redeployment of military forces) but will continue to ignore protection of civilians.
- Secondly - Israel is continuing with extra-judicial executions and with military incursions and arrests inside the OPT. After the disengagement they have said that they will maintain these practices.
- Thirdly – Israel has committed itself to preventing all Palestinian workers from entering Israel by 2008. Although this is largely the case now the complete closure of Erez checkpoint will worsen the economic crises inside Gaza.
- The fourth issue is that Israel will remain control of the land, sea and air borders – so preventing the passage of people and goods at its own behest. This will also deepen the economic crises brought upon by closures and checkpoints.

Israel’s continued construction of settlements and the wall inside the West Bank will also institutionalise the systems of closure inside the West Bank and between Gaza and the West Bank. This will also cause an even more serious depression in the isolated West Bank. Jerusalem will be completely cut off and apart from being a concern of every Palestinian this

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will also be of grave concern to human rights defenders who may not be able to reach their own offices.

Under the current disengagement plan the continued asphyxiation of the OPT is likely to worsen and so a deeper crisis in ESC rights can be anticipated over the coming years while the world pretends that nothing is wrong.

I request that FIDH today agree to the following steps:

1. To ensure that the key message - that occupation is not over - is included in an intensified advocacy and briefings campaign and, consequently, that continued pressure is placed on all High Contracting Parties to “ensure respect” for international humanitarian law;
2. That an FIDH mission of enquiry is dispatched to establish the short and long term effects of disengagement, during and after the process.

It is important, friends, to understand that what the world today sees as an act of peace they will realise in a few years time is an act of annexation and suffocation. Just as during the Oslo process PCHR warned against euphoria so now PCHR is warning against euphoria for the designs of Sharon’s government. I hope that, as I have always been able to, I can now continue to count on your valuable support on this occasion.

I appreciate you taking the time to listen to my intervention and I, as always, welcome any and all of you to Gaza to witness what is happening and continue to wish you the very best in your own tremendous work.

Warm regards,

Raji Sourani
Vice-President, FIDH.
Director, PCHR.