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> What news do you hear from the men and women of UAWC in Gaza? Do you have contact with them?

The news we are receiving from both our male and female team members in Gaza is deeply disturbing and frightening. Since the onset of the current genocidal war waged by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip starting on October 7th, we have lost contact with most of our team there for over three weeks.

We mourn the loss of our colleague Islam; she was killed by Israeli shelling on displaced people from the north of the Gaza Strip. Approximately 80% of the homes of our team members in Gaza have been completely or partially destroyed.

Most of our staff have been displaced from their homes to areas in the south and center of the Gaza Strip. Despite these harrowing circumstances, our team continues to be actively involved in the UAWC's campaign to provide relief to those affected in Gaza, supplying them with essential food items and other necessities.

The situation is dire, but the commitment and resilience of our team in these extreme conditions are truly commendable.

**Fuad Abu Saif holds an M.A. in Sustainable Development and Agriculture-Plant protection. a human rights defender, a leader and developer of hundreds of agricultural programs, initiatives, and coalitions.*

He has contributed to the development of the agricultural sector through empowering farmers' steadfastness and sovereignty over resources within a sustainable community-based liberational developmental framework bringing farmers' voices to the national policy level, as well as into regional and international areas.

Fuad is a member of the Coordination Committee of the Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO). He is also a member of the Palestinian Agricultural NGOs Coalition. Fuad was one of founders of the local Palestinian seed bank. He supported UAWC's membership in La Via Campesina and has played a major role in establishing La Via Campesina's Arab Region North Africa regional work.

> There is mainly talk about Gaza due to the scale of the massacre, but what is the situation in the West Bank?

The situation in the West Bank, while perhaps less publicized than Gaza, is equally alarming. Since the Israeli military launched its genocidal war against Gaza in October, they have imposed a suffocating blockade on the West Bank.

This has completely halted movement between cities, villages, and camps. Every entrance to these areas has been blocked with stone barriers, earth mounds, and iron gates, and military checkpoints are set up everywhere. Israeli forces are shooting at anyone who approaches these barriers.

Settlers, protected by the army, have initiated a widespread ethnic cleansing campaign in the West Bank. They have displaced more than a thousand Palestinians from Area "C," seizing their homes, crops, and in some cases, burning and destroying them.

Moreover, settlers have killed six farmers in the village of Qusra near Nablus. Since October 7th, Israeli forces have killed over 200 Palestinians and injured more than 3,000 in the West Bank, in addition to demolishing dozens of homes and destroying much of the infrastructure, particularly in Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm.

The residents of the West Bank are suffering from brutal and terrorizing campaigns by settlers, who attack Palestinian villages savagely, causing death, fear, and destruction in their wake. The situation in the West Bank is extremely serious and unprecedented. There are numerous indications of Israeli plans to annex large areas of the West Bank and displace Palestinians from their land, openly and clearly discussed by several ministers in the current Israeli government.

➤ **We witness with horror the use of hunger as a weapon of war, the denial of people's right to food, the loss of peasant territories... What consequences is this last phase of the conflict having?**

On October 10th, the Israeli Defense Minister announced the cutting off electricity, water, food, and fuel supplies to the entire Gaza Strip, which has been under a continuous siege for more than 17 years. This action has led to severe hunger and a drastic shortage of food supplies. Reports from our team in Gaza indicate that necessities of life are unavailable. The water being used is either saline from the sea or contaminated, and food is extremely scarce, with residents limiting themselves to one basic meal a day to cope with the blockade.

The use of hunger as a weapon of war is prohibited by international laws and human rights conventions. However, the occupying forces seem to disregard these regulations, acting as if they are above the law without facing any international accountability or deterrence. This emboldens them to continue their actions, causing immense suffering and violation of basic human rights in Gaza.

The situation in Gaza is a stark example of the grave consequences of this phase of the conflict, where basic human rights, including the right to food and access to clean water, are being blatantly violated.

➤ **How do you assess the international reactions of the governments of Europe, Arab countries, etc.?**

Regrettably, most Western governments, along with the United States, have shown clear and complete bias towards the occupying forces. Furthermore, the response from many Arab governments has been timid, almost silent, and largely inactive in terms of taking action to halt the hostilities.

For instance, Egypt, the largest Arab country bordering the Gaza Strip, has kept the only crossing between it and Gaza closed, despite the massive number of wounded needing urgent medical treatment and the desperate need for food and water supplies.

The green light given by Western governments to Israel at the beginning of the conflict has emboldened the occupation to commit over 1,200 massacres, resulting in approximately 12,000 Palestinian fatalities, more than 2,000 missing, and over 35,000 injured in just 40 days. Surprisingly, despite these unprecedented massacres, which are unparalleled in modern history over the past 100 years, these governments have not called for a ceasefire.

This lack of action and apparent indifference to the escalating humanitarian crisis and the blatant violation of international laws and human rights is deeply concerning and disappointing.

➤ **What in your opinion is Israel's ultimate purpose with this military operation? In this dark moment, what exits do you see? Some people are still contemplating a two-state solution... Is this proposal realistic?**

Israel's intention is to subjugate the Palestinian people and displace them from their land, which is evident in the statements of Israeli ministers and leaders. The forced displacement of approximately 900,000 Palestinians from the northern Gaza Strip towards Rafah and the Egyptian border, along with Israel's request for Palestinians to move to Sinai in Egypt, is a clear indication of this intent. Additionally, the bombing and killing that resulted in the complete or partial destruction of over 60% of homes in the Gaza Strip, forcing most of its residents to leave their homes, is further evidence that the plan is to expel Palestinians from their homeland.

The only solution is the complete and immediate end of the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, along with the right of return for Palestinian refugees to their homeland and the restoration of other Palestinian rights. Without these steps, there is no possibility of ending this conflict, and the situation will only become more complicated. This will make the solution more difficult, and Palestinians will return to demanding their full rights, which have been denied since the Nakba in 1948, including the return to all historic Palestine.

➤ **Despite the information blockade and the attempt to criminalize the Palestinian struggle, a wave of international solidarity at the popular level is evident. What do you ask of the people of the world?**

Considering the current genocide war, we call for continued demonstrations worldwide to halt the ongoing genocide and compel the occupying forces to cease fire and allow the entry of

humanitarian aid. The persistence of global protests is crucial in raising awareness and applying pressure for change.

Furthermore, it is essential to continue pressuring Western governments to withdraw their support and protection from the occupation. These governments must be urged to hold the occupying forces accountable for their crimes in accordance with international law. The global community's role in advocating for justice and human rights cannot be overstated. Your voices and actions contribute significantly to the pursuit of peace and the upholding of human rights in this dire situation. By standing together in solidarity, we can help bring an end to the suffering and ensure that those responsible for the atrocities are held accountable under international law.

➤ **In this context of brutal aggression, what work is the UAWC doing on the ground?**

During this brutal aggression, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) is actively engaged in two primary areas: the West Bank and Gaza. On October 24th, we launched a significant international campaign aimed at providing relief to thousands of families affected by the war and displaced from their homes.

In the West Bank, UAWC is focused on reaching families that have been forcibly removed from their homes and villages, many of whom are farmers. We are providing them with necessary food, shelter, and other essential life needs.

So far, we have reached more than 2,000 families in the Gaza Strip, particularly in areas like Khan Yunis, Jabalia, and Rafah in the south. Our campaign is ongoing and will continue to provide support to those in dire need.

The situation is challenging, but UAWC remains committed to offering assistance and support to those most impacted by the conflict.

➤ **The peasant population has always been a target of the Israeli forces, for their role and resistance to the occupation, for their role in generating alternatives against it. Now they use hunger as a weapon of war, and once again the peasants respond to that threat. Tell us about the StopGazaStarvation Campaign.**

The campaign launched by UAWC on October 24th aims to provide relief to thousands of Palestinians in Gaza who have been affected by the genocidal war waged by Israel since October 7th. This initiative is not only about immediate humanitarian aid but also seeks to raise awareness of the Palestinian cause and the ongoing genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank.

Through this campaign, UAWC is working to

highlight the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the systematic oppression in the West Bank, drawing international attention to the plight of the Palestinian people. The goal is to garner global support and solidarity, which is crucial for bringing an end to the atrocities and advocating for the rights of Palestinians.

➤ **What message do you want to send from UAWC to people around the world?**

Our unified message as Palestinians is the fundamental need for our freedom. For 75 years, we have endured the hardships of occupation. It is time for our children to grow up with the same hope and possibilities for the future as other children worldwide. We yearn for safety in our own land and homes. The creation of more Palestinian refugee camps must cease, and instead, we need the return of Palestinian refugees. Our aspiration is for an independent nation, control over our resources, and sovereignty, just like any other people. We are humans, no different from Israelis or others around the globe.

Our desire is to see an end to the ongoing injustice and wars, particularly as Gaza has faced it for the last 17 years. We call for an end to the hypocrisy of Western countries and the US in their direct or indirect involvement in the suffering of the Palestinian people. International laws and human rights should be upheld for everyone, including Palestinians. We are not seeking conflict; we are striving for dignity and freedom. We don't fight out of hatred but out of a need for basic human rights.

We want the world to recognize this and stand with us in our struggle for freedom. This is not just a Palestinian issue; it's about fundamental human values recognized globally. Throughout history, many peoples struggled against occupation and colonialism, and in the end the occupation ended and the peoples were victorious.

We, too, seek an end to our plight and the realization of freedom for the Palestinian people.

NOTE. This interview took place on Thursday, November 16. At the time of publication (11/23/23), the number of people killed in Gaza has risen to 14,500.

