

# YWCA Newsletter



"We are full participants in our national struggle, and yet we are not fully granted a place at the table. The Intifadas changed some attitudes, but we still have a long way to go..."

The women of Palestine are often referred to as the glue of our society. We are the ones who hold things together our families while our husbands, brothers, and sons are imprisoned, deported, wounded, killed or have migrated for economic and political reasons..."

Quaker leader Jean Zaru

# A Place at ALL the Tables

## UNSCR1325 in Palestine



In the holy land of Bethlehem the international conference on Women's Freedom, Peace and Dignity in Palestine: UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for accountability took place from September 29th to October 1, 2014.

The conference was initially planned as the closure activity within a project funded by FOKUS through Y-Global (YMCA-YWCA of Norway) but soon became a major national and international joint activity between the YWCA of Palestine, the World YWCA and other leading partners already engaged in UNSCR1325 including the Ministry of Women Affairs, and the National Committee for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, the National Coalition for the Activation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) headed by the General Union of Palestinian women,, the National Forum Combating violence Against Women, and Kairos Palestine.

Renowned women's rights activists, religious leaders, human rights defenders and politicians gathered to share and discuss the realities faced by Palestinian women and the effects of the Israeli occupation throughout the occupied State of Palestine. Through the lens of UNSCR1325 the conference addressed the right and need for women's participation in the peace process, as well as prevention of, and protection from all forms of violence, including gender based violence. Ms. Intisar al-Wazir, President of the General Union of Palestinian women reminded us that "Palestinian women are the most in need for protection against violence and pain caused by the occupation. Palestinian women have struggled since 1948: living in diaspora, undergoing the illegal practices by Israeli occupation, restrictions in movement, harassments at checkpoints, house demolitions and revocation of their identity."

"We need to enhance political participation rather than political representation. Women bring a different context and analysis to the male-dominated discourse. We need to reorganize women and re-strengthen the movement."  
Aida Touma,  
Founder of Women Against Violence

The conference discussed state policies, which aim to uplift women's role and dwelt on how Palestinian women vision implementing UNSCR1325 under military occupation and ongoing settler colonization. The conference included listening to and learning from others who tried to implement UNSCR 1325 in other countries and from partners around the globe who work with issues either related to combating violence, gender rights and equality, or peacemaking. As Marie Claude Julsaint, World YWCA Global Manager for Violence Against Women said in her opening speech: "While UNSCR 1325 does not directly address issues of women under occupation, it does not exclude action within its framework. The Resolution is particularly important for Palestinian women, who suffer from two forms of oppression: one is the oppression, violence, and brutality of the Israeli military occupation and the other is the male oppression that impedes full equality as citizens in accordance with the Palestinian Charter of Independence and the Palestinian Basic Law".

On day three of the conference, the last session, a statement calling for action on the local/national and international level was presented.



### Here is the statement that was read and disseminated to the press:

*We affirm the right of Palestinian women in resisting the Israeli occupation, in order to restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people at the core of which are the rights of return for Palestinian refugees based on UN resolution 194 and the right for self-determination and the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian state with its capital Jerusalem.*



*A number of working papers related to the theme of the conference were presented and discussed within the legal and human rights framework of the state of Palestine, as well as Palestinian vision to implement UNSCR 1325 pertaining to the protection, security and peace for women in conflict areas.*

*The political participation of women as well as the obstacles to her reaching decision making positions was also discussed. The participants were also introduced to the global Boycott Divestment Sanctions Movement and encouraged to use this as an appropriate nonviolent advocacy and accountability tool against the ongoing Israeli military occupation.*

#### The conference:

- Demands that the UN Security Council work towards ending the Israeli military Occupation, the root cause of many of the most blatant violations and injustices perpetrated against the Palestinian people and requesting international protection for women;*
- Calls on the Swiss Government and other governments' signatories to the four Geneva Conventions to convene a special meeting to discuss the violation of Israel to the IV Geneva Convention and to adopt necessary measures to enforce Israel's commitment;*
- Calls on all members of the UNHRC to support the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, around the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in the occupied state of Palestine, demanding the UNHRC to adopt necessary measures to question the investigation with special attention to document violations pertaining to women and children during the latest Israel assault on the Gaza Strip;*
- Condemns and denounces the offensive assault by Israel against Gaza, and its targeting of innocent civilians especially women and children;*
- Supports the Palestinian State to take the Israeli military leaders to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes; and to join the Rome Convention as well as its affiliation with the International Criminal Court (ICC);*
- Proposes linking the UNSCR 1325 with UNHRC and all human rights agreements especially those pertaining to the protection of women and children based on the IV Geneva Convention;*
- Endorses the Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions Movement as one way to*

*What is the solution? UNSCR1325 is about Women, Peace, and Security. It is about engaging women in prevention and resolution of conflicts and in building just and lasting peace. The 1325 Resolution is also about ending impunity and prosecuting those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes*

*Fredrik Glad-Gjernes, Y-Global of Norway*

*hold Israel accountable for its gross violations of human rights and flagrant abuse of international law;*

- Proposes to escalate the UAV engine movement against companies that have produced the military equipment and supplies that have been used during the Gaza aggression;*
- Proposes organizing solidarity activities and events with the Palestinian people locally and internationally; recommends establishing a follow up committee consisting of participants from the conference. Establish a network of women organizations including the National YWCA of Palestine, World YWCA and conference participants for the purpose of exchanging experiences in the development and implementation of UNSCR 1325, as well as supporting the Palestinian women in their struggle for liberation from Israeli Occupation;*
- Emphasizes the importance of holding Israel accountable for all the losses in the infrastructure, homes and facilities incurred by the Israeli aggressive assault on the Gaza Strip and the rejection of Israeli's participation in the reconstruction process; recognizes the important role of the Secretary General of the United Nations in implementing UNSCR 1325 and activating the oversight role where and when the Resolution is not implemented.*

The Framework for the UNSCR1325 National Action Plan was presented by Mr. Ismail Hammad, Legal Advisor of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The strategy aims at the unification of the official and private efforts within a framework of joint work with a unified vision with clear action steps for everyone.





# Objectives and Proposed Policies and Interventions for the Palestinian National Action Plan

## Overall Goal: Protection, Accountability and Participation

### The First Strategic Objective: Protection

To develop protection mechanisms for Palestinian women and girls who are victims of violence of the Israeli occupation.

- **The first policy:**  
Improve the quality of social, health and legal support for women and girls who are subjected to violence by the occupation
- **The second policy:**  
Strengthen the capacity of institutions and individuals for the empowerment of women and girls who are subjected to the violence of the military occupation and are denied access to information
- **The third policy:**  
Strengthen the elements of the steadfastness of the Palestinian women and girls in the face of the occupation through economic empowerment

### The Second Strategic Objective: Accountability

The accountability of the military occupation in accordance with international and regional laws

- **The first policy:**  
Activate the regional and international accountability mechanisms of the occupation in regard to violations against Palestinian women and girls.
- **The second policy:**  
Build the capacity of organizations working on mechanisms of monitoring and documentation of violations by the occupation against women

"Now I am taking action for change by calling for accountability of the government of Canada for their role in supporting violations of the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people, and by raising awareness of BDS as a tool for nonviolent resistance"

Jessica Notwell, YWCA of Canada,  
World YWCA Board member

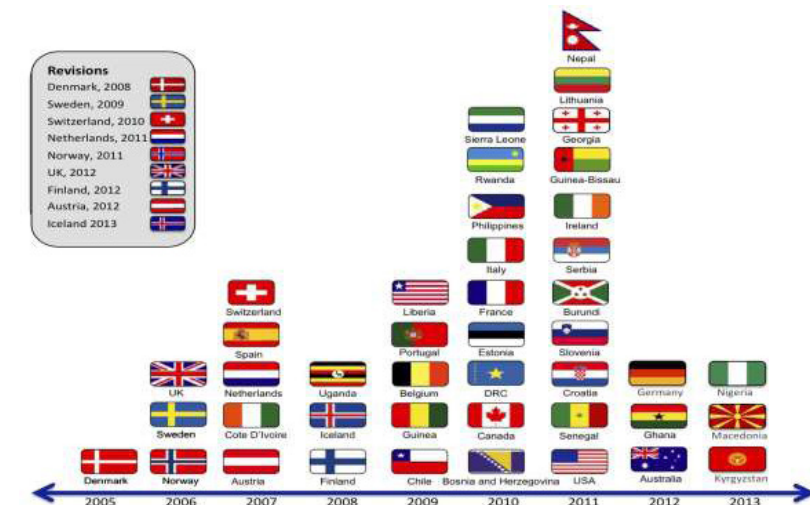
### The Third Strategic Objective: Participation

To promote the participation of Palestinian women and their integration in policy making decisions and levels at the national and international level

- **The first policy:**  
To promote the participation of Palestinian women and their integration in policy making decisions at the national and international levels
- **The second policy:**  
Promote and support the representation of women in decision making positions and ensure equal opportunities in different positions.

- **The third policy:**  
Activate the role of women in maintaining civil peace and promoting national unity concepts and values.
- **The fourth policy:**  
Increase the representation and participation of Palestinian women in the mechanisms of international and regional bodies working on international peace and security.

Here is a graph of the Adoption Timeline of 1325 NAPs from 2005-2013



The primary message from all the participants was the need and demand for accountability and the recognition for and guaranteeing of internationally recognized rights for human security, dignity, and freedom. The occupier, Israel, must pay a high price for the ongoing occupation and its colonial settler policies and laws. The conference called for taking Israel to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

On June 25th Palestine will present cases on last summer's Gaza offensive and settler expansion and other war crimes. Conference attendees also called for national and international support for the Palestinian civil society's call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS). Towards this action the YWCA of Palestine will present at the 28th World Council gathering in October a panel under Women's Rights on BDS as a nonviolent strategic tool for peace making. We invite you to go to our website to read the full report at [www.ywca-palestine.org](http://www.ywca-palestine.org)



## Stats Worth Knowing

The following are some statistics from a summary from the Negotiations Affairs Department (an independent group advising Palestinian negotiators). The work of the YWCA of Palestine takes place in the context of historical events and current tragedies.

When the Balfour declaration was issued in 1917, there were some 850,000 Palestinians only 7% of Jewish-Palestinians (and most Jews were also opposed to Zionism)

- It has been 67 years since the occupation of 78% of Palestine in 1948.
- It has been 48 years since the occupation of the other 22% of Palestine (WB and Gaza) that started 1967.
- Today there are 12.5 million Palestinians 7.2 million are refugees/displaced people (six million from the ethnic cleansing of 1948-1950, 843,737 from 1967 Naksa, and 345,217 internal displacement within the green line, 57,669 internally displaced in 1967 areas).
- UNRWA has 5.4 million registered refugees and operates in 59 official refugee camps (17 unofficial camps).
- Roughly 6.5 million Israeli Jews live in historic Palestine, vast majority of them immigrants or children of immigrants. They have access to 91.3% of the land and have physical sovereignty over 100% of it.
- In its ongoing policy of using citizens of Gaza as laboratory test subjects for new weapon development, Israel killed in its attack in summer 2014 on Gaza 2147 Palestinians. Most of those were civilians including 531 children and 302 women. The Israeli assault also left 11,231 injured including 3258 Palestinian children.
- Israeli Jewish public voted in the most right wing government in Israeli history including ministers now serving that support ethnic cleansing and massacring civilians.
- There is increasing public support in Western countries for human rights of Palestinians and also for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) to help end racism and ethnic cleansing

## What is the CSW and why is it important for the YWCA of Palestine?

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) dedicated to gender equality and advancement of women. It is the principal global policy-making body for this Council. It meets every year for 10 days in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

The 59th Session of the CSW marked the official 20 year review of the global commitments made on women, equality, development and peace at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995.



The World YWCA was present at the founding of the UN and also the establishment of the CSW. In addition it recognizes the Beijing Platform for Action together with CEDAW and UNSCR1325. The World Y calls for a “comprehensive recommitment to the Beijing Platform for Action as together with any emerging issues as the foundational reference consensus document for women’s empowerment and gender equality within the United Nations inter-government framework.” Furthermore, the World Y actively contributes to four main areas: economic and training, ending violence against women, economic empowerment for women, and women and health. The YWCA of Palestine has also prioritized these four main areas in their programs and advocacy with a special emphasis on economic empowerment and violence against women.



Particularly important for the YWCA of Palestine is the issuing of the Report of the United Nations

General Secretary called “Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women” each year. This year’s report highlights the situation of Palestinian women from 1 October 2013-September 30, 2014. It provides “an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the UN system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihood; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report ends with recommendations for the CSW.”

The report states that “Palestinian women and girls still face significant obstacles in accessing basic services, health care, psychosocial support, water and sanitation, justice institutions and economic opportunities.” It explicitly lists the “failed” U.S.-brokered peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, Israeli “settlement expansion, settler violence, land expropriation, the demolition of Palestinian houses and a high number of arrests of Palestinians, including Hamas affiliates, and confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli forces and settlers,” and last summer’s Operation Protective Edge as the major reasons for problems faced by Palestinian women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.



In addition to the context of a failed peace process and a genocide in Gaza last summer, this Commission report highlights that the State of Palestine (yes this is new terminology) has also accession to new international treaties and conventions and this will mean new obligations. The report holds up as laudable efforts to strengthen policy and implementation frameworks to address violence against women and promote gender equity. The YWCA of Palestine is part of this effort they are lifting up the work on the new National Action Plan begun at our International Conference on UNSCR1325 in October 2014. In the recommendation section of the report at the end there is a sober recognition that *“progress on development indicators remains fragile and prone to regression, including as it relates to women’s rights.”*

One way to think of the CSW is see it as the large umbrella that our work on women’s rights, economic empowerment, and violence against women falls under. We are using UNSCR1325 as a tool for fulfilling our mission and are grateful to be part of not only the world YWCA movement for women’s empowerment, equality, development and peace but also the CSW mission to strengthen gender equality and development. We at the YWCA of Palestine are proud to be contributors to the world wide movement for women’s equality.

World YWCA Statement for 59th Session of the UN CSW.pdf 53.08 kB  
[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2015/5](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2015/5)

## Hope Now and For the Future



*“My hopes are like any woman’s hopes---to have equal opportunities in economical, social, political and decision making roles and to end all kinds of violence against women. I hope that every girl will be able to make her own choices in life especially regarding marriage, education, and work. I also hope for the civil society representatives and women NGOs to have a considerable role in formulating policies that will enhance the status of women. Finally, I hope that after 20 more years this will no longer be a valid issue to advocate because gender equality and women’s empowerment will be achieved.”*

These are the words from Minerva Halteh, General Assembly Member at YWCA of Jericho upon reflection of her time at the “Fifty-ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, CSW 59/Beijing +20.” Ms. Halteh attended this 59th Session on the Commission on the Status of Women with Suhair Ramadan, Women’s Rights Advocacy of YWCA of Palestine and Vice President of our national board Haifa Baramki. The Session which met at the UN in New York went from March 5th-14th.

On March 6th, the first day of the program, Minerva spoke in a session on violence in Palestine called Uniting Our Voices Against Violence: A Bottom Up Approach to Equipping Women and Girls in their Communities. She also participated in many other events and the World YWCA young women’s caucus.

On March 9th Ms. Ramadan and Ms. Baramki participated in a side event on UNSCR 1325 called *Amplifying the Voice of Palestinian Women within Peace and Security Agenda*. The event gave an overview of the Palestinian context and some of the particular challenges for the rights of women and girls and specific challenges women have in decision-making and participation. The event also explored how women have been active in civil society and their organizations working on peace. The session concluded with recommendations for ensuring the implementation of the Women Peace and Security Agenda in the context of Israel’s military occupation. Special emphasis was given to what the international community should be doing to ensure that Israel stops violating human rights and international law.



Ms. Baramki provided a historical overview of key events in Palestinian history beginning with the Balfour Declaration of 1917 up through the present. This was not Ms. Baramki’s first public speaking event but her first time at the CSW and speaking to such a large and diverse audience. “It was wonderful to see such a diverse group of women, especially young women...The problem for women

(worldwide) is ingrained in our religions and cultures. Where a woman is placed makes a difference about what kind of rights she might have or experience.”



Ms. Ramadan talked about the campaigns that the YWCA of Jericho and Ramallah launched under the UNSCR 1325. The women decided on a drug campaign as a way for the women participants to protect and prevent the spread of drugs in their camp and in their homes. The women and their Communities chose women leaders to represent them in their campaign against drug use and to continue representation in the local council. Each community chose to work with this issue in the context of the refugee camp and how it relates to violence against women. The training forced the activation of the 3P’s of the resolution which are “Participation, Protection and Prevention.”

Speaking and sharing these stories of success by Palestinian women to such a large international audience showed the creativity and resilience of Palestinian women and the importance of how woman can become participants in decision making at all levels and hold all violators accountable.

20 years have passed since the first Session on CSW and we are still working on gender equity and women’s leadership, and empowerment, let us pray and work to make Minerva’s hope come true that in the next 20 years we, the women of Palestine, will have made substantial gains.

## The Establishment of the YWCA in Bethlehem

The YWCA of Palestine expanded its services and programs to the southern parts of Palestine by establishing a YWCA association in Bethlehem. The YWCA was officially registered in the Palestinian Ministry of Interior on October 11th, 2014. Since then a temporary board was elected to handle all preparations and operational issues. The National Office is providing all support possible be it financial and or human to ensure proper operations of this newly established association. In the mean time, the National office is helping the Bethlehem YWCA board to find temporary premises for the association until the permanent premises is secured. The YWCA in Bethlehem will be a great source of expanding the YWCA services to more communities particularly to women who are considered the most marginalized in Palestine.



## Romantic Boycott

One way the YWCA is supporting the call for BDS is through working with university students in initiatives related to the campaign. Following a workshop that was organized by the YWCA- Palestine on BDS, a group of Students at Bir Zeit University worked this spring on a project through our Stop Poverty Campaign to grow flowers under the title of “Romantic Boycott”. It is known that most of the flowers in the Palestinian market come from the Israeli market, the idea is that people buy flowers cultivated in the university as a starting point to raise awareness among students and employees to express their feelings of appreciation and love in a pure Palestinian way and through a pure Palestinian product. By buying Palestinian flowers they are supporting local economy and boycotting Israel. It’s an initiative that was supported by many students and many external stakeholders.

## Supporting Our Partnership with the United Church of Christ (UCC) for “taking a stand for justice”

The YWCA of Palestine has different kinds of partnerships around the world. Just as our partners support our work, we also support theirs. In June the United Church of Christ, one of our churches and primary supporters for the Fabric of Our Lives Project voted on resolutions toward a Just Peace in the Middle East. All three resolutions are built upon the foundation of the 2005 economic leverage resolution, which called for economic resources to try and end the occupation.



According to UCC News four conferences of the UCC were bringing forward two resolutions built around that idea— the Central Atlantic, Central Pacific and the New York Conference on one, and the New Hampshire conference on the other — that both share the title “Actions Toward a Just Peace in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” A third resolution, brought by the Northern California-Nevada Conference, asked the church to consider if the Israeli government’s actions against Palestinians meet the definition of apartheid. The resolutions were considered at the 30th General Synod, which convened from June 26 through 30 in Cleveland.

The resolutions on Just Peace in the conflict proposed a four-point strategy for the wider church to help end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. First, the resolutions suggested a study of the document “Kairos Palestine,” which invites the global Christian community to witness firsthand what is happening in the West Bank and Gaza; Second, economic leverage that includes divestment from “companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and boycott of products produced in such territories by Israeli companies”; Third, political pressure by petitioning Congress to ensure that “aid to Israel violates neither the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act nor the U.S. Arms Export Control Act”; and fourth, interfaith dialogue “among the three Abrahamic faiths aimed at reaching religious reconciliation and achieving political resolution.”

In the background to its resolution, the UCC Palestine Israel Network (UCCPIN) lists the three demands of the Palestinian civil society BDS call: “End to the occupation; equality for Palestinians now living in Israel; and recognition of Palestinian refugees’ right of return,” emphasizing that, “UCCPIN chooses to focus particularly on the first of these goals believing that an end to the occupation is an essential ingredient for a just peace.”



We join with others around in the world in applauding the UCC for its bold resolutions. We also affirm what Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu said in his recent support letter, “It is unconscionable to remain silent, or neutral, in the face of injustice. Neutrality maintains the status quo and compounds the injustice...Freedom for Palestinians will liberate Israelis, too. Thank you for recognizing our common humanity, for taking a stand for justice. Your resolution places you on the side of justice and human rights for all.”



## Holding Israel Accountable: Going to the International Criminal Court

The YWCA of Palestine and other national and local women's groups in Palestine have been advocating that Palestine go to the International Criminal Court (ICC) as one way to hold Israel accountable for its gross human rights violations. The ICC deals with war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Unlike the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of the UN, the ICC brings individuals to trial not countries.

One of the major calls for action from our October international women's Conference on UNSCR1325 was a call to hold Israel accountable. As Fredrik Gjernes, Director of the YWCA/YWCA Global in Norway said, "The 1325 resolution is about ending impunity and prosecuting those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes."



We were very pleased that on April 1st Palestinians formally joined the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a key step toward being able to hold Israel accountable. President Mahmoud Abbas signed the Rome Statute, ICC's founding treaty and other international agreements, after the UN Security Council rejected a Palestinian drafted resolution demanding a full phased withdrawal of all Israeli forces within three years. Important to note that both Israel and the US have not signed the Rome Statute, however, their nationals can still be tried.

Palestine has asked for jurisdiction over crimes committed in the occupied territories of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza beginning June 13, 2014. Why this date? Because this is the date that mass rounds up of Palestinians began as Israeli authorities searched for those responsible for the abduction of the three teenagers who had gone missing.

Palestine believes that Israel committed war crimes during the 51 day war over Gaza, where more than 2,000 Palestinians were killed, mostly civilians and mostly women and children and tens of thousands of homes were destroyed or damaged.

The YWCA of Palestine contributed to the UNSCR1325 Commission subcommittee testimonies and data for the UN Commission of Inquiry report. This is one of the main reports that will be submitted to ICC.

Here is the statement that was delivered at the UN Human Rights Council by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom which highlights some of the important issues that need to be addressed by the Commission of Inquiry, the body that will submit a UN report to the ICC.

**Statement by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) on behalf of the Palestinian Women National Coalition of 1325 on the accountability for human rights violations in Palestine Human Rights Council 29th Session,**

*The Human Rights Council has passed fifty-seven resolutions condemning human rights violations on the Palestinian people since 2006. It has also established a number of independent inquiries or fact-finding missions to investigate abuses, including extreme military actions, committed by Israel against the people whose territory it occupies.*

*Nonetheless, even as it notes and condemns on-going human rights violations and acknowledges the deteriorating situation in the Occupied State of Palestine particularly in besieged Gaza, there has been no corresponding translation into real obligations by Member states to ensure that Israel, the occupying power, is held accountable for these violations. As a result, the member states of the Human Rights Council has done nothing to prevent further abuses and consistently fails to protect the Palestinian people. Why are not the human rights analysis translated into decision making related to peace and security?*

*This Council has the mandate, and must produce the political will, to act decisively, to end Israeli impunity, to safeguard Palestinians, and to signal to the world that upholding Human Rights brings hope and human security.*

*We reiterate that Human Rights are not selective: they apply to all people at all times Regardless of nationality, race, religion or gender and must be applied without discrimination or prejudice, especially given the extreme vulnerability of a people displaced and controlled through prolonged military occupation.*

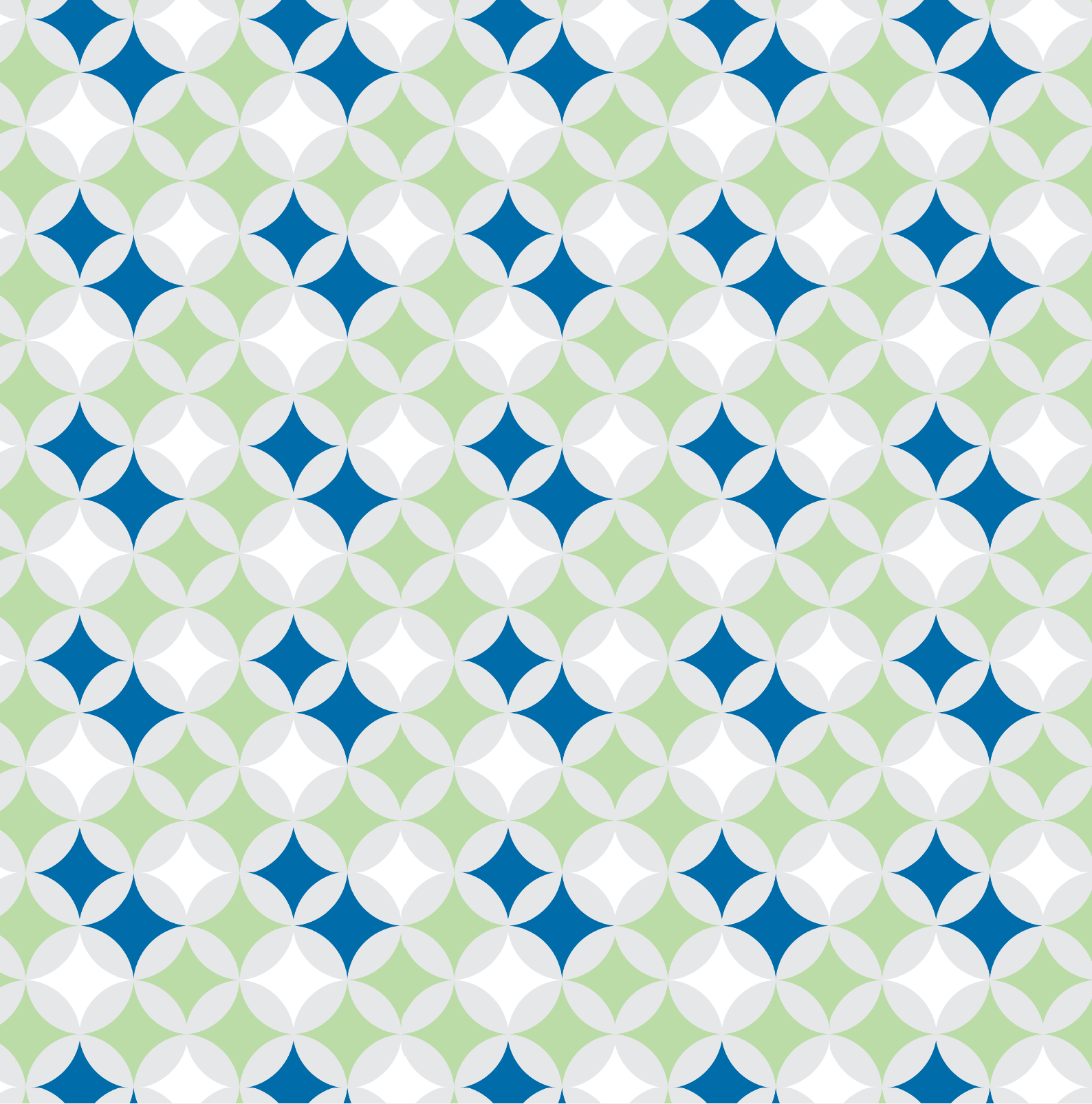
*Member states have the duty to guarantee the fulfillment of Palestinian human rights including their right to freedom and self-determination by bringing an end to the military occupation of Palestine and the unceasing violence with which it is maintained and deepened.*

*We, the national Palestinian women's coalition call on all member states of the Human Rights Council to ensure that the findings of the Commission form a base for developing immediate concrete, adequate accountability measures to prevent the recurrence of Israeli human rights Violations and provide justice for Palestinian victims.*

*The specifically gendered impacts of the on-going conflict have received little public attention. Palestinian women's organizations remain a lone voice arguing that women's experiences of daily insecurity whether in their families or in the public sphere qualify them to bring a different analysis, discourse and set of solutions. It is your duty to take this into account.*

*We urge the Human Rights Council to support and hold a special session on the human rights situation of Palestinian women both under occupation and in refugee camps.*





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**YWCA Palestine**

