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**PCHR, Al-Mezan & Al-Haq Joint Statement – General Debate**  
**21<sup>st</sup> session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute**  
**6 December 2022, The Hague**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

After decades of occupation and oppression, when Palestine joined the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2014, our hope as Palestinian human rights organizations was to finally get justice for the victims of Israel's heinous occupation and oppression became real. We supported the ICC from day one and have been fighting to find a way to seize the attention of the Court for years.

In 2021, the opening of an investigation by the Prosecutor was perceived as a huge leap forward. After years of frustration, we hoped that it was the start of a new era of accountability for the grave crimes committed in occupied Palestine.

However, till today we have not seen any concrete step in this investigation, no action by the Prosecutor to break the vicious cycle of impunity. The situation on the ground is deteriorating year after year, month after month, day after day. We feel that we have been left alone in our struggle. And Palestinian victims are losing hope.

During this year alone, more than 200 Palestinians, including tens of children, have been killed by Israel's settler-colonial regime in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Prominent Palestinian Al-Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, was assassinated in cold blood by an Israeli sniper in broad daylight. The offices of six prominent Palestinian civil society organizations, including Al-Haq, were raided and shut down by the Israeli occupation forces after they were falsely designated as terrorist organizations. Despite all these events

not a single statement has been issued by the Office of the Prosecutors concerning Palestine.

We have seen that the Prosecutor is highly active in other situation countries, most notably Ukraine. This is important and crucial not only for the Court but for the whole international criminal justice system. At the same time, it is also crucial that the same level of attention, activity, and resources is applied to other situations including, Palestine, to avoid perceptions of selectivity and politicization. Victims should not be competing for justice and double standards should not have a place in justice. Ukraine deserves justice, Afghanistan deserves justice, and certainly Palestine deserves justice.

We are aware that investigations take time, but the Office of the Prosecutor should take into account that the suffering of the Palestinians did not start with Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute, but it started 75 years ago. Every day that passes without accountability, innocent Palestinians are being killed, their lands are being confiscated and their homes are getting destroyed. That's why we want the ICC prosecutor to urgently expedite his investigations into the situation in Palestine.

We are fully engaged with the International Criminal Court but the pressure we are facing as victim's representatives is very challenging. Victims are starting to lose faith and hope in the ICC process. The lack of action and accountability by the ICC sends a negative message to the Palestinian in general and the direct victims of Israeli crimes.

International law is a way of demonstrating that we are equal and if crimes are committed, they must be punished, regardless of the nationality of the perpetrators and of the victims, whether they are Black or white, rich or poor, powerful or not. All we are asking for is the equal application of the law, that we are treated the same as everyone else, that we enjoy the same rights as everyone else.

I have lived my entire life under occupation. But I do believe in the rule of law, and our shared dignity. I firmly believe that we are on the right side of history, that justice will be achieved, but the road is not easy, and the ICC has a big responsibility to prove that we are not alone in the fight for justice.

Thank you.