

**PRESS RELEASE**

**PALESTINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS FOR ENHANCED PROTECTION AND ACCESS AHEAD OF THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT**

Ramallah and Gaza, State of Palestine, 16 December 2014: Palestinian civil society actors came together in the West Bank and Gaza to agree a series of recommendations that will feed into the Middle East and North Africa Regional Consultation, in Amman on 3-5 March 2015. The Regional Consultation is key milestone in the lead up to the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, 2016.

The Humanitarian Forum (THF), the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), Qatar Charity, and UNOCHA convened a consultation with Palestinian civil society organizations in Ramallah and Gaza on 15 and 16 December respectively. Over 60 NGOs discussed the most pressing humanitarian challenges under the Summit's four main thematic areas: humanitarian effectiveness, reducing vulnerability and managing risk, transformation through innovation and serving the needs of people in conflict.

Recommendations focused on the protection of civilians and humanitarian access, highlighting the occupation as the main cause of civilian insecurity. Many emphasized the need to address the causes of the humanitarian crisis and not just its symptoms, including the need to lift the blockade on Gaza. Participants also underscored the need to ensure accountability for potential violations of International Humanitarian Law in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Moreover, they reaffirmed the need to address Palestine refugees' right of return.

Given the protracted nature of the crisis, many NGOs also called for greater investment in strengthening the resilience of the domestic institutions, both government and civil society. They also called for a national strategy that could guide international support.

“Free movement of people and goods is one of the main challenges faced by Palestinians and humanitarian organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory”, stated the Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt, Mr. James W. Rawley. “The fact that we are having the WHS Palestine civil society consultation in Gaza and the West Bank separately is testament to that”, he said.

The WHS was called for by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to find new ways to tackle humanitarian needs in our fast-changing world.

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*For more information about the World Humanitarian Summit, please see [www.worldhumanitariansummit.org](http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org)*