



## VIRTUAL EVENT

*On the margins of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69)*

***“The destruction of the health system in Palestine:  
A lifeline in peril for women and girls”***

**Convened by the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights  
of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP)**

**20 March 2025**

---

### CHAIR SUMMARY

The event ***“The destruction of the health system in Palestine: A lifeline in peril for women and girls”*** was held on the margins of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) and was convened virtually, on 20 March 2025, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP). Member States participated in the 90-minute event, which was also livestreamed on UN WebTV. The recording of the event is available on the Committee’s website- <https://www.un.org/unispal>.

**Mr. Sofian Akmal Abd. Karim**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, moderated the event, which opened with remarks by the Moderator and remarks by **H.E. Ms. Feda Abdelhady** Deputy Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations. Panellists included **Dr. Tlaleng Mofokeng**, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health; **Dr. Mimi Syed**, Emergency Medicine Physician in Gaza; **Dr. Adlah Sukkar**, Pulmonologist and Critical Care Physician with Doctors Against Genocide; and a video testimonial from Gaza by **Ms. Zaynab Al-Ghunaimi**, Director General, Palestinian Center for Legal Research, Consulting and Protection for Women.

During the opening, **Mr. Abd. Karim** stated that the Committee’s annual event on the margin of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), offered a unique opportunity for Committee Members and Observers and the public at large to assess the impact on women of Israeli unlawful policies and practices since the 1948 Nakba to the present day throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem. Since 7 October 2023, Palestinians in Gaza have endured the most brutal and unprecedented levels of violence, resulting in over 61,000 Palestinian deaths, 70% of them women and children, he noted. Attacks

and destruction of hospitals and limited access to healthcare had the biggest negative impact on pregnant and nursing women.

**Ambassador Feda Abdelhady** noted that Palestinian women had suffered from misery and injustice for decades caused by Israeli violence, an apartheid regime, constant military aggression and the ongoing Nakba against the Palestinian people. At least 12,410 women have been killed by Israeli forces in the last 15 months. While the Israeli siege prevented international investigations and reporting, what was already known about the current situation was harrowing, with studies showing that the life expectancy in Gaza has decreased by 30 years.

Women faced the humiliation of going through menstruation and childbirth without hygiene supplies, water, sanitation or privacy. She added that Israel weaponized the civilians' access to food and water to engineer a man-made starvation, increasing the vulnerability of women and their babies to malnutrition, illness and death. Those countless violations by Israeli forces and authorities constituted war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. Ambassador Abdelhady then read emotional testimonies of women in Gaza, who shared their experiences of the war, the losses suffered and the trauma caused to their families, including by the loss of infants to hypothermia and preventable diseases.

#### Panel Discussion

**Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng**, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, expressed her shock over the renewed Israeli attacks on Gaza. The horror of genocide in Gaza had also spread in the West Bank. Palestinians, especially in Gaza, must be supported by a global solidarity movement to end the decade-long systemic and sustained imperialist violence that they faced every day. She added that an accurate assessment of the implementation of the Beijing +30 Platform for Action, the achievement of gender equality and the realization of the 2030 Agenda would be incomplete without this spotlight on the ongoing genocide of Palestinians.

She recalled that the destruction of health institutions disproportionately impacted girls and women, adding that medical staff had been repeatedly harassed and arrested and targeted, while medical infrastructures and supplies had been irreparably damaged. This situation of genocide had also worsened the violations of sexual and reproductive health rights, with many reported cases of physical and sexual assaults against medical personnel in hospitals. Pregnant women did not have access to adequate nutrition and healthcare, putting not only their lives at risk but also that of their babies and the fetuses they carried.

The health consequences of racism, as well as the experience of colonialism and genocide, will have an impact on Palestinians for generations to come. The international community cannot allow this situation to continue with impunity. She highlighted further that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and from the illegality of the continued presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which stated that Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory is illegal and must end.

**Dr. Mimi Syed** shared her experience of working as an Emergency Medicine Physician in Gaza in September and December of 2024. During that time, she spoke with mothers and their children and related to the audience the stories she heard from many victims of the conflict. As one of many examples, she spoke about the case of a two-year old with jaundice and hepatitis. She was in a lot of pain but her medical evacuation had been denied by Israel. She also described how mothers could not get milk formula to feed their babies. The world was witnessing a premeditated and deliberate attack against the future of this population, she added.

The water and sanitation situation were also extremely dire. She witnessed many cases of kidney failure caused by E-coli but also due to the salt in drinking water which could not be filtered as Israel was preventing the equipment to enter the Gaza Strip. She also discussed how women and girls were affected by hypothermia, while lacking medication and disinfecting products, causing diseases that were totally preventable otherwise.

**Ms. Zaynab Al-Ghunaimi**, Director General of the Palestinian Center for Legal Research, Consulting and Protection for Women, gave a video testimonial in which she talked about the importance of holding the perpetrators accountable for this attempt at annihilation of a whole community, through starvation, forced displacement and military attacks. She also talked about the resilience and perseverance of Palestinians to defend their cause. She thanked the women organizations around the world who supported women in Gaza, to protect them not only from the effects of the war, but also from the violations of their rights. She further called for the end of the occupation, in accordance with the ICJ Advisory Opinion.

**Dr. Adlah Sukkar**, Pulmonologist and Critical Care physician with Doctors Against Genocide, talked about how essential medical equipment was prevented by Israel from entering Gaza, including for MRI and cancer treatment. Those restrictions also caused severe malnutrition and made it impossible to treat even simple wounds. In addition, up to 50% of foreign physicians were denied entry while many local health personnel were either killed or detained. She informed that her organization held weekly webinars during which physicians in Gaza described the extreme challenges they have faced, including having been detained and tortured in Israeli custody. In addition to the destruction of healthcare facilities and targeting of medical personnel, many medical students were also not able to complete their education, which will have long-term consequences for the health system.

The current situation had a profound impact related to direct injuries, pregnancy complications, traumatic birth and extreme mental stress. As a pulmonologist, she raised alarm about the lung health of malnourished infants and the long-term effects of the inhalation of debris from aerosolized concrete and asbestos. She also shared personal accounts of many of her family members who had died in the OPT during the repeated Israeli aggressions.

## Discussion

During the Q&A session, **Ms. Zonya Rivero Lopez**, Deputy Secretary-General of the Federation of Cuban Women, spoke about the suffering of Palestinian women and the war crimes committed by Israel in Gaza which led to the death of thousands of women and girls. She lamented the ongoing blockage of humanitarian aid and policies that prevented UNRWA from providing essential assistance. She recalled the rights for Palestinian women to exercise their

right to self-determination and the right to an independent Palestinian State. She further stated that Israel's impunity must cease, adding that the destruction of medical infrastructures prevented women from access to essential services, while hundreds of health workers had also been victims of this war, and that there must be accountability for these crimes.

The Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt, **Ms. Heba Mostafa**, expressed solidarity with Palestine and saluted the resilience of Palestinian women, recalling their rights to a dignified life. She further stated that the international community was failing them, and that it must act to combat the misinformation about the Palestinian plight and called for the realization of their rights.

**Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng**, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, reminded the audience of the strength of humanity's collective power. She emphasized the need to ensure accountability for the crimes committed against Palestinians, adding that she will present several reports in the coming months, including one focused on highlighting the situation faced by health care workers in Palestine.

### Closing

In her closing remarks, **Ambassador Abdelhady** expressed gratitude to the speakers for their testimonies on the situation faced by women in Palestine. This event put a spotlight on the horrific situation in Gaza and what was urgently needed. Israel made clear its intention to conduct ethnic cleansing in Gaza. Women were burying their children, were left as widows, burying their family members, and suffering immensely. But despite the adversity, Palestinian women continued to play their roles in the society, still serving as role models, in the most devastating war against a civilian population in this century. But their legendary resilience should not be taken for granted. Urgent actions and solidarity were needed to end the war, to end the illegal occupation and to bring justice, to fulfil the Palestinians' inalienable right of return and to make it possible for them to exercise self-determination in a sovereign and independent State of Palestine.

**Mr. Abd. Karim** closed the event.

\* \* \*

*\*\*\*Note: This Summary attempts to provide an overall picture of the deliberations of the virtual Event. A video of the Event can be found on the webpage of the CEIRPP, [www.un.unispal.org](http://www.un.unispal.org) as well as in its official Facebook page and YouTube account.*

*\*\*\*Note: The views and opinions expressed in this summary are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.*