**An Open Letter to Condoleezza Rice**
By The Palestinian NGOs Network
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**Dear Dr. Rice,**

This is not your first time here in our country and in the region. You must have witnessed what goes on. We are confident that you are fully aware of our region’s problems and the long history of struggle and hate, the main reason of which is the Israeli occupation and persecution, not only of the Palestinian people, but also of the people in the whole region.

The killing, destruction and displacement that are taking place in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is a continuation of Israel’s policy of neglecting the rights of the Palestinian people, and its refusal to enter an equal, meaningful peace process that is built on fairness, justice and international legitimacy.

Furthermore, what Lebanon is currently witnessing in the way of killing, destruction and displacement, and which - considering the small population and limited resources - is an unprecedented war of destruction in contemporary history. News from Lebanon and Palestine is similar: People are being killed by the same weapons, and by the same soldiers. The victims are mainly civilians, including children and women. In less than 12 days, more than 362 people have been killed in Lebanon compared to 140 killed in the Palestinian territories in less than 20 days. The force being used by the Israeli troops can no longer be described as “excessive”, as you had always described it. Instead, it is inhuman and savage, aiming at exterminating as many people as possible. This brings to our minds the force used by Serbia in Bosnia as well as the crimes against humanity committed in the Second World War.

Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of the weapons being used by the Israeli troops in this dirty war are American, and a great portion of them are being given to the Israeli government as grants. People in our country as well as in Lebanon are wondering why a great country like the United States would do whatever it takes, whether on the military or political levels, to ensure Israel’s immunity and protection against any consequences of its grave breaches of International Humanitarian Law, thereby encouraging its aggression and display of military strength.

We are fully aware of the United States’ interests in the region, but we are also aware that it has responsibilities to maintain international peace and security.

Your country’s continued neglect of the causes that have lead to this situation, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands, and the Israeli government’s ongoing aggression and persecution, and its continuous disregard for international legitimacy, and its refusal to implement the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, have all led to the current situation.

The natural result of hatred, aggression and persecution will only perpetuate violence in all its types and such circumstances will - by no means - help in the development of the principles of democracy and civil society. In summary, we believe that the words of the United States, and its call for a new Middle East established on the principles of freedom and democracy, are not reflected in its actions. On the contrary, your policy in the region, specifically providing the Israeli government with the immunity to practice the current killing, destruction and persecution, will only worsen the situation and lead to an endless situation of hate, violence and instability.

What we are pursuing and struggling to obtain is not continuous animosity and violence. Instead, we are struggling to establish the basis of durable peace and stability in the region. Our youth and children wish to live in security, peace and stability, to establish civilized, developed, democratic and secure communities rather than be engaged in an endless circle of violence and hatred.

A fair and balanced peace in our region cannot be achieved unless established on a basis of mutual respect for the interests of the people in the region. We would also like to confirm that human dignity is a very important element to always keep in mind. People cannot reach dignity unless their national aspirations are fulfilled, living their lives freely with no compulsion by anyone.

We are looking forward to and hoping that your government will conduct a detailed review of its policy in the region and stand up to the level of responsibility which is necessary for a country of global influence, whose decisions inevitably affect people’s lives here.

Finally, we would like to confirm that any attempts to resolve this current crisis using military force will not lead to any result, as is illustrated by many examples all over the world.

In order to strengthen the diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, there should be an immediate ceasefire, and the causes of the current crisis should be addressed to try to resolve it in light of international law and the respect of human rights and interests of people in the region.

We hope that your visit will contribute to security and stability in the region and peacefulness of its people through bringing to an end the war and aggression practiced against the Palestinians and Lebanese.

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