

# Media Update

28 November 2023

## UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

### THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE 29 November 2023

This International Day of Solidarity comes during one of the darkest chapters in the history of the Palestinian people. I am horrified by the death and destruction that have engulfed the region, which is overwhelmed with pain, anguish and heartache.

Palestinians in Gaza are suffering a humanitarian catastrophe. Almost 1.7 million people have been forced from their homes – but nowhere is safe. Meanwhile, the situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, risks boiling over.

I express my sincere condolences to the thousands of families who are mourning loved ones. This includes members of our own United Nations family killed in Gaza, representing the largest loss of personnel in the history of our organization.

I have been clear in my condemnation of the terror attacks by Hamas on 7 October. But I have also been clear that they cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

Across the region, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency is an indispensable lifeline, delivering vital support to millions of Palestinian refugees. It is more important than ever that the international community stands with UNRWA as a source of support for the Palestinian people.

Above all, this is a day for reaffirming international solidarity with the Palestinian people and their right to live in peace and dignity.

That must start with a long-term humanitarian ceasefire, unrestricted access for lifesaving aid, the release of all hostages, the protection of civilians and an end to violations of international humanitarian law. We must be united in demanding an end to the occupation and the blockade of Gaza.

It is long past time to move in a determined, irreversible way towards a two-State solution, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and international law, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

The United Nations will not waver in its commitment to the Palestinian people. Today and every day, let us stand in solidarity with the aspirations of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights and build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for all.

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## UNHABITAT

### PRESS RELEASE

## Denial of Women's Housing, Land and Property Rights (HLP) is Gender Based Violence (GBV)

Islamabad, November 28, 2023- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) marked the culmination of its awareness campaign with a three-day National Conference (November 28-30, 2023) aimed at securing Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) Rights for women and vulnerable groups in Pakistan. The inaugural session was graced by Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women, who served as the Chief Guest. Noteworthy attendees included representatives from the Government of Pakistan, the United Nations, foreign dignitaries, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and academia.

Mr. Jawed Ali Khan, Habitat Programme Manager at UN-Habitat, warmly welcomed participants and shed light on the conference's genesis, which emerged as a response to the catastrophic floods in 2022. These floods affected over 33 million people, displacing numerous families and necessitating

urgent rehabilitation and house reconstruction. UN-Habitat's primary objective is to tackle the complex issues surrounding land ownership, property rights, and land tenure security, with a specific focus on women and vulnerable groups.

Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar underscored the glaring discrimination against women regarding their housing, land, and property rights, despite the existence of relevant laws and articles. She highlighted the challenges faced by women in Pakistan, particularly those involved in agriculture but lacking land ownership. Ms. Bakhtiar advocated for collaborative efforts and social activism to empower women, stressing the importance of addressing the hurdles faced by women and vulnerable groups in accessing HLP rights. She assured the support of the National Commission on the Status of Women in raising awareness about HLP rights and eliminating barriers to access these rights.

Mr. Julien Harneis, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Pakistan, expressed gratitude and highlighted how people were compelled to settle along roads in 2022 due to fears of losing land without legal rights, which hindered job mobility and led to malnutrition. He identified two critical issues: the vulnerability of families lacking education and basic necessities and the crucial need to grant land rights, especially to households headed by women. While acknowledging the efforts of the Sindh government in providing land titles, Mr. Harneis urged for an extension of this support to all vulnerable communities. He emphasized the significance of property rights for investment and called for a focus on recent property law rights in Pakistan.

Ms. Leyla Nugmanova, Assistant Representative at UNHCR, highlighted the organization's initiative to prevent violence against women. She stressed the pivotal role of HLP laws in challenging patriarchal norms and empowering women, particularly in times of disasters. Housing, Land, and Property rights were emphasized as the cornerstone of the Humanitarian and Development Nexus. Furthermore, Ms. Fareeha Umar, Portfolio Specialist at UN WOMEN, explained how legal barriers, discriminatory implementation of legal frameworks, and deeply entrenched cultural norms restrict women and vulnerable groups' access to property ownership and inheritance rights.

A panel discussion took place during the inaugural session of the conference, featuring esteemed panelists such as Ms. Nusrat Hashmi, Advocate at Lahore High Court; Dr. Raana Malik, Chairperson of the Department of Gender Studies at the University of Punjab; and Mr. Asim Bhatti, Member and Advocate at the District and High Court Bar Association. They underscored the insufficient awareness among women regarding their Housing, Land, and Property (HLP)

rights, emphasizing the critical need to tackle this challenge. The discussion highlighted the necessity for concerted efforts, comprising the implementation of legal reforms, educational initiatives, and community awareness programs. These initiatives are geared towards ensuring fair and accessible Housing, Land, and Property Rights for women and vulnerable groups in Pakistan. Recognizing the importance of empowering stakeholders with a comprehensive understanding of the legal framework and its gender-sensitive application was identified as a crucial step in achieving the goals of providing accessible HLP services.