

# *Palestinian farmers, fishermen demand end to Israeli siege on Gaza Strip*

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Gaza City, December 4 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Palestinian protesters have staged a rally in the besieged Gaza Strip, calling for an end to a decade-long Israeli siege on the coastal enclave.

The protest was organized by local groups of Palestinian farmers and fishermen in Gaza outside the premises of the Palestinian Legislative Council on Monday. The demonstrators chanted slogans demanding Palestinian unity and held signs condemning the Israeli siege imposed on the Gaza Strip since June 2007 and the political rift between rival Palestinian factions.

The coordinator of the Agricultural and Fishermen Committees, Saad Ziyadeh, told the Palestinian Ma'an News Agency that the protest aimed to call on the international community to end the state of silence towards Palestinian rights and to hold the Israeli regime accountable for the atrocities it commits against Gazans. Ziyadeh stressed that the Israeli siege had led to humanitarian consequences in Gaza, including extreme poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and hunger.

According to international estimates, 80 percent of Palestinians in the coastal enclave depend on international aid and 40 percent are under poverty line. Ziyadeh also called on decision-makers in the

West Bank and Gaza to end the state of division.

The Palestinian leadership has been divided between Fatah, the leading party of the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas resistance movement since 2006, when the latter scored a landslide victory in parliamentary elections in the Gaza Strip. Hamas has ever since been running the coastal enclave, while Fatah has been based in the autonomous parts the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The two rival groups signed a reconciliation agreement on October 12, 2017; however, the agreement was not fully implemented due to major disagreements between them over several issues. The Gaza Strip has been under an inhumane Israeli siege since 2007 and witnessed three wars since 2008, with Israeli forces conducting regular air raids on Palestinians in Gaza under the pretext of hitting Hamas targets.

Tensions have been running high near the Gaza fence since March 30, which marked the start of a series of protests, dubbed “The Great March of Return,” demanding the right to return for those driven out of their homeland.

The Gaza clashes reached their peak on May 14, the eve of the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe), which coincided this year with the U.S. embassy relocation from Tel Aviv to occupied Jerusalem.

More than 240 Palestinians have lost their lives and over 23,000 others sustained injuries by Israeli live fire during the protests since March 30th.

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