For immediate release

Press Release: Canada-funded Haya joint programme commemorates 16 Days of Activism with women survivors of violence, Bashar Murad, and DAM

Thursday 6 December 2018, Ramallah – To commemorate the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, the Representative Office of Canada to the Palestinian Authority and UN Women organized a 16 Days of Activism event in Ramallah today, inviting women survivors of violence, singer Bashar Murad, and hip hop group DAM, as part of the Haya: Eliminating Violence against Women joint programme launched in May this year.

The event took place in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and three other implementing UN agencies of the Haya joint programme – UNFPA, UN Habitat, and UNODC – and was a joint event of the 16 Days of Activism joint campaign "#HearMeToo: Voices against Violence," where around 30 international and national partners working for Palestinians, including Canada, gathered to unite voices in solidarity towards ending violence against women and girls. A film screening event also took place yesterday in Gaza as part of the Haya joint programme, showing "Samah," a documentary film to raise awareness on honour killing, directed by a Palestinian filmmaker Murad Nasser. Both events gathered around 150 audiences, many of whom were women and youth.

"Canada is deeply committed in eliminating gender-based violence worldwide and for Palestinian people," said Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot, the Representative of Canada to the Palestinian Authority, who opened the event with his welcoming remarks.

"Through this event, in line with Canadian government's wholehearted support of the 16 days of Activism worldwide, we hope to reiterate our commitments to protect women's human rights and empower vulnerable women and girls in the Palestinian society, in collaboration with various international and national stakeholders," he added.

Three women survivors of violence trained by the Inad Theatre in Bethlehem played an art show using dolls introducing a survivor's experience of violence, seeking of justice, and recovery. Singer Bashar Murad, who recently launched a song with UN Women titled "Ana Zalameh (I am a man)," about gender equality created by both men and women, as well as a Hip Hop group DAM, well-known for their advocacy for women's rights, also joined the event to show their support in this nation-wide efforts to end voices against gender-based violence.

"This year's 16 Days joint campaign was launched as part of a global 16 Days of Activism campaign under the theme #HearMeToo to amply voices of women survivors of violence and those who work towards ending violence against women and girls", said Maryse Guimond, the Special Representative of UN Women Palestine Office.

"UN Women stands together with the Government of Canada and all other partners of the #HearMeToo: Voices against Violence campaign to provide a safe and just place for women and girls survivors of violence, where they can speak out and receive necessary support to recover, have a normal life, and pursue their unlimited potential."

Women and girls in the Palestinian society continue to experience various forms of gender-based violence - it can range from verbal and sexual harassment in the streets to domestic violence and honour killing in the worst-case scenario. Unfortunately, most survivors are overlooked, not visible to many, and shamed into silence. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) Palestine Report reveals that 1 in 4 Palestinian men reported witnessing their mother being beaten by their father or a male relative during their childhood, while 63 per cent of Palestinian men agreed that a woman should tolerate violence to keep the family together.

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