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**THE EPPA PRESS STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS ON A HUNGER STRIKE STARTING ON THE 17/04/17.**

The Ex- Robben Island Political Prisoners Veterans association, an association of all ex-political prisoners of SA, was founded with the advice and support of our then beloved and late President Comrade Nelson Mandela in 1995, Cape Town at Robben Island or Makana Island as it is affectionately known among former prisoners. The EPPA is a none profit, a section 21 company which is non-partisan, Anti-Racism, Anti-xenophobia and it also promotes Voter, leadership , Political education and support the international Solidarity movement led by the BDS, CDA and the PLO in the occupied Palestinian territories : it represents men and women who fought against Apartheid Colonialism. These gallant fighters and veterans stood the test of time and passed through the eye of the needle because of their selfless sacrifices in the national democratic struggle in SA. They were incarcerated at Robben Island and other apartheid dungeons in SA.

The EPPA represent the diverse ideological viewpoint of all former liberation movements and depend mainly on donations to address the socio-economic problems that affect ex-political prisoners. The association has decided to organise a series of events in the year 2016 up to 2017, to celebrate 23 years since the release of political prisoners. The association on its endeavour always briefs the president of the republic about its national and international political programmes, unequivocally in support of the Palestinian liberation struggle against Israeli Apartheid Zionism. The former deputy president and the president of the republic are patrons of the association.

The EPPA strongly condemns the illegal detention of children and women and all political prisoners in Israeli prisons. The Association has always been calling for the unconditional release of all prisoners in all jails from Israel. We also support the call for prisoners to join in a hunger strike in order to fight for better prison conditions as we did under Apartheid in SA. We believe that Hunger Strike is the only weapon used by all prisoners in order to demand human rights in prison. The association wishes to extend revolutionary greetings to one of the Palestinian icons, a freedom fighter, a Political prisoner of conscience and a revolutionary leader Marwan Al Barghouthi. We strongly believe that Cde Marwan will lead the hunger strike which will be turned into a decisive victory for all political prisoners.

The EPPA together with all freedom loving people and progressive forces inside SA will embark on a number of solidarity activities in support of the fight for better living conditions in all Apartheid Israel Jails. We unconditionally support all the demands made by our brothers and sisters in those dark prison cells and, spiritually and in Gods will, Victory is certain.

The EPPA calls on the international Red Cross and the International Defence Aid Fund to intervene on behalf of the Palestinian Political Prisoners and make sure that the Geneva Convention Protocol on the rights of Prisoners of War is observed and carried out by the Israel Prison Authorities as they did under Apartheid SA. We had similar experience during Apartheid in SA prisons where through Hunger Strike, we achieved all the rights stated by our fellow brothers and sisters in those prison cells. We therefore solemnly support the launch of the Prisoners Day.

The EPPA call on all political prisoners and Detainees to 'UNITE' and fight against these draconian laws of arbitrary detention without trial and an end to solitary confinement and demand the following rights, under the auspices of the UN and Red Cross.

1. The right to have education, books and all reading material
2. The right to have better medical aid.
3. The right to have family visits especially contact visits on a weekly basis.
4. The right to have nutritious food and letters from families.
5. The right to play sport, music and cultural activities
6. The right to cook their own food as we did at Robben Island.

‘While we will not forget the brutality of Apartheid, We will not want Hunger Strike to be a monument of our hardship and suffering. We would want it to be a triumph of the human spirit against the forces of evil; a triumph of wisdom and largeness of spirit against small minds and pettiness; a triumph of courage and determination over human frailty and weakness.’

The EPPA of SA will always stand side by side with you. Do not despair, have courage, determination and commitment: for freedom is at the horizon. Victory is certain. We shall overcome. Enshalla!! Long Live Palestinian Prisoners.

VIVA PALESTINE!!

**Regards**

**EPPA NATIONAL SECRETARY**

**MPHO MASEMOLA**

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