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married and make the money for her family. So this also could result in early marriage for females. Families sometimes force daughters to get married because they want to be rid of the financial burden of her, even if she doesn't cost them so much. But because they are poor, they think about her food, her transportation. All of these things are tied into the unemployment and general violence. People get very disappointed and it's easy to lose their temper and unleash domestic violence on their wives, their kids, their neighbors, whoever.

We talk about the female forced into early marriage. We also have a high rate of divorce these days because of the unemployment.

Also we're seeing many of the ladies sitting in streets asking for money, and this hasn't been found in our community at all, really. This is a new phenomenon. All the families are suffering from the same circumstances, and the same conditions, so they will not be able to afford help for her.

Unemployment is also increasing the number of people who need assistance, which increases the burden on the international community to cover the basic needs. Working on this kind of assistance means you can't go and develop something else, something more. It's basic needs coverage only, emergency needs.

**J.Z.:** What challenges do the current conditions present in your work in delivering aid to people?

**I.A.N.:** Under difficult circumstances, it is getting access to the worst families if they are in a restricted area or in conflicted areas, if there are killings or shootings. In terms of other programs, there are complications in how we can get materials. Because we are talking about helping disadvantaged farmers and irrigating their greenhouses, we need the raw materials for them to build and repair. Because of the siege on Gaza, we are not able to get this material, which makes our work more difficult. So this kind of scarcity of material has sometimes limited our intervention, and

for all the international organizations.

We have 5,000 families who have lost their houses, and none of the international organizations or even the government is able to rebuild their houses or offer them a new house because the construction materials are not allowed to enter Gaza.

**J.Z.:** What are they doing? How are they surviving?

**I.A.N.:** Some of them are living with their relatives. Others are living in crowded apartments. And some of the organizations can afford some rent and heat, but it does not last for long. They could afford it for the first two months, but that's it. So it sometimes forces the family to go to very bad conditions, bad apartments or warehouses, and live there. Because also they are unemployed, they cannot pay the fees.

**J.Z.:** Two years ago, during your work in Gaza shortly after Hamas took over, you said that the NGOs who are operating in the Gaza Strip would have to play the role of the government there because the government will not be able to do it.

**I.A.N.:** For example, the government should assure that the social affairs are OK. That people are working, students graduate, to take care of needy families. But now 80

percent is relying on food assistance. The government is not able to afford this. So the international organizations are now taking this responsibility.

The governing of basic needs is done by the international community.

**J.Z.:** You grew up in the region and the conflict all your life. What is there to give people a sense of hope that it can change because it is almost more grim today than it was 30 years ago?

**I.A.N.:** The humanitarian assistance is required, but also Palestinian people will have to work together. We are asking the international community to play an influential role and push the Israeli side to implement the resolution for a two-state solution. Because we want to live in peace, and we would like the international community to play their role, an active role in this. We know the negotiations have gone on for a while. We know we are the weak party. We are waiting for the international community.

**J.Z.:** There is international pressure to recognize the blockade as a war crime and a crime against humanity. And the U.N. fact-finding report noting violations on both sides is gaining attention. Does this give you hope for raising awareness of the Palestinian plight?

**I.A.N.:** We are hoping that something good will happen. But given the circumstances, there is nothing so far to let us be optimistic.

And who is paying the price for all these conflicts taking place? It's not the government, it's not the Palestinian Authority, it's not Hamas. It's the poorest people, the poor people in Gaza and the West Bank. Because the families are now homeless, they are waiting for an agreement, because they are hoping that the construction material will get in so they can have a shelter. Which is one of the basic rights. It's then normal Palestinian people and the poor people who are paying the price for all these conflict, for the Israeli-Palestinian or Palestinian-Palestinian issues.

**J.Z.:** Personally, how do you deal with it?

**I.A.N.:** For hope, we are not so optimistic at all. Most of the people, they give up. The people are waiting for what kind of solution, we do not know. And I consider it a problem of the Palestinians, they are uniquely adapted. They can adapt to any situation — we stand in line for 10 hours just to get our bread. We will survive. This is the problem. Palestinians have a very strange coping mechanism. It's strength, but I get mad at that. Whatever situation, we will just adapt, just cope with it.

They have something special because of what they have experienced since 1948, and in 1967 and then the First Intifada and then the Second Intifada, and now you have the ongoing military action ... They're shooting farmers working on their farms, fisherman at sea — all for security reasons. What kind of danger does a farmer working by his hands do to a soldier, or a tank or a bulldozer? What kind of danger?

We want to live in peace with our neighbors. We are recognizing the existence of Israel, and we would like to live in peace with them. The normal people just want to enjoy life and have their basic human rights. You ask any average Palestinian and they say they want to live in peace, to have a shop and to feed their kids. This is what they want. Nothing more.

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