

**Rafah. June 13th, 2007.** Over 3,000 gathered in Rafah demanding an end to the violent confrontations in Gaza.

During the past months the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has sensed impending chaos in the Gaza Strip and determined a need for coordination among civil society institutions to moderate the effects of lawlessness and violence. Civil society promotion is a cornerstone of the work of the FES in the Palestinian Territories and the FES lends its support to the newly founded Palestinian NGO network (PNGO Network) comprised of 26 NGOs.



*Demonstration in Rafah on June 13<sup>th</sup>*

The demonstration came during days of armed clashes, which claimed the lives of civilians and militants in the Gaza Strip. The PNGO Network mobilized the members of diverse institutions in a public demonstration against violence. Palestinians marched through Rafah in southern Gaza while fighting between rival forces continued.

The violence and the subsequent destabilization in the region have overshadowed the presence of civil society groups in media reports from the region. The demonstration indicates, however, the active presence of Palestinians committed to rule of law and opposed to violence in Gaza.

United in their call for a return to reason, supporters of diverse political movements including Fatah and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine as well as heads of familial clans reportedly attended. Demonstrators marched through the streets carrying banners reading "Only the Law May Rule" and "Our Goal is Life- Not Death". The march ended in the city center with speeches calling for a rule of law, an immediate ceasefire, and resumption of dialogue.

Ibrahim Moamar, director of the Society for Democracy and Law, an NGO advocating a democratic and secular state, which conducted the project, reflected on the need for a demonstration "If this internal fighting continues it will blow up the Palestinian question". The demonstration was attended by the local press and reported in local newspapers and media. International media has reduced access to Gaza and the area surrounding the Rafah refugee camp hindering the ability to cover events and shed light on non-partisan movements among the residents.

The Palestinian NGO Network is an umbrella organization, which seeks to consolidate and strengthen the Palestinian civil society with special emphasis on the principles of

democracy and social justice. According to the organization itself "PNGO strives for the attainment of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people". Sovereignty of law and respect for human rights guide the organization's work. The Rafah demonstration reflects PNGO's commitment to building positive peace as well as the ability to mobilize a large number of individuals and organizations.