



*“We call for the international community as well as Arab and international human rights organizations to exert pressure to end the suffering and human rights abuses of Palestinians at the Rafah border crossing and re-open immediately“* Human Rights Activists in Rafah

**Rafah. July 14th, 2007.** As the Rafah border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt remains closed, civil society groups assembled in a demonstration on Saturday to rally international support for thousands of stranded people.

The peaceful demonstration was organized by the National Society for Democracy and Law (NSDL), a partner of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in the Palestinian Territories. As a part of the ongoing Civil Institutions Project, the demonstration was designed to strengthen the voice of thousands of stranded individuals and their advocates.

The setting of the demonstration brought international attention to the festering humanitarian crisis. The closure of the Rafah passage has stranded thousands waiting to cross with insufficient funds and a lack of vital goods and services. More than 300 individuals gathered at the passage attracting attention from local and international media. Demonstrators carried signs and banners calling for local and international human rights advocates to mobilize and end the closure policy. The closed border not only impedes the free movement of goods and people, but compromises the basic rights of access to humanitarian goods and services of those kept waiting.

The FES and the NSDL hope that the demonstration and the larger Civil Institutions Project will contribute to restoring respect for human rights and the rule of law in the Gaza Strip as well as encouraging long term participation of civil society in democratic processes.