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**Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories**

Joint written statement* submitted by Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



The gendered impact of the latest escalation of Israel's violence on Palestinian women and girls

Introduction

In the context of 73 years of Israeli institutionalized regime of racism domination and oppression over the Palestinian people as a whole, Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line, refugees and exiles have taken the streets to demonstrate against Israel's ongoing ethnic cleansing.

Israeli policies that victimize and discriminate against the Palestinian people have a clear gendered impact as they isolate Palestinian women. The Israeli violations of international law disproportionately impact Palestinian women due to their role as care-providers for the family and within the household. The annexation has huge effects on women's legal, social, educational, economic and political status and rights, as well as their access to services, especially for survivors of gender-based violence.

In this submission, WCLAC urges the Council to take immediate measures abiding by its legal and moral obligations to protect the Palestinian people as a whole. Hence, WCLAC reiterates on the Council's members to support and facilitate the Commission of Inquiry investigation process in all Israel's IHL and IHRL violations over Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.

The investigation should adopt a gender-responsive approach in all deliberations about the occupied Palestinian territories to explicitly address the gendered impacts of the occupation in all relevant resolutions, with special attention to the promotion and protection of human rights of Palestinian women and girls, and take measures to address the repercussions of occupation.

Israeli military offensive on Gaza

Although the current ceasefire is an important step to end the indiscriminate attacks and the illegal use of explosive weapons against the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, it does not resolve the deeper problem of Israel's systematic policies of blockade, collective punishment and grave breaches of IHL and violation of human rights. The continuing siege will only exacerbate the situation and feed into the already existing violence.

Israel's unlawful claim of "self-defense", has resulted in murdering 242 Palestinian, including 66 children, 38 women (of whom four were pregnant), and 138 men.¹ Israel intentionally targeted residential houses, and in most cases, with no warning or order of eviction² 258 buildings, comprising 1,042 housing and commercial units, were destroyed.³ The targeting of commercial units included media offices is a violation of freedom of expression enshrined in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Article 19 of the Universal declaration of Human Rights. In total, 77,000 people became internally displaced, bearing in mind that there are additional 769 units severely damaged.

In addition, four hospitals, the only COVID-19 test center in Gaza, and 50 schools were damaged by Israeli airstrikes; the latter impacted 41,897 children. Attacking health care and educational institutions is considered one of the six grave violations against children, and a

¹ OCHA, Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel, Flash Update#11 20 May 2021. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/escalation-gaza-strip-west-bank-and-israel-flash-update-11-covering-1200-20-may-1200-21-may>.

² Relief Web, Save the Children, Fifty schools in Gaza and three in Israel have been damaged in the last week, 19 May 2021. 2021 <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/fifty-schools-gaza-and-three-israel-have-been-damaged-last>.

³ OCHA, Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel, Flash Update #7, 17 May 2021.

violation to Article (53) of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Moreover, this is considered a violation to Article (18) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that hospitals and health care facilities may not be the object of attacks and must be protected and respected under all circumstances, and Article (27) of the Hague Regulation, which specifically addresses the need to protect hospitals during bombardments.

In violation to Article (33) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel has completely cut off electricity in all Gaza during the aggression period. Moreover, wastewater pipes, water-pipes and wells have all been damaged as a result of the airstrikes, destroying the infrastructure, directly violating Article (54)(2) of the Additional Protocol I of the GC. This resulted in a tighter and rapidly deteriorating situation of water and electricity shortage, which Gaza already suffers from on a regular basis, as part of the illegal prolonged blockade.

N.A, and her family have lived through the horrors and atrocities of this recent Israeli bombardment on Gaza. Each member of her family including her elderly mother and young daughter suffer from post-traumatic disorders. Her mother lost her sight due to the toxic phosphorus gas, N.A is currently living a very difficult time. Her 6 years old daughter has excessive electrical charge in her brain, and gets seizures when she hears any sound. She developed urinary inconsistency and N.A does not know how to deal with it. All children are in need of a psychiatrist due to the trauma and tragedy they lived. In addition, N.A's disabled brother developed a condition where he starts screaming unprovoked every hour, cries loudly amid, and post the ceasefire.

Women in the Gaza Strip, among their main role as caregivers, will bear the responsibility to support and take care of injured and or traumatized children, noting that the majority are now without a shelter.

Forced dispossession: Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem

Sheikh Jarrah is one of the many Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, which was illegally annexed in 1967, that is under the threat of mass forced displacement. While Israel does not hold legal jurisdiction over this land, peaceful demonstrations against this attempted displacement were met with unlawful and excessive Israeli police violence, including shooting residents, spraying protesters with wastewater, identity checks, surveillance, blockading the neighborhood entrance, brutal physical attacks, and arbitrary and fabricated arrests.

This violence is part of a wider pattern. Israeli settlers easily can make claims of ownership on Palestinian homes with the support of Israeli courts and security forces, while any appeals made by Palestinian families are rejected. Palestinians in cities inside the green line, including Haifa, Akka, Al-Lyd, and Yaffa, along with Jerusalem, have suffered from lynch mob attacks, home invasions, harassment, car attacks, gender-based violence, and shootings, carried out by Israeli settlers, with the backing of state security forces. In Jerusalem, an Israeli settler ran over a Palestinian man with a car, yet was immediately protected by an Israeli police officer. In contrast, Palestinians receive summary execution.

M.K, a young woman living in Sheikh Jarrah, has grown up to the terror of Israeli settlers forcibly displacing her family from her childhood home. She has also been subjected to verbal abuse, intimidation, and sexual harassment by settlers since she was 10 years old, without any response by the Israeli police to her family's complaints.

The Israeli occupying forces while standing in front of her home shot J.K, a 15 years old girl from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, causing a fracture in her spine and bruises in her lungs.

Privacy invasion is also a main human right violation people of Sheikh Jarrah are suffering from. G.A, a resident there, has told us, "The Israeli forces have put surveillance cameras over our house; they watch every move we make." Another resident, said "After we received the eviction notice, our life was turned upside down. We were very afraid; this is the house of my grandfather, my mother and my uncle. All our lives are connected to it.

Psychologically, it destroyed us because it is our concern to preserve our heritage, the smell and picture of my mother at home, as well as our memories.”

Recommendations

- Call for an end to the culture of impunity enjoyed by Israel and ensure that it adheres to its obligations under the UN charter and international law.
- Call for the prosecution of Israeli settlers for their harmful and violent acts against Palestinian people as a whole.
- Demand that Israel ends the blockade on Gaza, in which daily violates the human rights of Palestinians in Gaza.
- We call on HRC members to support justice and accountability measures including the ICC investigation and the annual updating of the UN Database.
- To support and facilitate the commission of inquiry mandate, including investigating, analyzing evidence, and recommending accountability measures to all violations of IHL and IHRL, taking into account the gendered impacts, as well as the underlying root causes of the situation over Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.
- Call on third states to impose sanction and other serious measures to hold Israel accountable for the use of explosive weapons, disproportionate and inhumane violence and war crimes against the Gaza population.

Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center- JLAC, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.