



The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

Reprisals against Civilians

Report on Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) violations against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip for the period from the Palestinian paramilitary operation on 25 June 2006 till 31 July 2006.



Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

Consultative Status with the ECOSOC of the United Nations
Affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists - Geneva
Member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) - Paris
Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network – Copenhagen
Member of the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) - Stockholm
Member of the Arab Organization for Human Rights – Cairo



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The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights is an independent non-profit legal agency based in Gaza city. The Centre was established in April 1995 by a group of Palestinian lawyers and human rights activists in order to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in accordance with international standards, create and develop democratic institutions and an active civil society in Palestine in accordance with internationally accepted standards and practices and support all efforts aimed at enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights according to international law.

The Centre enjoys Consultative Status with the ECOSOC of the United Nations. It was granted three international prominent awards for its efforts in the field of human rights:

1. The 1996 French Republic Award on Human Rights; and
2. The 2002 Bruno Kreisky Award for Outstanding Achievements in the Area of Human Rights; and
3. The 2003 International Service Human Rights Award (UNAIS).

The Centre has wide relationships with human rights and civil society organizations throughout the world. It is an affiliate of five international and Arab human rights organizations, which are active in the international arena:

International Commission of Jurists

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), headquartered in Geneva, is a non-governmental organisation in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe and the OAU. Founded in 1952, its task is to defend the rule of law throughout the world and to work towards the full observance of the provisions in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. its membership is composed of sixty eminent jurists who are representatives of the different legal systems of the world.

Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme

The Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH) is an international non-governmental organisation dedicated to the world-wide defence of human rights as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Founded in 1922, FIDH has eighty-nine national affiliates in all regions.

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (Euro-Med Network) is a network of human rights organisations and individuals from the Middle East, North Africa and the European Union, established in 1997. The overall objective of the Network is to contribute to the protection of the human rights principles embodied in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995.

International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC)

The International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) is one of the most important international legal bodies. It is specialized in legal and judicial training. It includes more than 30 members of distinguished legal organizations throughout the world, including American Bar Association; Arab Lawyers Union; and Bar Council of England and Wales.

The Arab Organization for Human Rights

It is an NGO founded in 1983. It calls for respect and promotion of human and people rights and fundamental freedoms in the Arab World for all individuals on its land in accordance with international human rights instruments. The Organization signed an agreement with Egypt in May 2000, according to which its headquarter was moved from Limassol in Cyprus to Cairo.



The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights is an independent non-profit non-governmental organisation dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights, the rule of law, and democratic principles in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

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Introduction:

Since 25 June 2006, the Gaza Strip has been witnessing unprecedented deterioration in the humanitarian situation, the harshest such development since the unilateral disengagement plan in September 2005. The whole Gaza Strip is the subject of a wide scale IOF military operation. The IOF operation comes after the paramilitary operation conducted by three Palestinian resistance factions, including the armed wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). The Palestinian operation was conducted on 25 June 2006 against an IOF outpost in the Karm Abu Salem area, southeast of Rafah. It resulted in the death of 2 IOF soldiers, the injury of 6, and the imprisonment of one soldier. Two Palestinians were killed in the operation.

The Israeli government refused to conduct any negotiations with the captors of the soldier, who requested the release of Arab and Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails in exchange for his release. Israel threatened to conduct a large scale military operation to free the soldier. In addition, Israel declared another objective: stopping the firing of "Qassam" rockets at Israeli targets from the northern Gaza Strip.

The IOF military operation was described as a rolling ball. It included a complete naval, air, and land closure of the Gaza Strip. The closure isolated the Strip from the outside world and hindered the flow of food and medical supplies to the Strip. The operation also included the destruction of infrastructure. This destruction included the bombardment of the main power station, destroying bridges, bombing governmental buildings (including the office of the Prime Minister and the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs), and bombing universities and education institutions. In addition, the IOF operation included extra-judicial assassinations against Palestinian activists, threatening to assassinate the Hamas leadership, including the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers, and limited incursions into the Gaza Strip. These incursions were nicknamed the "grasshopper." Hundreds of Palestinian casualties fell during the ongoing IOF operation, including scores of children. In addition, IOF destroyed houses and razed agricultural land.

Parallel to the operation in the Gaza Strip, IOF continued to perpetrate war crimes and serious violations against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank. This included extra-judicial assassinations of Palestinian activists throughout the West Bank and the destruction of civilian property. IOF continues to construct the Annexation Wall inside the West Bank territory in total disregard of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion outlawing the Wall.

The ongoing IOF operations in the Gaza Strip since the Palestinian paramilitary operation can only be classified as reprisals and collective punishment against Palestinian civilians. These operations cannot be justified as Israeli security and military necessities. They are a flagrant violation of International Humanitarian Law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. The IOF operations necessitate immediate and effective intervention, especially by the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention and United Nations bodies, to halt these crimes and serious violations against Palestinian civilians.

PCHR views these operations as actions openly and clearly targeting civilians. Thus, they are a violation of article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Centre is dismayed by the position of international parties regarding the crimes perpetrated against civilians. Especially noted are the Government of Switzerland, the depository of the Geneva Conventions, and the European Union. The Centre condemns the position of the United States of America, which encourages IOF to perpetrate more war crimes through providing political and legal cover for these actions.

I- Willful Killing and Excessive Use of Force:

IOF have committed additional war crimes and serious violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention during the period covered by the report. IOF have used excessive and disproportionate force against Palestinian civilians. IOF used war planes (including fighter jets, attack helicopters, and armed drones), advanced tanks, and naval war vessels manufactured for use in conventional wars between armies. IOF used this military arsenal under the pretext of confronting Palestinian resistance activists, who are lightly armed and hide in the streets of the Gaza Strip towns and refugee camps. During the period from 25 June – 31 July 2006, IOF war crimes have resulted in the death of 156 Palestinians. The victims included 81 civilians, 33 children, and 9 women. In addition, more than 720 Palestinians were injured, including 168 children.

Incursions into Palestinian-controlled Territory:

The IOF gave its land operations in the Gaza Strip the codename "grasshopper" in reference to the quick shifting from one area to another. Thus far, land operations have targeted several areas in the Gaza Strip, especially the north and east. IOF were still in the midst of this operation at the time of publishing this report. So far, large number of casualties fell in these operations in which war planes, tanks, and war vessels are used. Palestinian houses and civilian installations are destroyed and agricultural land is razed without any military necessity.

Incursion into El-Shoka – Rafah:

After the Karm Abu Salem operation, IOF destroyed the farm from which the operation perpetrators set off in the southeast of Rafah. IOF conducted extensive combing operations along the border to the east of Rafah. And on 28 June 2006, IOF occupied Gaza International Airport, and destroyed large parts of the airport. In addition, IOF moved 300-500 meters into El-Shoka area, and razed large areas of agricultural lands. Till now, IOF continue to shell residential areas in El-Shoka. As a result nearly 150 families were forced to evacuate their houses and move into temporary shelters in Rafah provided by UNRWA.

Incursion into Beit Hanoun:

From 3-5 July 2006, IOF moved into Beit Hanoun, north of the Gaza Strip, and occupied large parts of the town. IOF destroyed a large number of houses, civilian properties, and razed large areas of agricultural land. A number of Palestinians were killed in the incursion.

And on 15 July 2006, IOF moved into the town a second time before withdrawing on 18 July 2006. IOF destroyed civilian properties and infrastructure, in addition to human casualties. Seven Palestinians were killed in this second incursion, including 1 child. In addition, thirty Palestinians were killed, including 5 children and 2 women. Nearly 120 houses were totally or partially destroyed. And nearly 100 donums of agricultural land were razed. The electricity, water, and communication infrastructures were destroyed. In addition, IOF destroyed the fences of 4 UNRWA schools and inflicted damages on 4 secondary schools. Further, IOF destroyed the western section of wall fence of the Beit Hanoun Hospital and besieged it. IOF also inflicted damages on Al-Quds Health clinic in the center of Beit Hanoun, and destroyed 8 civilian vehicles, including 2 cement trucks. IOF also partially destroyed the fences of the Beit Hanoun UNRWA clinic, the Beit Hanoun Cemetery, and the National Club in the town. IOF took over the Ghassan Kanafani School for

Development, and transformed it into a military outpost during the incursion. Damages were inflicted on the school and on the Bara'em kindergarten.

Incursion into Beit Lahya:

During the period 6-8 July 2006, IOF moved into the town of Beit Lahya in the north of the Gaza Strip. IOF armored ground forces, covered by war planes and navy war vessels, moved into El-Salatin Quarter in the west of the town. Fierce clashes erupted between IOF and Palestinian resistance activists. The clashes resulted in the death of tens of Palestinians, most of them civilians. IOF withdrew from the area in the morning of 8 July 2006, leaving behind extensive destruction of civilian property. Nearly 100 houses were damaged, and 50 donums of agricultural land were razed. IOF also destroyed the fence of El-Salatin cemetery, and destroyed many civilian vehicles. IOF detained 4 Palestinians, including 3 brothers from El-Attar clan.

Incursion into Khan Yunis:

At the start of this operation, IOF moved into El-Fokhari village, east of Khan Yunis. IOF have taken positions near Sofa Crossing on the border of the Gaza Strip, and moved into the village a number of times. The incursions into the village were conducted by tens of armored vehicles that fired indiscriminately at houses. A number of civilians were killed and injured during these incursions. In addition, hundreds of donums of agricultural land were razed; and nearly 100 houses were damaged.

On 12 July 2006, IOF moved into the town of El-Qarara, north of Khan Yunis, and advanced to El-Matahin intersection on Salah El-Deen Road. IOF armored vehicles fired indiscriminately at houses and agricultural land during their advance. IOF controlled Salah El-Deen Road and prevented movement between the north and south of the Gaza Strip. The incursion lasted for 2 days; and a number of Palestinians were killed and injured. In addition, IOF razed 100 donums of agricultural land and destroyed watering wells and irrigation channels in these lands.

Incursion into Deir El-Balah:

On 12-14 July 2006, IOF moved into Deir El-Balah. IOF armored vehicles advanced to the Abu Holi area and occupied the Matahin intersection on Salah El-Deen Road, the main north-south road in the Gaza Strip. IOF also moved up to the former settlement of Kfar Darom, east of Deir El-Balah. Eight Palestinians were killed and scores injured during the 2-day incursion. In addition, civilian property was destroyed.

Incursion into El-Maghazi Refugee Camp:

On 19-21 July 2006, IOF moved into the eastern outskirts of El-Maghazi refugee camp, causing extensive damage to civilian property, infrastructure, and agricultural land. Nineteen Palestinians were killed during the incursion, including 4 children and 1 woman. One-hundred and twenty five Palestinians were injured, most of them unarmed civilians. The injured included 30 children and 4 paramedics. Thirty-one injuries were classified as serious. Four houses were completely destroyed; and nine were partially destroyed. A sewing workshop, providing for 80 families, was destroyed. Nearly 200 donums of agricultural land were razed. And the electricity, water, and road infrastructure was destroyed.

Incursion into El-Tuffah Quarter in Gaza City:

IOF moved 1 kilometer from the east towards Gaza City, and deployed in positions on the eastern outskirts of El-Tuffah Quarter and El-Sha'af neighborhood. IOF committed war crimes against Palestinian civilians and destroyed civilian property. Twenty Palestinians were killed, including 7 civilians and a 3-year old child. Sixty-seven Palestinians were injured, including 12 children and 2 journalists. In addition, IOF:

- Razed 80 donums of agricultural land;
- Destroyed 24 civilian houses, 8 completely;
- Destroyed 3 chicken farms;
- Destroyed 3 honey farms, each containing 140 hives (each hive costs \$US 140);
- Destroyed 6 cars; and
- Destroyed a biscuits factory.

Reprisals against Civilians:

IOF continued to implement the policy of reprisals against Palestinian civilians. When targeting resistance activists with war planes, tanks, and ships, IOF does not give any consideration to the fact that they are in populated areas, especially when children are around. As a result, the number of Palestinian casualties doubles. In other instances, IOF bombs populated houses under the pretext that there are resistance activists in the area. A notable example is bombing the house of Farid Hajjaj in Mansour Street, east of Gaza City, on 8 July 2006. Farid's wife Amna Hajjaj (42), his daughter Rawan (6), and son Mohammad (20) were killed. Another 5 family members of the family were injured. PCHR's preliminary investigation into that incident included field visits to the attack site, eyewitness accounts, examining shrapnel and rocket remains in the house, and examining official documents such as medical reports and pictures of the dead and wounded. The investigation clearly points that the Hajjaj family house, located on the western part of the East Road, at the end of Mansour Street in Shejaeya Quarter, was targeted by 3 rockets from Israeli drones.

In a similar crime on 21 July 2006, IOF shelled another house to the east of Shejaeya Quarter. The house belonged to a family from Harara clan. The bombardment was carried out under the pretext that gunmen were about to fire rockets. Four Palestinians were killed and 3 injured in the incident. PCHR's preliminary investigation indicates that one shell landed directly on the roof of the 3-story house. Two of Jaber's children and their cousin were on the roof. They were killed instantly. Jaber's wife went up from the second floor to see what happened after the first shell landed. As soon as she reached the roof, a second shell was fired at roof. She was killed instantly. Three members of the family were injured by shrapnel, including a 3-year old girl. The victims killed are: Mo'min Jaber Harara (18); Amer Jaber Harara (21); Sabah Harara (45), the mother of the first two; and Mohammad Hamdi Harara (27).

Extra-judicial Assassinations:

During the period covered by the report, IOF committed 6 extra-judicial assassinations against Palestinians, three of them in the Gaza Strip. Eleven civilians, including 8 children were killed in these assassinations. In addition, 46 Palestinians (mostly civilians) were injured, including 5 children and 8 women (one of them pregnant).

PCHR's documentation of these events points to IOF disregard for civilian life, especially children. Such disregard clearly points towards the intent to kill and take revenge. Most of the assassinations have been conducted from the air, with disregard to the presence of the "target" in civilian areas, houses, or crowded streets.

An example of IOF total disregard for civilian life was the bombing of the house of Dr. Nabil Abu Selmeia on 12 July 2006. The house was totally demolished with the household asleep inside. The father, mother, and seven of their children were killed. Thirty-four neighbors were injured. IOF claimed that Mohammad Deif, the commander of Izzedeen El-Qassam Battalions (the armed wing of Hamas), and other commanders were in the house. PCHR's documentation indicates that an IOF fighter jet dropped 2 bombs at the house belonging to Nabil Abdel Latif Abu Salmeya (46), a leader in Hamas who works as a lecturer in the Islamic University. The 2 bombs hit the 2-story house built on 200 square meters in the Shanti lands in the town of Jabalia. The house was destroyed on top of the occupants. The owner was killed, and so were his wife Salwa Ismail Abu Salmeya (42) and 7 of their children: Basma (16), Somaya (17, handicapped), Aya (9), Yehya (10), Nasr (7), Huda (13), and Eman (12). The son Awad (19) was rescued, and is suffering from serious injuries. His son Mohammad survived as he was in the second floor with his brother Awad.

II- Destruction of Infrastructure:

IOF perpetrated systematic destruction of Palestinian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. This included the destruction of key civilian properties that are not military targets, and the destruction of which cannot aid military operations. Among these properties are the Gaza Power Plant, the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Office of the Prime Minister, and an office of Palestinian Legislative Council members. In addition, IOF destroyed a number of educational institutions including a building for the student council at the Islamic University. IOF also destroyed 6 bridges in the north and center of the Gaza Strip, and destroyed a number of roads throughout the Strip.

Bombing the Gaza Power Plant:

On 27 July 2006, IOF bombed the Gaza Power Plant in Nuseirat refugee camp. The bombardment caused a power blackout for half of the Gaza Strip population. Six power transformers were destroyed in multiple air raids on the plant, which provides 45% of the electricity consumed in the Strip. The power plant needs reconstruction, renovation, and refurbishing that will take up to 6 months, at the expense of 15 million US dollars. The Gaza Electricity Company was forced to ration electricity by scheduling of power and outages in areas. Thus, most of the Gaza Strip suffers from power outages.

During IOF incursions, power transformers were targeted by IOF planes. In this context, IOF bombed 2 power transformers on 29 June 2006 in the Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing and Sudaneya area in the north of the Gaza Strip. Power was cut off completely from north of the Gaza Strip. It is noted that the targeted transformers receive electricity from an Israeli power company, and were providing part of the electricity for Gaza City after the bombardment of the Gaza Power Plant. And on 19 July 2006, IOF bombed the power transformers in the central part of the Gaza Strip, during the incursion into El-Maghazi refugee camp. Power was cut off the whole central part of the Strip.

These actions could have catastrophic consequences if power remains cut off large parts of the Gaza Strip, and fuel is barred from entering the Strip to operate power generators needed to run health

and environmental installations, such as hospitals, clinics, water wells, sewage disposal facilities, and others. A health and food catastrophe for more than 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip could ensue.

Bombing Bridges:

Since the start of military operations, IOF have imposed restrictions on the movement of Palestinians inside the Gaza Strip by bombing bridges connecting parts of the Gaza Strip. On 27 June 2006, IOF planes bombed two bridges on the Gaza Valley on the coastal road and Salah El-Deen Road. Both bridges were completely destroyed. A third bridge was partially destroyed. The primary artery of transportation between the north and south of the Strip was cut off. On 30 June 2006, IOF helicopters fired 4 rockets at the Gaza Valley Bridge on Salah El-Deen Road. Three rockets hit the bridge, destroying a second part of the bridge that was previously targeted. On 14 July 2006, an IOF fighter jet dropped a bomb on a bridge connecting El-Moghraqa area and El-Zahra town in the center of the Gaza Strip. The bridge was completely destroyed. On 15 July 2006, an IOF fighter jet dropped a bomb at the bridge connecting El-Bureij refugee camp and Juhr El-Deek area to the east of the refugee camp. The bridge was completely destroyed. On 9 July 2006, an IOF fighter jet dropped a bomb on the Beit Hanoun Bridge, on the southern entrance of the town. The bridge was completely destroyed, and Beit Hanoun isolated from the rest of the Gaza Strip. In addition, power was cut off the northern Gaza Strip as a result of this raid.

PCHR is concerned over the suffering of the civilian population over the next few months due to the IOF rejection of allowing Palestinian technical crews from fixing the bridges, especially the two key bridges on the Gaza Valley in the center of the Gaza Strip. These two bridges are very essential for the passage of civilian vehicles between the north and south of the Strip. After the destruction of the bridges, the Ministry of Public Works paved the roads under the bridges for vehicles. But there is concern that the movement under the bridges will be hindered during the winter, when the water level in the Gaza Valley increases.

Bombing Government Ministries and Buildings:

IOF bombarded the institutions of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) as part of the collective punishment policy and the efforts to undermine the PNA. IOF planes destroyed a number of governmental structures, including:

On 29 June 2006, IOF planes bombed the office of Interior Minister, Said Seyam, in the fifth floor of the Ministry of Interior Building in Tal El-Hawa Quarter, southwest of Gaza City. The office sustained heavy damages. And on 5 July 2006, an IOF fighter jet dropped a bomb at the third floor of the same building. A large fire broke out in the building; and the extensive damage threatens the whole building of collapsing. Surrounding houses suffered extensive damages; and 2 civilians were injured in the raid.

On 13 July 2006, an IOF fighter jet dropped a bomb at the PNA Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The building consisted of 6 stories, and was located in the Governmental Buildings Complex in Tal El-Hawa Quarter. Severe damages were inflicted on the building and on surrounding houses. And on 16 July 2006, IOF planes bombed the building a second time, destroying it and causing severe damages to surrounding houses and civilian vehicles. Twelve civilians were injured by shrapnel, including 6 children and 2 women.

On 15 July 2006, an IOF plane fired a rocket at the Ministry of National Commerce in Sheikh Radwan Quarter in Gaza City. The Ministry's offices sustained heavy damages, including the office of the Minister.

On 15 July 2006, an IOF plane bombarded an office for the Palestinian Legislative Council members from the north of the Gaza Strip. The office was located in the second floor of a residential 5-story building.

In all raids, the targeted offices were destroyed, and the buildings sustained heavy damages. In addition, surrounding buildings were damaged.

Bombing Educational Institutions:

IOF collective punishment and reprisals included the bombardment of educational institutions. On 29 June 2006, an IOF plane bombed a sports field in the Islamic University of Gaza in Gaza City. On 4 July 2006, an IOF helicopter fired a rocket at the Islamic University Campus in Thalathini Street in Gaza City. The rocket hit a building used by the university student council, destroying it completely. Damages were inflicted on other buildings on campus. And on 5 July 2006, an IOF plane dropped a bomb on Dar El-Arqam School in El-Tuffah Quarter in Gaza City. A number of buildings and classrooms were destroyed. No injuries were reported. And on 27 July 2006, IOF planes bombed Al-Azhar University College of Agriculture and the nearby Agricultural Secondary School in Beit Hanoun.

III- Home Demolition and Razing Agricultural Land:

During its military operation in the Gaza Strip, IOF armored vehicles and bulldozers systematically destroyed houses and farms. Thus far, IOF have destroyed tens of houses, especially in the eastern parts of Rafah, Beit Lahya area, and Beit Hanoun. Hundreds of families were displaced, and forced to take shelter in UNRWA schools. In addition, IOF bulldozers razed large areas of agricultural land.

New Tactic:

IOF improvised a new technique in demolishing the houses of Palestinian civilians. Starting on 23 July 2006, IOF started to issue warnings to the owners of the houses to be destroyed or bombed. The warnings are relayed through a call to the mobile phone of the house owner, giving him a no more than one hour to evacuate the house. The warning is issued by someone claiming to be an Israeli intelligence officer, giving his name. PCHR stresses that warning civilians before destroying their houses cannot be a justification for destroying civilian properties, which are protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention.

This new tactic has affected 14 houses so far. Statements by the targeted families indicated that they did not get a chance to take out their belongings from their houses before the bombardment. The warnings were issued less than one hour before the bombardment, which is insufficient time to take out personal belongings and furniture. The targeted houses are not located in confrontation areas or in areas from where rockets are fired. The houses are distributed throughout the Gaza Strip, and many are multi-story apartment houses. IOF did not present any evidence that can be viewed as justification for bombarding any of the targeted houses. Among the targeted families are:

- House of Mohammad Izzedeen El-Sheikh Deeb (31) in Naser Quarter in Gaza City. The house is 4 stories and shelters 45 people, including 25 children. It was hit by 3 rockets from IOF helicopters. The ground floor was destroyed and the other floors were damaged. Surrounding houses were damaged as well. The house owner said, *"I received a call to my mobile from a person who identified himself as an Israeli intelligence officer called Danny. He told me that I have 1 hour to evacuate my house without telling me the reason."*
- Family of Omar Mohammad El-Mamlouk (44) from Shejaeya Quarter in Gaza City. The house consisted of 2 stories and housed 19 people, including 8 children. It was bombed by a fighter jet, and was totally destroyed. Nearby houses suffered damages. Omar said, *"I was sitting in front of my house when I received a call an anonymous person who said that he is from the Israeli army. He told me that I have to evacuate my house immediately because it will be bombarded in a few minutes. He did not give my any chance to inquire."*
- Family of Salah Saleh El-Sha'er (48) from Qiezan El-Najjar area in Khan Yunis. The house consisted of 3 stories and housed 40 people, including 28 children. It was bombed by a fighter jet, and was totally destroyed. Nearby houses suffered damages. In addition, several neighbors were injured. El-Sha'er said, *"My brother's wife woke me up in a hurry with a terrified look on her face. She told me that her husband received a call from someone who identified himself as from Israeli intelligence. He asked him to leave the house immediately as it will be bombarded shortly."*

On 30 July 2006, PCHR submitted a complaint to the Israeli Attorney-General's Office over the warnings issued before the bombardment of civilian houses. The Centre protested the method of warning and destruction, and pointed to 3 main points with regards to the issue:

- 1- The method Israel uses before the destruction of civilian houses;
- 2- The time window given by Israel to Palestinian civilians; and
- 3- The destruction is based on purely intelligence information that could be mistaken, inaccurate, or outdated.

In a reply dated on 2 August 2006, the Israeli Military Attorney claimed that "the operations of the Israeli army are against 'terrorist parties,' and are conducted in accordance with the customs of war and International Law...and that these operations are conducted with the legal support of the Military Attorney."

The Military Attorney refused to give ample time to evacuate the houses threatened with destruction, stating that the time frame given to evacuate buildings could vary from one case to another. With regards to the third point, the Military Attorney claimed, "with regards to the third point in the Center's complaint with regards to the demolitions being based on intelligence information...The Israeli Air Force strikes are based on reliable and up to date intelligence information of the Israeli army."

IV: Complete Closure of the Gaza Strip:

IOF have imposed a complete land, air, and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip since the Palestinian operation at Karm Abu Salem. The suffering of the civilian population was accentuated by this closure, which included the closing of Rafah International Crossing Point on the border with Egypt. In addition, all of the Gaza Strip other border terminals were closed. Gaza International Airport remained closed. Also, fishermen were prevented from going out to sea.

Rafah International Crossing Point, the only terminal connecting the Gaza Strip with the outside world, has been closed since the Karm Abu Salem operation. Nearly 5,000 Palestinian travelers, including patients, women, children, and elderly, were forced to overstay at the Egyptian side of the border after (patients) having completed their trips for treatment in Egyptian hospitals. These travelers were forced to wait for the reopening of the border in very inhumane conditions that lack basic services and necessities such as food, sleeping areas, and medical care for patients. Many travelers ran out of money and could not cover their expenses. They relied on aid provided by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. In addition, to the lack of services and inhumane conditions, these travelers were forcibly separated from their families beyond pre-planned travel times.

These inhumane conditions resulted in the death of 6 patients during the report period. IOF did not allow the relatives of the deceased to retrieve the bodies of their kin. Many were forced to bury their relatives in Egypt.

As a result of the suffering of these travelers, hundreds of Palestinian civilian and armed people blew up part of the border fence with Egypt on 14 July 2006. They opened a large gap in the wall, and 2,500 travelers returned to the Gaza Strip. However, a large number of travelers preferred to wait for an official solution to their problem. Israel did not heed the calls of the international community and human rights organizations to solve this humanitarian problem. In this regard, four Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations submitted a petition to the Israeli High Court on 5 July 2006 to allow the return of Palestinian patients stuck in the Rafah International Crossing Point to return to their homes. The organizations that submitted the petition are Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, Mezan Centre for Human Rights, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. The petition was submitted after Israeli authorities prevented 400 Palestinians, including 70 patients, stuck inside the Rafah Crossing to return to the Gaza Strip when the crossing was closed on 25 June 2006.

Despite the seriousness of the humanitarian situation, IOF waited till 18 and 19 July 2006 to allow the Palestinians stuck on the Egyptian side of the border to return to the Gaza Strip.

However, the closure did not solve the problems of hundreds of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip who require medical treatment abroad, whether in Egyptian, West Bank, or Israeli hospitals. These patients remained deprived of their right to travel to receive medical treatment.

IOF continues to close all land crossings of the Gaza Strip, especially Al-Muntar (Karni) Commercial Crossing, Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing for individuals (including humanitarian workers, patients, and workers), Sofa Crossing for construction materials, and Karm Abu Salim Crossing for medical and humanitarian supplies. IOF have allowed limited openings of the crossings for goods and supplies to allow food, fuel, and medical supplies to enter the Gaza Strip. As a result the suffering of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip has worsened.

V: Detaining Civilians including Ministers and Members of Parliament:

Simultaneous to the crimes in the Gaza Strip, IOF continued to carryout incursions into towns, villages, and refugee camps in the West Bank. As a result, civilian casualties fell, and destruction was brought upon civilian properties and infrastructure. IOF continued to commit extra-judicial assassinations against Palestinian activists. And IOF is continuing the construction of the Annexation Wall on Palestinian land.

Reprisals and collective punishment against civilians after the Karm Abu Salem operation included the West Bank as well. The Israeli government announced after the operation that Palestinian members of parliament and cabinet ministers have no immunity. Israel threatened to detain them as a bargaining chip to win the release of the Israeli soldier imprisoned in the Gaza Strip.

In fulfillment of these threats, IOF conducted wide scale detention operations against scores of Hamas supporters, including cabinet ministers and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elected on the platform of the pro-Hamas "Change and Reform List."

On 29 June 2006, IOF conducted a series of incursions throughout the West Bank, with the exception of Jericho. IOF surrounded the places of residence of a number of Palestinian government ministers and PLC members. IOF detained 8 ministers and 26 PLC members, in addition to many other political leaders of Hamas. A few days later, IOF detained the second deputy speaker of the PLC, Dr. Hasan Khreisha, as he was returning to the West Bank from Jordan, and other PLC members.

The detained ministers are Omar Abdel Raziq, Minister of Finance; Samir Abu Eisha, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation; Khaled Abu Arafa, Minister of Jerusalem Affairs; Wasfi Qabha, Minister of Prisoners' Affairs; Issa El-Ja'bari, Minister of Local Government; Fakhri Torokman, Minister of Social Affairs; Nayef El-Rajoub, Minister of Waqf and Religious Affairs; and Mohammad El-Barghouthi, Minister of Labor.

The detained PLC members are Basem Ahmad Moussa Za'arir, Khalil Moussa Khalil Beb'ei, Samir Saleh Ibrahim El-Qadi, Mohammad Ismail Othman El-Tal, Mohammad Motlaq Abdel Mahdi Abu J'heisha, Mohammad Maher Yousef Bader, Anwar Mohammad Abdel Rahman El-Zoboun, Mahmoud Dawood Mahmoud El-Khatib, Wa'el Mohammad Abdel Fattah Abdel Rahman (El-Husseini), Mohammad Mahmoud Abu Tir, Ahmad Mohammad Ahmad Attoun, Hosni Mohammad Ahmad Bourini, Reyad Ali Mostafa Amlı, Yaser Suliman Dawoud Mansour, Ibrahim Mohammad Saleh Dahbour, Khaled Suliman Fayez Abu Hasan, Khaled (Sa'id) Abed Abdallah Yehya, Reyad Mahmoud Sa'id Radad, Fathi Mohammad Ali Qarawi, Imad Mahmoud Rajeh Nofal, and Naser Abdallah Odeh Abdel Jawwad. In addition, IOF raided the house of PLC member Ahmad Ali Ahmad in Ein El-Ma' refugee camp, but did not find him there.

Most of the Cabinet Ministers and PLC members are still incarcerated under terrible conditions in Israeli jails, noting that many of them suffer from different ailments. Some of them were brought to trial. IOF released PLC second deputy speaker on 30 July 2006 after posting a bail of \$US 2,300.

Conclusion:

The IOF measures against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are war crimes that violate international law and customs, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention. Despite IOF claims that these measures are part of the effort to liberate the imprisoned Israeli soldier, the nature and scope of the operations point without a doubt to the fact that the imprisonment of the soldier is a pretext used by the Israeli government to carry out a large scale military operation to punish Palestinians for the results of the elections. In addition, the operation aims to redraw the borders of the Gaza Strip to suit Israel's demands and vision for a unilateral solution to the conflict with Palestinians. According to this vision, the solution is a state of limited sovereignty in the Gaza Strip and 42% of the West Bank.

During the IOF operation, Palestinian civilians have fallen victim to a systematic policy of Israeli human rights violations that included isolation from the outside world, deprivation of humanitarian assistance, and destruction of infrastructure, such as bombing the Gaza Power Plant. In addition, IOF planes conducted tens of air raids on densely-population areas, sometimes dropping one-ton bombs on targets. IOF also detained tens of PLC members and cabinet ministers in total disregard for the elected representatives of the Palestinian people.

PCHR is extremely dismayed by the stance of international parties with regards to the crimes perpetrated against Palestinian civilians; especially the position of the Government of Switzerland, the depository of the Geneva Conventions, and the European Union, which is considered part of the conspiracy of silence regarding what is happening. The Centre strongly condemns the position of the United States of America that gives political and legal cover for IOF actions and encourages IOF to perpetrate more crimes.

PCHR and calls upon:

- the international community, including the UN, to intervene immediately and effectively and take all necessary steps to halt the Israeli aggression against Palestinian civilians, including the utilization of international forces to protect civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT);
- the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention to enforce its third article of the convention with regards to respecting the convention, and to take action to impose sanctions that ensure Israel's compliance to its obligations under the convention;
- the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to act towards stopping Israeli aggression against Palestinian civilians, including conducting an urgent visit to the OPT to investigate the crimes perpetrated by IOF.