
The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights



Report on Israeli Attacks on Palestinian Fishermen in the Gaza Strip in al-Aqsa Intifada

29 September 2000 – 31 May 2002



The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

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Introduction

Since the beginning of al-Aqsa Intifada on 29 September 2000, Israeli occupying forces have perpetrated serious human rights violations against Palestinian civilians. They have carried out systematic violations against the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people. Israeli occupying forces have waged a comprehensive war against the Palestinian people, using a wide range of weapons, including F-16's and Apache helicopters, Merkava tanks and heavy machine guns. A total siege has been imposed on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, isolating them from the outside world, and cutting them into parts. Israeli tanks have blocked entrances of Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps, transforming them into isolated cantons. Israeli bulldozers raze thousands of acres of Palestinian agricultural land and demolished hundreds of houses, rendering thousands of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, homeless.

Israeli practices against Palestinian civilians are part of the policies of collective punishment adopted by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people, in violation of international human rights legislation, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949. Article 3 of the Convention provides that "no protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited." Article 3 (1) of the Convention provides that "persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. To this end, the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons: (a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; (b) Taking of hostages; (c) Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; (d) The passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples."

As part of the policy of collective punishment adopted by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians, they have repeatedly imposed marine sieges on the Gaza Strip, preventing hundreds of Palestinian fishermen from fishing. According to the Palestinian-Israeli Accords, Palestinian fishermen have the right to sail in Area "L," which extends up to 20 nautical miles out to sea, but Israeli forces decreased this area to 6 nautical miles. This area is very small and makes it difficult for fishermen to earn a reasonable income. Israeli forces also obstruct fishing and block and fire at their fishing boats. They have arrested and attacked a number of fishermen and imposed heavy fines.

This report highlights the suffering of Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip while fishing, as a result of continuous attacks by Israeli occupying forces. It covers Israeli attacks on Palestinian fishermen from 29 September 2000, the beginning of al-Aqsa Intifada, to 31 May 2002. During

this period, 10 Palestinian fishermen were wounded by Israeli gunfire and 5 other sustained bruises and injuries when Israeli naval troops sprayed water on their boat. Israeli occupying forces also arrested 65 Palestinian fishermen while fishing. They have also confiscated nets, blocked and sank a number of fishing boats, and imposed a marine siege on the Gaza Strip.

Israeli practices against Palestinian fishermen violate international human rights instruments, which ensure the right to work, especially the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 6 (1) of the Covenant provides that "the States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right." Article 1(2) of the Covenant provides that "all peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence." Israeli practices against Palestinian fishermen also violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as article 23(1) provides that "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment." Additionally, they violate Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949, with article 52 providing that "all measures aiming at creating unemployment or at restricting the opportunities offered to workers in an occupied territory, in order to induce them to work for the Occupying Power, are prohibited." Israeli practices against Palestinian fishermen also violate the Declaration on Social Progress and Development whose article 6 provides that "social development requires the assurance to everyone of the right to work and the free choice of employment." Article 10(a) of the same Declaration provides that "the assurance at all levels of the right to work and the right of everyone to form trade unions and workers' associations and to bargain collectively; promotion of full productive employment and elimination of unemployment and under-employment; establishment of equitable and favourable conditions of work for all, including the improvement of health and safety conditions; assurance of just remuneration for labour without any discrimination as well as a sufficiently high minimum wage to ensure a decent standard of living; the protection of the consumer."

A Regenerated Policy

For many years, Israeli occupying forces have restricted Palestinian fishermen's sole income, depriving them of their right to work. They have unjustifiably attacked Palestinian fishermen and their boats and have imposed restrictions on their work.

The Palestinian-Israeli Interim Agreement signed between Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli government, in Article 11 of the annexed protocol on the redeployment of the Israeli forces and security arrangements, gives Palestinian fishermen the right to sail in Area "L," which extends up to 20 nautical miles from the coast of Gaza. Although this arrangement is unfair for Palestinian fishermen, Israeli occupying forces have repeatedly violated it. They have imposed a marine siege on the Gaza Strip and have decreased the area allowed for fishing without coordination with the Palestinian side in violation of the Agreement. They have attacked Palestinian fishermen in an apparent attempt to force them to give up their jobs.

The first case was on 8 March 1996, when Israeli occupying forces imposed a marine siege on the Gaza Strip. When they eased the siege on 22 March 2002, they decreased the area where fishing is allowed to 12 nautical miles, preventing fishermen from moving further, which had an adverse affect on their production and income.

Israeli naval troops have chased and blocked fishing boats, cut nets and fired at fishermen, although fishing boats and fishermen have borne licenses and carried out their work inside the assigned area where fishing is allowed. As a result of such Israeli arbitrary practices, many Palestinian fishermen gave up their jobs, despite lack the any skills for other professions. Fishing has become a journey of death and terror due to the Israeli attacks on fishermen.

PCHR has documented and followed up attacks against Palestinian fishermen by Israeli occupying forces. According to PCHR's investigations, all Israeli attacks on Palestinian fishermen and their boats, in violation of their economic rights, are unjustifiable as the fishermen carry out their work within the prescribed area. Such Israeli practices are just some of the grave breaches perpetrated by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians and their property.

Fishing in the Gaza Strip

In the Gaza Strip, there are approximately 2500 fishermen, as shown on the table below. In addition, 1200 Palestinians have jobs related to fishing, such as the manufacture and maintenance of boats and nets, the preparation ice blocks for fish storage and fish skinning and selling.

Around 40-50 families, mostly women, from al-Shati refugee camp work in fish skinning for local traders or Israeli companies. They receive low wages for this job, despite long hours and health problems as a result of the work. They work in this profession in order to help improve the living conditions of their families. However, their work suffered a setback as the fish production in the Gaza Strip sharply decreased, while living conditions of those families has rapidly deteriorated as their income from this work used to aid the easing the hard economic conditions under which they live.¹

¹ Mahanna, E'timad, *Report on the Situation and Needs of Women Working in Fish Skinning in al-Shati Refugee Camp*, Palestinian Working Women Association for Development, Gaza: 2001.

Table of the Distribution of Fishermen in the Gaza Strip in 2002

Area	Number of Fishermen
Gaza	1297
Deir al-Balah	365
Khan Yunis	606
Rafah	275
Total	2543

Source: The General Corporation of Fish Wealth

Approximately 4000 families, with an average of 8 members per family, that is 32000 persons, depend upon the fishing industry for their living.² The majority of these families live in the al-Shati refugee camp, Deir al-Balah and the al-Mawasi region in Rafah and Khan Yunis. Their lives are characterized by instability as fishing is seasonal and has to constantly face aggressive Israeli restrictions.

Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip use approximately 727 boats distributed as shown in the following table:

Area	Number of Boats
Gaza	433
Deir al-Balah	87
Khan Yunis	99
Rafah	275
Total	727

Source: The General Corporation of Fish Wealth

Palestinian fishermen regularly have to face Israeli measures while fishing. Israeli naval troops, fire at, chase and arrest the fishermen, damage their fishing equipment, block and sink their boats and unjustifiably impose high fines on them. In addition, Israeli occupying forces have repeatedly imposed a marine siege on the Gaza Strip, preventing fishermen and those working in relevant jobs from their sole source of income.

According to Palestinian official sources, the total loss incurred to fishermen from the beginning of al-Aqsa Intifada until April 2002 is estimated at US\$5.5 million, US\$700,000 of which is the loss incurred to fishing equipment while the rest is in the fish production.³ Fish production sharply decreased in 2000 and 2001 as shown in the following table:

Year	Production in Tons
1993	1200
1994	1500
1995	2200
1996	2360
1997	3790
1998	3620
1999	3665
2000	2600
2001	1950

Source: The General Corporation of Fish Wealth

² Source: Mohammed Zaqqout, Head of al-Tawfiq Cooperative Society for Fishermen, Gaza.

³ Source: Tariq Musbah Saqer, Director General of the General Corporation of Fish Wealth, Ministry of Agriculture, Gaza.

Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip live under dire condition in the al-Aqsa Intifada due to aggressive measures by Israeli forces against them. They are habitually prevented from fishing, arrested or fired at.

Al-Tawfiq Cooperative Society for Fishermen in Gaza provides services for fishermen, including fuel, ice and nets. It also contributes with 30% of the health insurance of fishermen. As a result of Israeli practices against fishermen during al-Aqsa Intifada, the society stopped its contribution to the health insurance of fishermen. Many fishermen have been unable to pay the required fees of fishing to the society, so debts have accumulated and mounted to approximately 1.5 million NIS (approximately US\$ 320,000).⁴

Although there are some international organizations which offer assistance for Palestinian fishermen in the current crisis, this assistance does not meet all the needs of the fishermen, nor covers their losses as a result of losing their jobs and paying excessive fines. Mohammed Zaqqut, Head of al-Tawfiq Cooperative Society for Fishermen in Gaza stated that "assistance provided by international organizations for fishermen is very little and does not cover the loss incurred to those fishermen as a result of the Israeli practices." He added that "*al-Ta'awon* (Cooperation) funded a one-month job creation program for fishermen in the southern area, with an average salary of US\$ 10 per day, Tamkeen organized lectures for fishermen on the protection of the sea environment, and UNDP provided nets for about 20 fishermen and trained them on how to use them."

As a result of the Israeli practices against Palestinian fishermen, their living conditions have deteriorated and their debts have grown, with many of them have not been able to cover the costs of fishing. Furthermore, international organizations have failed to provide enough assistance for them to overcome these problems.

Israeli Attacks on Palestinian Fishermen in the al-Aqsa Intifada

Israeli attacks on Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip have escalated during the al-Aqsa Intifada. Israeli gunboats regularly chase and harass Palestinian fishing boats. Israeli naval troops often attack and arrest fishermen and force them to sail to the Israeli harbour of Ashdod, where they are interrogated and suffer degrading behaviour. In addition, Israeli naval troops unjustifiably fire live bullets and sound bombs at Palestinian fishing boats, pour hot or waste water on their boats, and obstruct them from going about their work, occasionally forcing the fishermen to stay ashore.

Israeli occupying forces have repeatedly imposed a marine siege on the Gaza Strip during the al-Aqsa Intifada, preventing fishermen from their sole source of income. They have also decreased the area in which Palestinian fishermen are allowed to fish, from 20 nautical miles out to sea, the distance provided for in the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, to 6 nautical miles. These measures have led to a decrease in the fishing production and income of fishermen. As a result of the total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, Palestinian fishermen have not been able to sell fish in the markets of the West Bank, and have been restricted to selling fish at low prices in the Gaza Strip.

PCHR has documented Israeli attacks on Palestinian fishermen since the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada on 29 September 2002. Following are details of such attacks until 31 May 2002:

1) Shooting at Fishermen

⁴ Source: Mohammed Zaqqut, Head of al-Tawfiq Cooperative Society for Fishermen, Gaza.

Israeli action against Palestinian fishermen has not been limited to preventing them from fishing and damaging their fishing equipment, but includes shooting at those fishermen while fishing, in blatant violation of international law.

From the cases mentioned below, it can be inferred that Israeli forces intentionally fire at Palestinian fishermen. During the period under study, 10 Palestinian fishermen were wounded by the Israeli gunfire and five others sustained bruises and injuries as Israeli naval forces sprayed the boat with water.

On 6 December 2000, Israeli occupying forces opened fire on a Palestinian fishing boat, wounding a fisherman. This incident took place at approximately 20:00 when four Palestinian fishing boats were sailing in an area opposite the coast of Rafah, where fishing is permitted. A Palestinian fisherman said that four Israeli gunboats came close to their boats and without warning opened fire on one of the small vessels. A fisherman, Jamil Kamal al-Nada, 18, from al-Mawasi area in Rafah was wounded by live bullets to the right leg and the left thigh from a distance of approximately 100 meters.

At approximately 16:00 on 20 March 2001, Israeli naval troops opened fire on Palestinian boats sailing across the Rafah sea. As a result, Ayman Khalil al-Bardawil, 29, from al-Mawasi area in Rafah, was wounded by a live bullet in the leg. Approximately 50 Palestinian fishing boats were sailing less than 100m away from the Rafah shore, when Israeli soldiers on a military vessel unjustifiably opened fire upon them. Palestinian fishermen took their colleague to shore. He was evacuated to hospital by a civilian car, whose passage was obstructed by Israeli soldiers at Tal Al-Sultan roadblock between Rafah and the Al-Mawasi area for approximately two hours, before it was allowed to travel to hospital. The car arrived at hospital at approximately 18:30.

At approximately 17:30 on 23 July 2001, Israeli occupying forces in a military location west of the "Dogit" settlement, north of Beit Lahia, fired for no apparent reason at a Palestinian fishing boat near the seashore of Beit Lahia, wounding a fisherman, Mohammed Mohammed Zayed, 28, with a live bullet in the left leg. Zayed was about to start fishing, approximately 500m away from the Israeli military location, when he was fired at.

At approximately 06:40, Israeli occupying soldiers in a military location west of the "Dogit" settlement, north of Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, fired without any prior warning at Khalil Mohammed Zayed, 60, from Beit Lahia, seriously wounding him with a live bullet to the chest. According to PCHR's investigation and eyewitness's testimonies, Zayed, a fisherman, was walking on the beach, opposite to the aforementioned military location, when he was fired at for no apparent reason.

On 4 September 2001, Israeli soldiers on a gunboat stopped a fishing boat, owned by Salim Taher Abu al-Sadiq, 76, from al-Shati refugee camp, when it was roughly 5 miles away from the shore of Gaza. Five fishermen were on the boat and Israeli soldiers ordered them to stand at the front of it. Then, they sprayed the boat with large quantities of hot and waste water. According to a testimony by one of the fishermen, they entered the cabin of the boat to have shelter, but Israeli soldiers continued to spray water on them. Windows of the cabin were broken, and the fishermen sustained bruises and injuries from broken glass. Then, the Israeli gunboat left the area and the fishermen went back to the seashore. They were evacuated to Shifa' Hospital in Gaza City. They were:

- 1) Khaled Ahmed Abu 'Amra, 36, from al-Shati refugee camp, injured in the head, the face and the hands;
- 2) Rashad 'Abdel-Raziq Baker, 42, from al-Remal neighbourhood in Gaza City, injured in the left hand;

- 3) Eihab Fayeze Abu al-Sadiq, 14, from al-Shati refugee camp, sustained bruises throughout the body;
- 4) Mohammed Salim al-'Aamoudi, 40, from Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood in Gaza City, sustained bruises all over his body; and Fayeze Salim Abu al-Sadiq, 37, from Al-Shati refugee camp, received severe bruising all over his body.

In his testimony to PCHR, one of those fishermen, said:

"On 4 September 2001, I went fishing with four of my colleagues. We all had required permits. At approximately 09:30, while we were approximately 5 miles away from Gaza seashore, an Israeli gunboat arrived at the area. It poured water over the motor of the boat, which immediately stopped working. Then, it strongly poured water on front part of the boat. Windows of the boat were broken and the fishermen were injured by shrapnel from glass. The Israeli gunboat left the area without offering help to the fishermen, despite my asking the officer to do this. Two hours later, we arrived at Gaza seashore, and from there we were evacuated in an ambulance of the Palestinian Naval Force to hospital."

On 16 September 2001, Israeli naval troops opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats that were fishing less than 3 miles away from the Gaza shore. One of the fishermen, 'Abdul Raziq Baker, 41, was wounded by shrapnel in the back and the limbs, while others were terrified and escaped to the seashore.

In his testimony to PCHR, one of those fishermen said:

"At approximately 20:00 on 16 September 2001, while we were sailing across the sea, approximately 3 miles away from Gaza shore, we were surprised by Israeli naval troops firing at us without any prior warning. Israeli naval troops fired at us for approximately 90 minutes. They also fired flare bombs. We were 5 fishermen on the boat. One of us, Rashad 'Abdul Raziq Baker, was wounded by shrapnel in the back and the limbs, while the boat was damaged. Since that date, we have not gone fishing fearing for our lives from Israeli gunfire."

At approximately 20:00 on 5 February 2002, Israeli naval troops fired for no apparent reason at Hussam Fathi al-Sultan, 25, who was fishing near the coast of Beit Lahia, wounding him with a live bullet in the right thigh.

At approximately 16:00 on 8 April 2002, Israeli naval troops in a gunboat fired at a Palestinian fishing boat that was sailing near Beit Lahia by the north of the Gaza Strip. Two Palestinian fishermen were wounded:

- Lu'ai Joma'a Zayed, 20, from Beit Lahia, wounded by a bullet to the left foot; and
- Ahmed Isma'il Zayed, 18, from Beit Lahia, wounded by a bullet to the right arm.

At approximately 05:45 on 5 May 2002, Israeli occupying forces in a military location west of the "Dogit" settlement, north of Beit Lahia, fired at a Palestinian fishing boat at Beit Lahia seashore, approximately 100m away. Two Palestinian fishermen were wounded:

- 1) Hamdan 'Omar al-Sultan, 32, from Beit Lahia, wounded by a medium calibre bullet to the right thigh; and
- 2) Lu'ai Jom'a Zayed, 18, from Beit Lahia, wounded by a medium calibre bullet also to the right thigh.

2) Arresting Fishermen While Fishing

Israeli naval troops systematically attack Palestinian fishermen, in an apparent attempt to terrify them and force them to give up their jobs. They often chase Palestinian fishing boats and arrest fishermen. Those fishermen are usually held in detention centres inside Israel and are subject to unfair trials that force them to pay excessive fines, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention which prohibits the transfer of persons from the occupied territories to the territory of the occupying power.

During the al-Aqsa Intifada, Israeli aggressive measures against Palestinian fishermen have significantly increased. Israeli forces always claim that fishermen exceed the area where they are allowed to fish, to justify their aggressive measures against them, even though Palestinian fishermen are in fact committed to the space allowed for them.

During the period under study, Israeli naval troops arrested 65 Palestinian fishermen while fishing as shown in the following table:

**Palestinian Fishermen Arrested by Israeli Occupying Forces
29 September 2000 – 31 May 2002**

No.	Name	Age	Date	Notes
1.	Nabil Mahmoud Sa'id Baker	38	15 Dec. 2000	Arrested while fishing
2.	Hassan Khalil al- Najjar	34	15 Feb. 2001	Arrested opposite to Khan Yunis seashore
3.	Sa'id 'Abdullah al- Najjar	25	15 Feb. 2001	Arrested opposite to Khan Yunis seashore
4.	Mohammed Hassan al-Habil	37	15 Feb. 2001	Arrested opposite to Khan Yunis seashore
5.	Khader Khalil al- Najjar	29	15 Feb. 2001	Arrested opposite to Khan Yunis seashore
6.	Mohammed Mohammed al-Najjar	27	15 Feb. 2001	Arrested opposite to Khan Yunis seashore
7.	Isma'il Mohammed al-'Aamoudi	47	7 Mar. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
8.	Ayman Isma'il al- 'Aamoudi	27	7 Mar. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
9.	Hassan Ibrahim al- Habil	27	17 Mar. 2001	Arrested opposite to Beit Lahia seashore
10.	Ahmed Khalil al- Habil	17	17 Mar. 2001	Arrested opposite to Beit Lahia seashore
11.	Ziad 'Abed Miqdad	25	26 Mar. 2001	Israeli soldiers forced him to get out of the sea while he was fishing and detained him in "Rafiah Yam" settlement for two hours
12.	Khalil 'Abed Miqdad	25	26Mar. 2001	Israeli soldiers forced him to get out of the sea while he was fishing and detained him in "Rafiah Yam" settlement for two

				hours
3.	Mazen Hassan Abu Riala		16 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
4.	Ikrami Mahmoud Abu Riala		16 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
5.	Mohammed Zuhair al-'Aamoudi		18 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
6.	'Abdul Rahman Zuhair al-'Aamoudi		18 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
7.	'Aahed Subhi Baker	41	28 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
8.	Mahmoud Subhi Baker	32	28 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
9.	Mohammed Subhi Baker	35	28 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
0.	Mithqal Ghazi Baker	28	28 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
1.	Wisam Ghazi Baker	20	28 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
2.	Suhail Fadhel Baker	35	28 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
3.	Ramadan Subhi Baker	29	28 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
4.	Ramez 'Ezzat Baker	26	28 Apr. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
5.	Jawad Mohammed Al-'Aamoudi	30	12 May 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
6.	'Alaa' Fu'ad al-Habil	24	12 May 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
7.	Mohammed Baker	25	12 May 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
8.	Khaled Ragheb Baker	22	13 May 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
9.	Mohammed Ragheb Baker	31	13 May 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
0.	Eyad Suleiman Abu Riala	32	13 May 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
1.	Ibrahim 'Omar al-Habil	24	23 Aug. 2001	Arrested opposite to Gaza seashore
2.	Eyad Rajab al-Hissi	24	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
3.	Nihad Rajab al-Hissi	18	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
4.	Fares Murad al-Hissi	21	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
5.	Sameh Mahmoud al-Hissi	24	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
6.	'Adnan Sha'ban Abu	40	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing

	Riala		2001	
7.	Mohammed Ahmed Tulba	18	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
8.	Haitham 'Ali al-Habil	22	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
9.	Eihab 'Ali al-Habil	19	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
0.	'Alaa' Kamal Abu Sultan	23	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
1.	Mohammed Mahmoud Baker	25	7 Sept. 2001	Arrested while fishing
2.	Zaki Ibrahim al-Najjar	20	1 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
3.	Haitham 'Ali al-Habil	23	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
4.	Maher Kamal Abu Sultan	30	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
5.	'Alaa' Kamal Abu Sultan	23	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
6.	Sa'id Ahmed Abu al-Khair	35	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
7.	Salem Mohammed Abu Riala	40	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
8.	Muneer Hassan Abu Riala	28	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
9.	Nayef Hassan Abu Riala	45	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
0.	Ziad Ramadan Abu Riala	47	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
1.	Mohammed 'Awadh Mohammed Gannan	20	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
2.	Khaled Suleiman Abu Mousa	23	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
3.	Mohammed Khalil al-Bardawil	31	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
4.	Ayman Mohammed al-Bardawil	32	10 Oct. 2001	Arrested while fishing
5.	'Aadel Sa'id Abu Riala	29	25 Nov. 2001	Arrested while fishing
6.	Tawfiq Sa'id Abu Riala	19	25 Nov. 2001	Arrested while fishing
7.	Khaled Ragheb Baker	22	13 Jan. 2002	Arrested while fishing
8.	Shafiq Ragheb Baker	25	13 Jan. 2002	Arrested while fishing
9.	Ragheb Fares Baker	20	13 Jan. 2002	Arrested while fishing
0.	Mohammed Ghazi	24	13 Jan. 2002	Arrested while fishing

	Baker		2002	
1.	Mohammed Ibrahim al-Qara'an		18 Jan. 2002	Arrested while fishing
2.	Mohammed Mutair Nassar		18 Jan. 2002	Arrested while fishing
3.	Kamel 'Eid Mohammed Abu Hassira	28	6 Feb. 2002	Arrested while fishing
4.	'Aadel 'Eid Mohammed Abu Hassira	18	6 Feb. 2002	Arrested while fishing
5.	Na'im Shehada Ahmed al-'Arrouqi	48	6 Feb. 2002	Arrested while fishing

3) Confiscation of Fishing Licenses and Damaging Fishing Equipment

Israeli naval troops stop and search Palestinian fishing boats in a provocative manner, and often confiscate fishing licenses of fishermen unjustifiably. They also damage nets and confiscate fishing boats, impounding them at Israeli harbours, or even sinking the boats at sea, causing substantial losses for fishermen.

PCHR has documented some cases in which Israeli naval troops confiscated fishing licenses of Palestinian fishermen, damaged fishing equipment or sank boats.

At approximately 04:00 on 18 June 2001, Israeli naval troops stopped one of a number of Palestinian fishing boats that were fishing in the area where fishing is allowed opposite to Rafah seashore. They confiscated fishing licenses of two Palestinian fishermen:

- 1) Mohammed Khalil al-Najjar, 53; and
- 2) 'Abdullah Khalil al-Najjar, 35.

On 21 April 2001, Israeli naval troops sank a boat and a vessel owned by Mahmoud al-'Aassi.

On 22 April 2001, Israeli naval troops attacked a number of Palestinian fishing boats. They confiscated the fishing license of Shafiq Ragheb Baker, a fishing boat owned by Jihad Abu 'Ouda, and sank a vessel owned by 'Othman Abu Riala.

On 26 April 2001, Israeli naval troops sank three Palestinian fishing boats owned by:

- 1) Al-Sayed Abu al-Khair;
- 2) Rashad al-Hissi; and
- 3) Rajab al-Hissi.

On the morning of 12 January 2002, a number of Israeli gunboats and military vehicles seized control of the fishing harbour at Rafah. They confiscated the motors of Palestinian fishing boats and Israeli bulldozers destroyed fishing equipment stored in the harbour.

On the same day, Israeli gunboats destroyed a Palestinian ship and a number of ship maintenance workshops on the Gaza seashore. According to a PCHR investigation, at approximately 02:30, two

Israeli gunboats moved into the fishing harbour in Gaza. Israeli naval troops planted bombs on the right side of a civilian fishing ship of the Palestinian Naval Force. When they withdrew from the area, a heavy explosion occurred and the ship was destroyed. According to an official source of the Palestinian Naval Force, two Israeli combat helicopters were seen flying over the area, apparently to cover the operation. The ship was donated to the Palestinian Authority by Korea in 1994, but Israeli occupying authorities denied its entry into the Gaza Strip until 1999. It was registered as a civilian fishing ship of the Palestinian Naval Force and did not serve any other purposes.

On 18 January 2002, Israeli naval troops arrested two Palestinian fishermen, Mohammed Mutair and Mohammed al-Qara'an, and confiscated their fishing boat. In his testimony to PCHR, Mohammed Mutair said:

“On 18 January 2002, my friend Mohammed al-Qara'an went fishing. At approximately 06:00, we were fishing approximately 5 nautical miles away from the coast, where fishing is allowed, and we had necessary fishing licenses. A number of fishing boats were also near us. Suddenly, an Israeli gunboat arrived and ordered us to leave the area. We told them that we would collect our nets and leave the area. Five minutes later, Israeli naval troops started cutting our nets and firing at our boats. They ordered us to take our clothes off and dive into the sea. My friend Mohammed al-Qara'an dived into the sea and swam towards the Israeli gunboat, which was approximately 15m away from us. He got on the Israeli gunboat, where Israeli naval troops handcuffed and blindfolded him. They ordered me to do the same, but I refused because it was so cold and I am old. The gunboat got closer to me, and Israeli naval troops ordered me to take my clothes off and get on it and I did. Immediately, they handcuffed and blindfolded me and then the gunboat moved. At approximately 12:00, we arrived at the Israeli harbour of Ashdod. During all that period we were without clothes. When we arrived at the harbour, an Israeli doctor checked us and they gave us old clothes and gain handcuffed and blindfolded us. We were taken in a military jeep to an Israeli police station in Erez area, where we were interrogated. We were held in a detention centre in Erez industrial zone. On 24 January 2002, we were released after we had been sentenced to one month arrest of judgement. Our fishing boat is still impounded. Our fishing equipment, clothes and approximately 1300 NIS were in the boat. Israeli naval troops also confiscated our fishing licenses.”

On 6 February 2002, Israeli naval troops arrested three Palestinian fishermen and blocked their fishing boat while fishing in the area where fishing is allowed:

- 1) Kamel Abu Hassira;
- 2) 'Aadel Abu Hassira; and
- 3) Na'im 'Arrouq.

In his testimony to PCHR on this incident, Rami 'Eid Abu Hassira, a fisherman, said:

“My four bothers, Na'im 'Arrouq and I were on our fishing boat. At approximately 07:30, an Israeli gunboat stopped us while we were preparing nets. It moved around our boats for half an hour. Then, Israeli naval troops ordered us to turn the motor of the boat off. They asked for our fishing licenses. Three hours later, they ordered Kamel Abu Hassira, 'Aadel Abu Hassira and Na'im 'Arrouq to take their clothes off and get onto the gunboat, where they blindfolded them. Soon, three other Israeli gunboats arrived and moved around our boat. Israeli naval troops ordered us to untie the rope that connected our boat with a subordinate small boat and took the small boat.”

4) Imposing a Marine Siege

Since the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Israeli forces have repeatedly imposed a total marine siege on the Gaza Strip, preventing Palestinian fishermen from working. They have also decreased the area where fishing is allowed from 20 nautical miles as provided for in the Israeli-Palestinian agreements to 6 nautical miles, although they claimed that they decreased it to 10 nautical miles. Israeli occupying

forces have also created two marine security zones, each is 2 square miles, one in Rafah near the Palestinian-Egyptian border in the southern Gaza Strip and the other in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. Palestinian fishermen are prevented from getting close to those two zones, so the area where fishing is permitted has further decreased.

Although Palestinian fishermen do not exceed the area where fishing is allowed, Israeli naval troops often attack them in an attempt to force them to give up their jobs. They chase fishing boats, spray them with water cannons and fire at them to terrify fishermen.

Israeli naval troops often escalate their aggressive measures against fishermen in fishing seasons, to cause them maximum losses. It seems that this part of the Israeli policies aimed at tightening the grab on the Palestinian people in all aspects of life.

As a result of the Israeli measures against Palestinian fishermen, hundreds of families have joined those living on charity assistance, as many fishermen have given up their jobs, while others have been forced to face the difficulties imposed by the Israeli government.

5) Israeli Aggressive Measures against Palestinian Fishermen in al-Mawasi Areas

Palestinian fishermen in the al-Mawasi area in Rafah and Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, like other residents of the area have been subjected to an Israeli racist policy aimed at bringing about the 'voluntary' evacuation of the area of its Palestinian residents, in order to pave the way for its annexation to neighbouring Israeli settlements. Since the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Israeli occupying forces have repeatedly closed fishing areas in al-Mawasi, depriving Palestinian fishermen of their right to work. Israeli naval forces have chased and fired at the fishermen even though they did not exceed the permitted fishing area.

Israeli forces prevent Palestinian fishermen living outside al-Mawasi area from crossing military checkpoints erected at entrances of the area towards the seas, in violation of their rights to work and free movement.

Israeli forces located at military checkpoints established at the entrances of the al-Mawasi area habitually prevent cars from entering the area to transport fish, forcing fishermen to carry their fish across the checkpoints on foot. At these checkpoints, they are subjected to long waits and humiliating checks every time they wish to cross. Fishermen also face the same obstacles when they want to bring fishing equipment to the area. In addition, Israeli occupying forces have repeatedly imposed curfews on the area, preventing fishermen from getting to the sea.

Legal Pursuit of Israeli Attacks on Palestinian Fishermen

PCHR follows up Israeli attacks on Palestinian fishermen, and provides free legal assistance for these fishermen. PCHR documents such attacks and brings cases before court demanding compensation for the fishermen, as part of the program of legal assistance and consultation provided by PCHR's legal unit. PCHR follow up all kinds of Israeli attacks against Palestinian fishermen and their property, both on the sea and in harbour.

Pursuit of Israeli attacks against Palestinian fishermen and their property varies depending on the kind of attack. Some complaints are brought to the attention of the legal advisor of the Israeli defence ministry, while other cases are brought before Israeli courts, especially when fishermen are arrested by Israeli naval troops. PCHR takes necessary steps to locate the place of detention of fishermen and inform their families. It also represents them before Israeli courts. PCHR continues to submit complaints to the Israeli defence ministry in cases of destruction of fishing boats and equipment. Those complaints are followed up until boats and equipment are released.

Conclusion

While the international community remains completely silent on the matter, Israeli occupying forces have perpetrated grave breaches against Palestinian civilians and their property disregarding all international human rights instruments and the international law. Since the beginning of al-Aqsa Intifada, Israeli occupying forces have perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Palestinian people who struggle for their legitimate rights to freedom and self-determination.

As part of the comprehensive war they have waged against the Palestinian people, Israeli occupying forces have attacked Palestinian fishermen. They have chased and fired at Palestinian fishing boats, arrested fishermen, damaged fishing equipment and imposed excessive fines on them. Many Palestinian fishermen have given up their jobs as a result of the Israeli harassment. Fishing has become a risk for all fishermen due to these Israeli measures. More than 2500 Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip and thousands working in relevant jobs have been subjected to large losses due to Israeli behaviour.

PCHR considers such Israeli aggressive measures against Palestinian fishermen as part of the grave breaches perpetrated by Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people. The gross Israeli violations of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories prove Israel's disregard for the international humanitarian law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. PCHR calls for:

Providing immediate international protection for the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Meeting the obligations of the High Contracting Parties under the Fourth Geneva Convention and taking concrete steps to ensure Israel's respect for the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The International Labor Organization's intervention to pressurise Israel to stop its attacks on Palestinian fishermen and allow them to work freely and safely.