

Israel's Gross Violations of Human Rights in the Face of COVID-19

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While the world is collectively dealing with the rampant spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), Israel has continued its systemic and widespread campaign of violating the rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), across both the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Following the call by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, António Guterres, for a global ceasefire “to allow humanitarians to reach populations that are most vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19”¹, Israel has *inter alia*; carried out the wilful killings of **Mohammed Abdul Karim Ghasib Hamayel, 15**, and **Sufyan Nawwaf Abd al-Haleem Khawaja, 30**, withholding the bodies of deceased as measures of collective punishment; continued military raids into the West Bank; conducted widespread arrests and administrative detentions; allowed for serious spikes in settler violence; continued its draconian closure of the Gaza Strip and denial to Palestinian's of adequate healthcare.

As such, following the closure of Bethlehem, as part of the State of Emergency declared by the Palestinian Authority (PA) on 5 March 2020,² Al-Haq continued to monitor and document human rights violations by both the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF), and Israeli settlers, unlawfully residing in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In cases involving violence and threats from settlers, directed towards Palestinians, the IOF failed to intervene to prevent the unlawful behaviour, instead providing support and protection for settlers, ensuring that such individuals are not held to account, and consolidating the existing regime of impunity.

The following cases, monitored and documented by Al-Haq, illustrate that the COVID-19 outbreak has not served as a barrier or challenge to continued Israeli violence:

I. Wilful Killings by Israeli Occupying Forces in the West Bank

1. The Killing of Mohammed Abdul Karim Ghasib Hamayel, 15

On 11 March 2020, the IOF shot **Mohammed Abdul Karim Ghasib Hamayel, 15** in the head, after storming Jabal al-Arma, also known as al-Arma Mountain, located east of the town of Beita, southeast of Nablus. Since 8:30 pm on 10 March 2020, and following settlers' calls to storm Jabal al-Arma, some of the residents of Beita called on all of the residents of their village and neighbouring villages to go to Jabal al-Arma to protect it from the settlers. Hundreds of residents responded to this call, travelling to and sleeping in Jabal al-Arma. The following day, at approximately 5:00 am, the IOF, supported by 40 military vehicles and two bulldozers, stormed Jabal al-Arma. The IOF fired on the Palestinian civilians with live

¹ UN, COVID-19: UN chief calls for global ceasefire to focus on ‘the true fight of our lives’ (23 March 2020), available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059972>.

² Al Jazeera, ‘Bethlehem under lockdown after coronavirus cases confirmed’ (7 March 2020), available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/bethlehem-lockdown-coronavirus-cases-confirmed-200307054939115.html>; CNN, ‘Israel, Palestinians impose closure of Bethlehem’ (5 March 2020), available at: https://edition.cnn.com/asia/live-news/coronavirus-outbreak-03-05-20-intl-hnk/h_bc84daf70a1164922d9701604a9bcb3c.

ammunition, rubber-coated steel bullets, and tear gas, shooting Mohammed with a bullet which targeted his left ear and exited from the right side of his head. At approximately 11:37 am of the same day, Mohammad was pronounced dead in Nablus's Rafidia Governmental Hospital.³



Mohammed Abdul Karim Ghasib Hamayel, killed by the IOF on 11 March 2020.

Salem Mustafa Hamdan Hamayel, a resident of Beita village and a participant of the organized sit-down at Jabal al-Arma, witnessed the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of forces by the IOF, and the killing of Mohammad. In his affidavit to Al-Haq, Salem recounted the following:

“I was surprised to see a group of soldiers hiding inside the mountain, as they were no more than 50 meters away from the Palestinian youth. As soon as they showed themselves, they fired live bullets indiscriminately, and the 15-year-old Mohammad Abdul Karim Ghasib Hamayel was wounded with a live bullet in the head and fell to the ground right in front of me. I was only about 10 meters away from him, so I immediately rushed to him, to try to carry him, the Israeli soldiers shot again, forcing me and the young people, who also were trying to help, to hide from the bullets [rather than saving Mohammad].”⁴

³ Mondoweiss, ‘Palestinian teen killed during village’s attempt to defend mountain from Israeli settlers’ (11 March 2020), available at: <https://mondoweiss.net/2020/03/palestinian-teen-killed-during-villages-attempt-to-defend-mountain-from-israeli-settlers/>.

⁴ Al-Haq Affidavit 90A/2020, given by Salem Mustafa Hamdan Hamayel, 23, a resident of Beita village in Nablus Governorate, on 12 March 2020.



Jabal al-Arma, close to where Mohammad was shot and killed (11 March 2020)

photo (C) Al-Haq 2020

According to Al-Haq’s documentation, the IOF’s indiscriminate use of force resulted in the inhalation of tear gas by dozens of Palestinians, the injury of three Palestinians, including Mohammad, with live ammunition, and the injury of eleven Palestinians with rubber-coated metal bullets, including journalist Baker Mohammad Sabah Mamdouh Abdul Haq, 30 who was covering the situation for Palestine TV. In his affidavit to Al-Haq, Baker recalled:

“On 11 March 2020, at about 5 am, and while I was present in front of the Palestinian Red Crescent tent, the occupying forces, supported by forty Israeli military vehicles and two Israeli military bulldozers, raided Jabal al-Arma from six areas. The Israeli soldiers got out of the vehicles and stormed the mountain and violent clashes between the residents and the Israeli soldiers erupted. The soldiers fired live bullets and rubber-coated metal bullets and tear gas canisters towards everyone who was on the mountain. Everyone who was at the place confronted them. During filming the raid, I watched defenceless citizens getting injured, including a child who was shot in the head. The soldiers prevented anyone, including ambulance crew, from approaching him. [The injured child] was kept [bleeding] on the ground for about half an hour without any assistance... The Israeli soldiers continued to repress the citizens and forcing them to leave the mountain, while the child was still lying on the ground. I was shot by a rubber-coated metal bullet in my left leg, while covering the event. I sat down when I was hit, and the soldiers prevented the ambulance crews from approaching me. When I sat down, the soldiers approached and assaulted me by pushing me and cursing and spitting in my face, forcing me to leave the area.”⁵

2. The killing of Sufyan Nawwaf Abd al-Haleem Khawaja, 30

Israel’s employment of excessive use of force has further resulted in the killing of **Sufyan Nawwaf Abd al-Haleem Khawaja**, 30 resident of Ni’lin village, west of Ramallah. On 22 March 2020, the Palestinian Authority (PA) imposed a curfew on Palestinian residents in the

⁵ Al-Haq Affidavit 89A/2020, given by Baker Mohammad Sabah Mamdouh Abdul Haq, 30, a resident of Nablus city, on 11 March 2020.

occupied West Bank, as a way to fight and limit the spread of COVID-19. According to Sufyan's father, "Sufyan went out to buy some basic supplies after the Palestinian government announced the imposition of the curfew."⁶

On 22 March 2020, the IOF shot Sufian and his cousin Mahmoud Bader Abd al-Haleem Khawaja (20), as they were driving their vehicle back to Ni'lin, instantly killing Sufian and injuring Mahmoud.⁷ Mahmoud fled the scene, and was later taken by residents of Ni'lin to Ramallah Governmental Hospital for medical treatment. Sufian was shot in the head and died immediately. The IOF prevented a Palestinian ambulance from taking Sufian's body to the hospital, and at the time of writing, Israel continues to withhold Sufian's body from his family as part of its on-going policy measures of collective punishment.⁸

II. Settler Violence

1. Settler Attack on Tareq Hussein Mahmoud Rafa'ai, 38 and his Two Children

On 10 March 2020, at approximately 3 pm, Tareq Hussein Mahmoud Rafa'ai, 38 of Turmus'ayya, along with his two children, Adam and Noah, two-years-and-a half-old twins, and his father-in-law Mousa Abu Awwad, 65, were attacked by a group of settlers. In his affidavit to Al-Haq, Tareq described the following:

My father-in-law, Mousa Abu Awwad, 65, and I took the children for a ride in his car, as a way to entertain the children, to al-Sahel area, east of Turmus'ayya, especially that the weather was sunny and the area there is filled with olive trees and plants. We arrived to the end of the paved road and [decided] to go back to the village. On our way back, but still away from the village, we were surprised by three motorcycles following us. I was driving, and I have noticed them because they have beeped at us several times. I thought that they were beeping because the drivers want me to take the right lane so that they can pass us, so I took the right lane and they passed us, but then they stopped in front of our car, intercepting our way. At that time, it caught my attention that the motorcycles were big, and they were the kind used for driving in mountains.

The three drivers of the motorcycles got off and approached us. When they did, I realized that they were settlers, as two of them had long sideburns. The first was blonde, the second had ginger hair, and the third had wheat-ish coloured skin, and they had tattoos on their faces. The third one had a tattoo of a crucified skull [a sign of danger]. They approached the car angry expressions were obvious on their faces. They started shouting in Hebrew, and I understood some of what they were shouting like 'what are you doing here?' and 'this is not your land.' They then started taking pictures of the car using their phones, and the kids were on our laps as they were asleep. One settler came very close to the car and filmed us while the kids were on our laps.

⁶ Shatha Hammad, "We lost him': West Bank village in shock as Israeli army kills Palestinian" (23 March 2020), Middle East Eye

⁷ Wafa, "Palestinian killed by Israeli soldiers in West Bank village" (23 March 2020), available at:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=589DKMa115477143243a589DKM>

⁸ *Ibid.*

The ginger settler, noting that he has big body and muscles, pulled my hand out of the car and forced me to put my finger on the iPhone's screen that he was carrying, and I did not understand why he did that... Then one of the settlers asked for our ID cards, which we refused to do. Then a settler, who was standing at the side of the window where my father-in-law was sitting, pulled his ID card from his shirt pocket, then went to the back of the car and took pictures of the ID card on his phone. My two children then woke up, and started crying as they were terrified of what they saw, and the screaming of the settlers. My father-in-law, while carrying my son Adam in his arms, got out of the car, to retrieve his ID card from the settler. The three settlers began attacking him, as they surrounded him, and started pushing, yelling and cursing at him.

I put my son Noah in the back seat of the car, and then got off the car, as I was afraid for my father-in-law, especially that he is 65 years old and has diabetes and high blood pressure, and for my son Adam, who was in my father-in-law's hands. At that moment, I saw the ginger settler taking Adam from his grandfather's arms. Adam was crying, and I was terrified because I remembered what the settlers did to Ali Dawabsha and Muhammad Abu Khdeir ... The settler was holding Adam from his feet, and so we pulled Adam from his hands, until we successfully managed to have Adam back... ”⁹

Before Tareq and his family were able to escape the scene, one of the settlers broke the back window car, as he also attempted to grab Tareq's son, Noah, who was sitting in the back seat.¹⁰ After Tareq and his family got back safely to their house, they contacted the Palestinian Liaison Office and described the attack to them. He also shared the incident on his Facebook page. Almost three hours after that, an Israeli officer contacted him, asked Tareq about the details of the incident, and asked him to come to the Israeli police station known as “Benjamin,” which is located in Mikhmas area, east of Ramallah, in order to identify the suspects. The Israeli officer further told him that they will open an investigation. Tareq, however, did not go, as he preferred to stay home and away from that area, due to the spread of COVID-19 in Rami Levy Mall, which is close to the police station.¹¹ As of the time of taking the affidavit, the Israeli police did not follow up with Tareq again.

2. Yitzhar Settler Attacks

On 11 March 2020, at approximately 11:45 am, Israeli settlers belonging to “Paying the Price” group, attacked Palestinian properties, close to Yitzhar roundabout, adjacent to Yitzhar illegal settlement, which was established on the lands of Huwwara, ‘Ourif, and 'Aynabous villages, southeast of Nablus. Israeli settlers threw stones at the house of Mu'taz Sadiq Qasrawi, smashing some of its windows. They also smashed the windows of three cars that were parked in the yard of Mohammed Abdel Aziz Ahmed Harzallah's house, which is located almost 200 meters away from the Yitzhar roundabout.

Similarly, on 12 March 2020, a group of Israeli settlers residing in Yitzhar settlement stormed the village of 'Aynabous, south of Nablus, and threw stones at the houses of Awwad Ameen

⁹ Al-Haq Affidavit 87A/2020, given by Tareq Hussein Mahmoud Rafa'ai, 53, a resident of Turmus'ayya village in Ramallah Governorate, on 14 March 2020 (hereafter ‘Affidavit No. 87A/2020 of 14 March 2020’).

¹⁰ Affidavit No. 87A/2020 of 14 March 2020.

¹¹ Affidavit No. 87A/2020 of 14 March 2020.

Hamad and Shakri al-Shqour, shattering some of the windows. During the same raid, they also smashed Hani Nabil's car.

Al-Haq also monitored an attack by Israeli settlers, assisted and protected by the IOF, on a number of shepherds in Khirbet Jab'et near the village of al-Mghayyer, east of Ramallah on 14 March 2020. The settlers beat the shepherds and attempted to steal their livestock.

3. Settlers Attack Ali Mustafa Mohammad Zu'bi, 55

On 20 March 2020, at approximately 1:30 pm, five Israeli settlers attacked, hit and threw stones at Ali Mustafa Mohammad Zu'bi, 55 a resident of Funduqoumiyya village, south of Jenin. Ali, who is a farmer, owns a 550-square-meter land located between Funduqoumiyya and Homesh settlement, which was evacuated after a decision by the Israeli authorities in 2005. That said, Israeli settlers are almost always present in that area. Ali reached to his land using his mule, as he wanted to collect green thyme. While he was collecting green thyme, he was surprised by a middle sized stone hitting his back, so he looked up and towards that direction and he saw three Israeli settlers, wearing civilian clothes and black masks covering their faces. In his affidavit to Al-Haq, Ali recalled the following:

“They then started screaming in Hebrew that I understand well. Then they started approaching me and continued throwing stones. Despite feeling severe pain in my back, I started running, to escape them. I, however, was unable to do so, especially that the land is a rough terrain, so I fell to the ground. I was able to run about 250 meters, but the settlers caught up, pushed me to the ground and started hitting me with their hands and feet all over my body. This coincided with the arrival of two other settlers, who were also dressed as the [previous] three settlers. They also started beating me and one of them was holding a pistol in his hand. Whenever I tried to get up and run, they would push me to the ground, beat me up, and verbally assault me. The beating lasted for 10-15 minutes, according to my estimation, during which I received kicks all over my body and all I was able to do was to protect my face and head with my hands. The armed settler then raised his gun towards me, as if he planned to shoot and kill me, but one of the settlers told him not to shoot in Hebrew. Just then, I was able to get up and run towards the nearby houses. The settlers chased me, but when I got close to the houses, they went back towards the settlement.”¹²

Following the attack, Ali went back to his land to look for his mule. Nevertheless, he was unable to find him, despite the fact that the mule was tied.¹³ He then submitted an official complaint with the Palestinian Liaison Office against the five settlers that attacked him. On 25 March 2020, and approximately 6:30 pm, Ali went back again to his land to look for his mule, and he was assaulted again by five Israeli settlers.

III. Israel Occupying Forces Raid and Arbitrary Detain Palestinians in the West Bank

On 8 March 2020, at approximately 7:30 am, the IOF raided al-Zahra neighbourhood in the town of Qabatiya, located south of Jenin. The raid was met with residents of the village

¹² Al-Haq Affidavit 96A/2020, given by Ali Mustafa Mohammad Zu'bi, 55, a resident of Funduqoumiyya village in Jenin Governorate, on 21 March 2020 (hereafter 'Affidavit No. 96A/2020 of 21 March 2020').

¹³ Affidavit No. 96A/2020 of 21 March 2020.

throwing stones at the three intruding Israeli military jeeps. The IOF responded by firing sound bombs and tear gas canisters, resulting in the respiratory impairment of several Palestinians.

On 9 March 2020, Al-Haq monitored a total of 11 arrests by the IOF. Four of these took place at al-‘Arroub camp, located north of Hebron, and concerned Abdel Karim Khaled Abu Sal (23), Amr Khaled al-Badawi, Majid Tayseer Al-Titi (23), and Ahmed Ezzat Al-Sabatin, after raiding their houses. In Jenin, meanwhile, the IOF detained Nidal Fayeze Abu al-Teen, his son Baha Nidal Abu al-Teen, and Mohammad Jamal Al-Hourani. Finally, in Toulkarem, the IOF arrested Munjid Mohammad Radwan and Khaled Ahmed Abd Rabbo, both residents of Toulkarem camp, as well as Yahya Jamal Sawey and Iyad Naser, residents of Toulkarem city.

On 10 March 2020, Al-Haq monitored 17 arrests throughout the occupied West Bank. This included eight at once, as the IOF raided houses at 2:00 am in Beita, southeast of Nablus, wherein the IOF arrested: Munawar Abdul Rahman Bani Shamsa, 55, Raed Abdul Rahim Hassan Daoud, 50, Hussein Daoud Bani Shamsa, 22, his brother Ibrahim, 26, Jihad Fayeze Hamayel, 24, his brother Fayeze, 22, Saif Deif Allah Hamayel, 22, and Abdul Salam Rushdi Darwish Mualla, 50, who is a university professor. Further, and around 2:30 am of the same day, the IOF stormed the village of ‘Awarta, southeast of Nablus, and arrested Abd Al-Salam Mohammad Yusif Awwad, 48, who is an expert on colonial affairs, from his family’s house. Around the same time, the IOF, in Kufr Thulth, east of Qalqiliya, arrested Ali Rafeeq Mohammad Shawahaneh, 40. Later, and at 3:00 am, in the village of Osarin, southeast of Nablus, Samer Hamdi Nayef Mufleh, 25 was arrested.

On 11 March 2020, at approximately 4 am, the IOF raided the house of Yousif Naser Hasan Salah, 19, who lives with his parents in al-Seibat neighbourhood in the old city of Jenin. Regarding the arbitrary arrest of his son, Naser Hasan Abd al-Fatah Salah, 53 recounted:

“I heard movement sounds at the door of the house. The door was not locked, so anyone could have opened it, but I was surprised that anyone would open the door. When I heard the door opening, I shouted ‘who is it?’ and then I saw about 15 Israeli soldiers who were wearing full military uniforms, putting their military helmets on their heads, wearing medical masks on their faces, and medical gloves on their hands. The scene was terrifying and frightening. One of the soldiers answered in Arabic ‘the Israeli Defence Forces.’ As you can see, I use wheelchair and I cannot walk. And at that point, I was in the living room, on my bed, while the rest of the family were in their bedrooms, which are located on the second floor of the house. We have an inside staircase which leads to the bedrooms. One of the soldiers asked me about the whereabouts of my son Yousif Naser Salah, and I told him that he was in his bedroom upstairs. As soon as I said that, 7 or 8 soldiers started going up to the upper floor, while the rest of the soldiers searched the first floor, and one soldier kept an eye on me. After about twenty minutes, the soldiers came down from the second floor with my son Yousif Salah. I saw the soldiers putting a medical mask on my son’s face and handcuffing his hands to the back with a plastic strap. Just then, one of the soldiers said that they will arrest my son, without explaining the justifications or reasons for the arrest... Now [at the time of taking the affidavit], my son is held in Megiddo Prison inside the Green Line, according to what the Palestinian Prisoner Society in

*Jenin have told me. The Palestinian Prisoner Society also informed me that my son had been presented before the Salem Military Court, west of Jenin, on 15 March 2020. [The Court] had extended his detention. At the end of my statement, I want to indicate that my son suffers from a mental illness, and was receiving mental treatment in Jenin's Health Directorate. Also, my son Sa'ad Naser Hasan Salah, 21 was shot and killed by the Israeli soldiers during one of their raids on Jenin Camp on 12 July 2017."*¹⁴

On 11 March 2020, at approximately 12:30 am, Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian citizens' cars as they crossed the main Huwwara Street, southeast of Nablus. A vehicle, with Israeli registration plate stopped at the roundabout at Huwwara Street. Three settlers got off, and attacked passing Palestinian vehicles with sticks. The settlers further attacked Salah Wael Lutfi Khamous (23) and Wa'ad Ghazi Dawoud Shihadeh (23), who tried to confront them, and smashed the back window of their car. The two young men fled towards Huwwara checkpoint, the western entrance of Nablus, and filed a complaint with the Israeli police. Salah had bruises in the back, from the attack and Wa'ad, who was driving the car, had bruises to his right shoulder. Later, and after submitting the complaint, they both went to Rafidia Governmental Hospital in Nablus for treatment. The following day, the IOF raided Huwwara town, south of Nablus city, and arrested Salah and Wa'ad from their houses.

On 14 March 2020, at around 8:00 pm, the IOF announced the arrest of Anas Mufid Mohammad Jaber, as he was close to the gate of the Annexation Wall, west of Baqa al-Sharqiyya, located north of the city of Toulkarem.

On 17 March 2020, the IOF conducted several raids, arresting four Palestinians. Mujahed Dirar Mohammad Awwad, 30, a resident of 'Awarta, southeast of Nablus, Nibal Ali Qara'an, 18 and Ra'fat Khaled al-Dweiri, 25 from Qalqiliya, Sameh Barakat Farhan, 20, a resident of Beita, southeast of Nablus were arrested that day.

The following day, the IOF arrested nine Palestinians after raiding different areas throughout the West Bank. At approximately 12:30 am, Hakam Abu Hadid and Imad Nuseibeh were arrested from their houses in al-'Oja village, north of Jericho city. Adham Abu 'Aqroub, Ali Jaber, 'Alaa al-Ghazawi, Nour al-Sarsour, Mohammad Barhan, and Imad al-Sheik were arrested by the IOF, after raiding their houses in Ramallah. Similarly, the IOF raided the house of Ayham Abdallah Abu Salah, which is located in 'Orabe village, south of Jenin, and arrested him.

On 19 March 2020, Israel continued its practice of arbitrary arrests, as the IOF arrested Mohammad Abd al-Hai Mahmoud Abu Dawoud, 19 from Hebron city. Further, and around 10:50 pm of the same night, the IOF raided Qalqiliya city, and arrested Khalil Majdi Abu Samra. Also on that day, the IOF raided al-Dheisha refugee camp, south of Bethlehem. During the raid, the IOF searched and ransacked several homes and arrested Mustafa Hasanat, Ramez al-Laham, and Yazan al-Bala'wi. Notably, Bethlehem was under lockdown at the time in line with previous decision by the PA.

On 20 March 2020, Palestinians protested the closure of the entrance of Kufr Qaddoum village, east of Qalqiliya. At approximately 12:40 pm, the IOF, located near the eastern

¹⁴ Al-Haq Affidavit 94A/2020, given by Naser Hasan Abd al-Fatah Salah, 53, a resident of al-Seibat neighbourhood in Jenin Governorate, on 19 March 2020.

closed entrance of the village, fired rubber-coated metal bullets, sound bombs, and tear gas canisters at the demonstrators, on the pretext that they threw stones. Consequently, Muayyad Shteivi, 63 was hit with rubber-coated metal bullet in the leg, and he was treated in the field by the Palestinian Red Crescent staff. A number of other protesters further suffered tear gas inhalation. Similarly, at approximately 4:30 pm, the IOF, positioned in the vicinity of Eyal checkpoint, north of Qalqiliya, fired rubber-coated metal bullets, sound bombs and tear gas canisters towards the protesting citizens, on the pretext that they were throwing stones. This act resulted in the injury of the child Ahmad Hasan Salmi, 14, who was transferred to Darwish Nazzal Governmental Hospital for treatment. At approximately 11:20 pm of the same day, the IOF raided Falama village, northeast of Qalqiliya. The IOF further stormed multiple Palestinian houses, conducted searches and tampered with their contents. Before their withdrawal, the IOF arrested five citizens: Ahmad Talib Abu Thaher, Mohammad Ibrahim Abu Thaher, Anas Ghassan Jamil Abu Thaher, Ahmad Hiyad Abu Thaher, and Mohammad Rafa't Abu Thaher.

On 21 March 2020, Palestinians continued their demonstration against the closure of Kufr Qaddoum village, east of Qalqiliya. At approximately 3:45 pm, the IOF, positioned near the eastern closed entrance of Kufr Qaddoum, fired rubber-coated metal bullets, sound bombs, and tear gas canisters towards the protesting citizens, for allegedly throwing stones. Yousef Abdul Fattah Taha, 16 was injured, along with dozens of citizens, who suffered gas inhalation.

IV. Unlawful Requisitions and Demolitions

On 26 March 2020, at approximately 9 am, the IOF raided Khirbet Ibziq in the northern Jordan Valley, and confiscated 8 unconstructed tents, sun cells, and 6 spray pumps, and building bricks which were intended for the construction of a mosque, health clinic, and village council. They further demolished and confiscated a mobile caravan used by the village council, claiming that the area is a closed military area, and thereby, building in that area is not allowed.

V. Israeli Human Rights Violations in the Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip remains occupied territory, with Israeli acting as Occupying Power, having rendered Gaza to be “a sealed off, imprisoned and occupied territory”.¹⁵ Current Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the OPT, Professor Michael Lynk, has noted that COVID-19 poses a particular threat to the Gaza Strip, due to a collapsing healthcare system, a low supply of essential drugs, a lack of clean and safe water,¹⁶ dense and unsafe population density and conditions, and the rising issue of malnutrition; all of these issues

¹⁵ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967* (29 January 2007) UN Doc A/HRC/4/17, para 6.

¹⁶ See Al-Haq, *On World Water Day, Al-Haq Recalls Israeli Water-Apartheid Amidst a Global Pandemic* (23 March 2020), available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/16625.html>.

having been imposed by the closure of the Strip by Israel.¹⁷ Worryingly, Gaza has recently confirmed nine cases of the virus, as of the time of writing.¹⁸

1. Indiscriminate Targeting of Civilians

Israel, as the main duty bearer, has failed to uphold its obligation to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the occupied Palestinian population.¹⁹ Rather, Al-Haq monitored numerous human rights violations perpetrated by the IOF since the beginning of the crisis. Amongst these, on 8 March 2020, at approximately 8:00 am, IOF soldiers were reported to have fired live ammunition and tear gas canisters towards civilian agricultural lands located to the east of the town of al-Fukhari, east of Khan Younes. Similarly, and after about 30 minutes, civilian agricultural lands to the east of the al-Qarara village, east of Khan Younes, were also targeted by the IOF. No injuries were reported in both incidents.

On 9 March 2020, at approximately 8:30 am, the IOF, located inside the fence, targeted shepherds with live bullets and tear gas canisters, east of al-Maghazi camp, which is located in the central Gaza Strip. This shooting continued intermittently until the evening, and no injuries were reported. Similarly, on 10 March 2020, at approximately 9:00 am, the IOF, positioned behind the fence, opened fire towards civilian agricultural lands east of the town of 'Abasan al-Kabira, located east of Khan Younes. No injuries were reported.

2. Attacks on Fishermen

On 22 March 2020, at about 4:10 am, Israeli warships, stationed in the sea opposite of northwest of Beit Lahia, and western al-Sudaniya area, west of Jabaliya, in the northern Gaza Strip, chased and attacked fishermen's boats, which were located about 2-3 nautical miles (nm) from the shore. Israeli warships fired at the fishermen's boats, causing damage to the fishing nets of a number of fishermen. This prompted the fishermen to flee the area rather than completing their work, without any injuries being reported.

On 25 March 2020, at approximately 8:50 am, Israeli warships attacked Palestinian fishermen yet again in the same week. Israeli warships, stationed in the sea opposite of al-Waha area, northwest of the town of Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, chased and attacked the boats of Palestinian fishermen, which were located about two (nm) distance from the shore. The Israeli attack raised fear and panic among the fishermen, who were then forced to flee the area and stop fishing, without any injuries reported.

¹⁷ UN, COVID-19: Israel has 'legal duty' to ensure that Palestinians in OPT receive essential health services – UN expert (19 March 2020), available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25728&LangID=E>.

¹⁸ Al Jazeera, "'Catastrophe': Fears over outbreak of coronavirus in Gaza" (26 March 2020), available at:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/fears-outbreak-coronavirus-gaza-200326111450748.html>; Times of Israel, 'Seven new cases of coronavirus emerge in Gaza Strip, bringing total to nine' (26 March 2020), available at:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/seven-new-cases-of-coronavirus-emerge-in-gaza-strip-brining-total-to-nine/>.

¹⁹ Article 43 of The Hague Regulations (1907)