



DEPRIVED A VOICE:

An Investigation into Shrinking Space in Area C



AL-HAQ



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Abbreviations and Terms

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS): “A Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity.

Israel is occupying and colonising Palestinian land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

BDS is now a vibrant global movement made up of unions, academic associations, churches and grassroots movements across the world. Since its launch in 2005, BDS is having a major impact and is effectively challenging international support for Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.”¹

Dunum: A unit of land equal to 1,000 square metres. Land in Palestine has been measured in dunums since the British Mandate era.

Human Rights Defenders (HRD): For the purposes of this report, Al-Haq will follow the Amnesty International definition of HRD.

“In line with the 1998 HRDs Declaration and other international standards, Amnesty International considers a HRD to be someone who, individually or in association with others, acts to defend and/or promote human rights at the local, national, regional or international levels, without resorting to or advocating hatred, discrimination or violence.

HRDs come from every walk of life; they may be journalists, lawyers, health professionals, teachers, trade unionists, whistle-blowers, farmers and victims or relatives of victims of human rights violations and abuses. Their human rights defence work may be conducted as part of their professional role, or be undertaken voluntarily or on an unpaid basis.”²

Israeli Civil Administration (ICA): The body responsible for the implementation of Israel’s military administration of the West Bank. It is part of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), which is a unit in the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

¹ BDS Movement, “What is BDS – Overview”, available at <<https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>>

² Amnesty International, “Human Rights Defenders Under Threat – A Shrinking Space for Civil Society”, (16 May 2017) 6, available at: <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/6011/2017/en/>>

Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT): Refers to the territory occupied by Israel since June 1967, comprised of two non-contiguous areas, considered as one territorial unit: the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Outpost: A settlement constructed in the West Bank without official authorisation from the Israeli government, but with the support and assistance of government ministries.

Settlement Enterprise: The residential communities, industrial zones and agricultural areas illegally established in the OPT and, integrally, the activities that help to sustain, promote and expand the settlements. These activities include settlement related infrastructure (including bypass roads and checkpoints), the Annexation Wall, the bifurcated Israeli legal regime applied in the OPT, settler violence and economic activities in agriculture, manufacturing, service provision and other commercial endeavours provided by or for settlers. Moreover, policies of population transfer of Israeli settlers into the OPT and the forcible transfer of the Palestinian population within and outside the OPT are central to the establishment and maintenance of such an enterprise. Settlements and the settlement enterprise are illegal under international law.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Shrinking Space Worldwide

Recalling that “the United Nations has stated on many occasions that the 53-year-old Israeli occupation is the source of profound human rights violations against the Palestinian people”, a June 2020 joint statement on behalf of 47 of the UN’s independent Special Procedures mandates condemned Israel’s plans to declare further of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) subject to formal annexation.³ Among the myriad violations of Palestinian human rights highlighted, the statement emphasized how “Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders, who peacefully bring public attention to these violations, are slandered, criminalised or labelled as terrorists.”⁴

The former United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mr. Michel Forst, provides a very broad definition of who is categorized as a human rights defender outlining:

“human rights defenders are those who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights, nationally and internationally, in a peaceful manner. They are members of civil society organizations, journalists, bloggers, whistle-blowers as well as political activists who advocate for the right to a safe and healthy environment. They do not need to belong to any registered organization to be a human rights defender. They can be ordinary women men and children, who believe in the universality of human rights and act to defend them. They are indigenous people who fight to defend and preserve their ancestral land and their cosmovision. They are agents of change, safeguarding democracy and ensuring that it remains open, pluralistic and participatory.”⁵

In particular, the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders outlines the important work of human rights defenders “in relation to mass, flagrant or systematic violations such as those resulting from apartheid, all forms of racial discrimination, colonialism, foreign domination or occupation, aggression or threats to national sovereignty, national unity or territorial integrity

³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Israeli annexation of parts of the Palestinian West Bank would break international law – UN experts call on the international community to ensure accountability”, (16 June 2020) available at:

<<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25960>>.

⁴ OHCHR, “Israeli annexation of parts of the Palestinian West Bank would break international law – UN experts call on the international community to ensure accountability”, (16 June 2020) available at:

<<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25960>>.

⁵ OHCHR, “End of mission statement by Michel Forst, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders - Visit to Peru, 21 January – 3 February 2020”, (3 January 2020), available at:

<<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25507&LangID=E>>

and from the refusal to recognize the right of peoples to self-determination and the right of every people to exercise full sovereignty over its wealth and natural resource” – all of which, it must be noted, are key root causes underpinning the continuing human rights violations in the OPT.⁶

Globally, there has been a sharp increase in the attempts by governments to systematically stifle dissenting voices, a phenomenon recognized as ‘shrinking space’. The term which describes the targeting and reduction of space for political struggle, has been defined by the Transnational Institute:

“as a concept or framework that captures the dynamic relationship between repressive methods and political struggle, including the ways in which political struggle responds to these methods to reclaim space, and the impact this response has upon how political struggles relate to one another. Its value as a framework is that it helps us to think through common trends of repression, including their sources, effects, and mechanisms, which political actors are faced with.”⁷

In 2017, Amnesty International described the current age as one “of fear, division and demonization”,⁸ observing that “governments in many countries are adopting laws and policies which make the work of human rights defenders riskier and more difficult. From laws that authorize force against peaceful protesters or allow for mass surveillance, to banning access to foreign funding or imposing stringent requirements to register organizations, the space to stand up for human rights is increasingly tight.”⁹

Also in 2017, the Transnational Institute noted that one of the consequences of ‘shrinking space’ campaigns was that “academics, mainstream NGOs, development organizations, independent expertise, ‘political correctness’, multiculturalism and even the ‘liberal elite’ are beginning to experience the kind of delegitimization that those at the margins and radical fringes have long been subject to, and who continue to bear the brunt of the new authoritarianism.”¹⁰ In June 2020, the escalation of United States (US) attacks on shrinking space culminated in the issuing of the US Executive Order 13928 providing for US sanctions directed against the Prosecutor and designated staff of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and those who “have materially assisted” the Prosecutor of the ICC, which may include for

⁶ UN General Assembly, “Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”, (8 March 1999), UN Doc. A/RES/53/144.

⁷ Transnational Institute, “On Shrinking Space: A Framing Paper”, (April 2017) 3
<https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/on_shrinking_space_2.pdf>

⁸ Amnesty International, “Human Rights Defenders Under Threat – A Shrinking Space for Civil Society”, (16 May 2017) 5, available at: <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/6011/2017/en/>>

⁹ Amnesty International, “Human Rights Defenders Under Threat – A Shrinking Space for Civil Society”, (16 May 2017) 5, available at: <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/6011/2017/en/>>

¹⁰ Transnational Institute, “On Shrinking Space: A Framing Paper” (April 2017) 10
<https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/on_shrinking_space_2.pdf>

example, staff of the ICC, lawyers, NGOs, human rights defenders and victims.¹¹ Such measures are intended to silence the Court's proceedings, in particular in the Situation of Afghanistan, and the Situation in the State of Palestine.¹²

1.2 Shrinking Space in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)

The Palestinian people have been subject to layers of displacement, including the Nakba of 1948, and again in the Naksa of 1967.¹³ Israel has continuously tightened its effective control over the Palestinian population, maintaining a system of apartheid and fragmenting the Palestinian territory and its people, to carry out a wholesale colonization of the territory, through incremental annexation during a protracted and now seemingly permanent military occupation.¹⁴

Under the guise of the Oslo process during the 1990's, the West Bank was divided into three areas (A, B and C). Area A, comprising approximately 18 per cent of the West Bank is formally under civil and security control of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Area B, approximately 22 per cent of the West Bank, is under Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control. In Area C, approximately 60 per cent of the West Bank, the Israeli Civil Administration, under the authority of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), is in charge of civil affairs and the Israeli military commander is in charge of security.

Although the Oslo Accords dictated these boundaries would be lifted within five years of the signing of the Accords in 1993, the boundaries remain in place, even if contested.¹⁵ This brings with it a unique dynamic that is incompatible with basic human rights principles as it has entrenched permanent occupation, apartheid, and a denial of self-determination, among other violations.

¹¹ Executive Order 13928 of June 11, 2020, Blocking Property of Certain Persons Associated With the International Criminal Court, available at: <<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/06/15/2020-12953/blocking-property-of-certain-persons-associated-with-the-international-criminal-court>>.

¹² Al-Haq, "Al-Haq Condemns Designations of International Criminal Court Prosecutor and Staff for Sanctions under US Executive Order 13928 as a Direct Threat to Justice in the Situation in the State of Palestine", (3 September 2020), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/17275.html>>; International Criminal Court, "Statement of the International Criminal Court on recent measures announced by the US", (11 June 2020), available at: <<https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=200611-icc-statement>>.

¹³ Al-Haq, "On Naksa Day, Al-Haq Recalls On going and Systematic Violation of International Law, calls for Recognition of the State of Palestine", (5 June 2020), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/16942.html>>

¹⁴ Al-Haq, "Apartheid, segregation and institutionalised racism", (14 March 2012), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/6913.html>>; Al-Haq, "Al-Haq and partners amplify engagement with Human Rights Council on Israeli apartheid" (4 July 2020), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/17066.html>>

¹⁵ "Despite the limitations of the Oslo Accords and the end of its intended interim period of five years, Palestine continues to function and act as a state in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.", ICC-01/18, Professor Asem Khalil, Professor Halla Shoaibi, "Situation in the State of Palestine, Submissions Pursuant to Rule 103" (16 March 2020) 9, available at: <<https://legal-tools.org/doc/awdwwwu/pdf/>>

In recent years, much has been written about shrinking space for civil society organizations and for human rights defenders in Israel and the OPT. Such concerns have been acknowledged by the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, who when addressing the Human Rights Council in September 2019 noted that: "my Office remains concerned that the targeting of human rights defenders – including with travel bans, delegitimising statements and reports, interrogation, detention and ill-treatment – by Israel, the PA and the *de facto* authorities in Gaza – has increased, resulting in further shrinking of civil society space."¹⁶ Within international academia, similar concerns have been identified with respect to unwarranted and far-reaching restrictions on discussion and analysis of Palestinian human rights and the application of international law to Israel and Palestine.¹⁷

Key concerns which illustrate the scope and impact of these broad developments include:

- Within the Green Line, the Israeli government has implemented legislation that denies Israelis and others the right to support the BDS Movement, targets the funding of NGOs, enables the revocation of residency based on allegiance to the State, and bans members of overseas NGOs from entering Israel.¹⁸
- In the OPT, the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) arrest human rights defenders for interrogation and detention and forcibly transfer them from the OPT into Israel. On 30 July 2020, the IOF arrested eminent BDS human rights defender Mahmoud Nawajaa in Ramallah, holding him under extended administrative detention¹⁹ for allegedly "belonging to an illegal party and providing services to it".²⁰ He was detained and deprived of his liberty until 17 August 2020, on the basis of undisclosed evidence for "investigation into a secret file".²¹
- Attempts to silence human rights defenders have been strongly felt in the US, Europe and beyond. In 2018, Norwegian Peoples Aid opted to settle a federal lawsuit for allegedly violating the terms of a USAID grant agreement under the False Claims Act, by

¹⁶ OHCHR, "Global update at the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council: Opening statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet", (9 September 2019), available at:

<<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24956&LangID=E>>

¹⁷ Landy, Lentin, O'Connor (eds) *Enforcing Silence: Academic Freedom, Palestine and the Criticism of Israel* (Zed Books, 2020).

¹⁸ Adalah, "Israel releases 'BDS blacklist' banning 20 NGOs from entering country" (7 January 2018), available at: <<https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9347>>

¹⁹ Administrative detention is the procedure through which the Israeli military arrests Palestinians without charge or trial. The arrest is based on 'secret evidence' and is renewable indefinitely. See also Addameer, "Administrative Detention", available at: <https://www.addameer.org/israeli_military_judicial_system/administrative_detention>

²⁰ Middle East Monitor, "Israel court releases BDS activist Mahmoud Nawajaa" (18 August 2020), available at: <<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200818-israel-court-releases-bds-activist-mahmoud-nawajaa/>>

²¹ Al-Haq, "PHROC condemns the arrest of human rights defender Mahmoud Nawajaa" (6 August 2020), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/palestinian-human-rights-organizations-council/17191.html>>

providing public workshops to youth in Gaza on democracy skills.²² Self-proclaimed “pro-Israel activist” attorney David Abrams filed the lawsuit in the US, as a private citizen, claiming that some of the youth in attendance at the workshop were members of political parties on the U.S. terrorist list (Specially Designated Nationals).²³ The case was settled out of Court without examination of the parameters of ‘material support’ and Abrams was paid damages of \$346,500 USD, opening the floodgates for similar private lawsuits against NGOs internationally in receipt of USAID, and having a chilling effect on the financing of work of human rights defenders globally.

- Since 2016, States in Europe have begun to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism, along with the IHRA’s 11 ‘contemporary examples’, which conflate criticism of Israeli government policies and actions with anti-Semitism. The definition provides that: “anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”²⁴ In 2016, the United Kingdom government adopted the definition wholesale along with the 11 ‘contemporary examples’, rejecting calls for clarifications from the Home Affairs Committee to include: “it is not anti-Semitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent. It is not anti-Semitic to hold the Israeli Government to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli Government’s policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent.”²⁵ Following the United Kingdom’s adoption of the IHRA definition and accompanying ‘contemporary examples’ in

²² Charity & Security Network, “Norwegian People’s Aid Settles Enforcement Case Over Democracy Building and Mine Removal Projects US Says Were Material Support” (2018), available at: https://charityandsecurity.org/news/news_npa-us_settle_case/

²³ Charity & Security Network, “Norwegian People’s Aid Settles Enforcement Case Over Democracy Building and Mine Removal Projects US Says Were Material Support” (2018), available at: https://charityandsecurity.org/news/news_npa-us_settle_case/

²⁴ International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, “Working Definition of Antisemitism”, available at: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>.

²⁵ House of Commons, “UK Government’s adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism” (4 October 2018), available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/home-affairs/communities/uk-governments-adoption-of-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism/>

December 2016, Austria adopted the IHRA definition in 2017,²⁶ followed by Germany and France in 2019.²⁷

- Of far reaching concern is the conflation of real and dangerous anti-Semitism with legitimate criticism of the State of Israel as a political entity. In May 2019, and in response to the motion adopted by the German parliament to label BDS as anti-Semitic based on the controversial IHRA's working definition of anti-Semitism, Palestinian civil society called on the German Government to refrain from adopting this resolution into law considering its serious ramifications for Palestinian civil society and its violation of Germany's obligations as a third State party to ensure respect for international law in the OPT.²⁸ Al-Haq has written several articles about why the IHRA's definition is a danger for freedom of expression and could have adverse effects for the attempts to eliminate anti-Semitism.²⁹
- As documented by Al-Haq, the PA has also applied its NGO laws so as to limit the freedoms of critical organizations by attempting to control and undermine the role NGOs play in monitoring public performance.³⁰
- On 2 August 2019, Frontline Defenders condemned the publication of direct threats, including "incited hateful comments including calls to kill Shawan Jabarin", Al-Haq's

²⁶ Yossi Lempkowicz, "With the support of all political parties, Austria's parliament votes resolution condemning BDS as anti-Semitic" (28 February 2020), available at: <<https://ejpress.org/61432-2/>>; Tamara Zieve, "Jewish officials hail Austria's decision to adopt antisemitism definition" *The Jerusalem Post* (27 April 2017), available at: <<https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/jewish-officials-hail-austrias-decision-to-adopt-ihra-antisemitism-definition-489111>>

²⁷ American Jewish Committee (AJC), "AJC Applauds National Assembly Adoption of Antisemitism Working Definition" (3 December 2019), available at: <<https://www.ajc.org/news/ajc-applauds-national-assembly-adoption-of-antisemitism-working-definition>>

²⁸ Al-Haq, "Palestinian Civil Society Statement in Response to the German Bundestag: Anti-BDS Resolution Violates Principles of International Law, Stands against Palestinian Civil Society and Aspirations for Freedom, Justice, and Dignity", (23 May 2019), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/6045.html>>

²⁹ Al-Haq, "Update: Administrative Court of Cologne rules in favor of supporters of BDS Movement" (22 October 2019), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/16098.html>>; Al-Haq, "Palestinian Civil Society Meet with the German Minister of State at the German Federal Office" (17 June 2019), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/6040.html>>; "Palestinian Civil Society Statement in Response to the German Bundestag: Anti-BDS Resolution Violates Principles of International Law, Stands against Palestinian Civil Society and Aspirations for Freedom, Justice, and Dignity" (23 May 2019), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/6045.html>>

³⁰ Al-Haq, "Comments on the Draft Law by Decree Amending the Law on Charitable Associations and Non-governmental Organisations No. 1 of 2000 as Amended" (29 October 2018), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/6142.html>>.

General-Director, on '4il', an online platform established by the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs. This platform was established in order to fight the BDS Movement.³¹

1.3 The Missing Piece: Area C

The 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II Agreement) divided the West Bank into three Areas. However, the present analysis focuses on Area C and the impact of shrinking space for civil society in this part of the OPT. As an administrative space constructed by the Oslo Accords, Area C is the only area with geographic contiguity. Notably, the PA has no power under Oslo to undertake its responsibilities within this area. However, this arrangement was intended to remain in place for a limited five-year transitional period, now exceeded by decades, in violation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.³² Palestinians in Area C are particularly vulnerable, as they are entirely dependent on, and subject to, the Israeli Occupying Authority. From building homes to acquiring permits for harvesting farmlands, nothing gets done without the approval of the Israeli Occupying Authority.³³

Critically, It is also important to understand that Area C is extremely resource rich. The Jordan Valley in particular is home to the most valuable natural resources the West Bank has to offer. For example, the Jordan Valley has fertile farmable ground that is excellent for crop production.³⁴ While Palestine's Area C quarries yield copious amounts of stone, Israel has unlawfully appropriated and leased the quarries to foreign companies, such as the German-owned HeidelbergCement, in order to maintain the Palestinian economy captive by Israel while fuelling Israel's economy and settlement enterprise.³⁵ The Dead Sea contains rare minerals that Israel illegally pillages for the production of skin care products and cosmetics under a license to Ahava.³⁶ As a result, Israel has established a sophisticated settlement enterprise of residential, agricultural and industrial settlements, resulting in billions of dollars appropriated from the

³¹ Frontline Defenders "Continued harassment against members of the organisation 'Al-Haq', including death threats against its general director Shawan Jabarin" (2 August 2019), available at:

<<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/continued-harassment-against-members-organisation-al-haq-including-death-threats-against-its>>

³² Articles I, V, "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements" (13 September 1993).

³³ OCHA, "Fewer permits granted to access land behind Barrier" (18 March 2019), available at:

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/fewer-permits-granted-access-land-behind-barrier>

³⁴ Al-Haq, "Settling Area C: The Jordan Valley Exposed" (31 January 2018) 46, available at <<http://www.alhaq.org/publications/8057.html>>

³⁵ See Al-Haq, SOMO, "Violations Set in Stone: HeidelbergCement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" (4 February 2020), available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/2020/02/04/final-report-violationsetinstone-en-1580802889.pdf>

³⁶ Al-Haq, "Business and Human Rights in Palestine" (2016) 8, available at:

<http://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/alhaq_files/publications/Business%20and%20Human%20Rights%20Booklet.pdf>

Palestinian economy every year.³⁷ Israel's Annexation Wall, unlawful settlements, and current plans for formal annexation, are all focused within Area C.³⁸ As a result, protesting the numerous human rights violations in Area C is incredibly dangerous.

1.4 Aim of this Report

This report is intended to give the reader an insight into how shrinking space manifests itself in Area C of the West Bank. It is not intended to be exhaustive in any way. The descriptive nature of this report lets the reader walk alongside the Human Rights Defenders of Area C. We have selected some of the most recent cases prior to the Covid-19 lockdown. They are by no means the most extreme cases we have witnessed. Rather, they represent an illustration of the daily obstacles that are faced in Area C for even the most basic human rights work.

³⁷ Al-Haq, "Facts on the Ground", available at:

<http://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/alhaq_files/publications/facts.on.the.ground.pdf>

³⁸ Al-Haq, "Establishing Guidelines to Determine whether the Legal Status of 'Area C' in the Occupied Palestinian Territory represents Annexed Territory under International Law" (17 July 2020), available at:

<<http://www.alhaq.org/publications/17136.html>>

2. The Cases

Case 1: The Harassment of an Al-Haq Field Worker

Description of Events



F.F.³⁹ is the field worker for Al-Haq in the Jordan Valley. The Jordan Valley is the area of the West Bank with the most fertile land and has featured heavily in Israel's annexationist plans. Israel routinely carries out military trainings in the Jordan Valley in order to create a coercive environment for the purpose of forcibly transferring civilian communities, in violation of Articles 52 and 53 of the Hague Regulations (1907), which prohibit the requisition of property for purposes not justified by direct military need or military operations,⁴⁰ and Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) which prohibits the forcible transfer by the Occupying Power of the civilian population from occupied territory.⁴¹

Humsa, Jordan Valley, Al-Haq © 2019

Al-Haq has previously expressed its grave concern that such orders are implemented in a way designed to enable Israel's illegal appropriation of Palestinian land and for the sole benefit of Israeli settlement expansion in the OPT.⁴²

³⁹ Name redacted to protect the identity of the field worker.

⁴⁰ Articles 52 and 53, Hague Regulations (1907).

⁴¹ Article 49, Fourth Geneva Convention. See also, Expert Opinion, Michael Bothe, "Limits of the right of expropriation (requisition) and of movement restrictions in occupied territory", Diakonia, available at: <<https://www.diakonia.se/globalassets/blocks-ihl-site/ihl-file-list/ihl-expert-opinions/limits-of-the-right-of-expropriation-requisition-and-of-movement-restrictions-in-occupied-territory.-dr.-iur.-prof-michael-bothe.pdf>>

⁴² Al-Haq, "Palestinian Families Evicted for Israeli Military Trainings" (21 May 2018), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6202.html>>; Al-Haq, "Palestinians Forced To Leave Their Homes Because Of Israeli Military Training" (15 November 2012), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6817.html>>

On Sunday, 12 May 2019, during Ramadan, F.F. was visiting Humsa, a neighbourhood comprising of 15 families (98 inhabitants) in the northern Jordan Valley, to document Israel's systematic harassment of the community and forced transfer from their homes. The IOF had ordered the evacuation of the entire village, to perform military trainings using artillery shells and live ammunition. The occupants of the village were considered endangered by these military trainings and were ordered to leave their homes for three days of the week, for at least three weeks.

The military trainings were scheduled during Ramadan, for a total of nine days out of 30, during which time the occupants were not permitted access to their homes. Ramadan is a holy month during which Muslims refrain from food and drink and immoral acts and devote their time to acts of worship and charity from sunrise to sunset, when they then break their fast for a special evening meal, *Iftar*. It is often a busy time for women in particular, who may be responsible for the preparation of food for the breaking of the fast when the sun sets.

In a statement under oath, F.F. recalls that he travelled to Humsa to meet with a prominent member of the Palestinian community in order to learn more about the IOF's restrictions placed on the neighbourhood. He planned to document the forcible transfers through recording statements and by filming the forced military removal of Palestinian civilians from their homes. F.F. arrived on 12 May 2019 at 14:00, intending to conduct interviews and to film the evacuation.

At around 15:00, the IOF and civil administration arrived at the village in a white Mitsubishi vehicle and a military jeep. Several soldiers and two men in civilian clothing disembarked from the jeep. F.F. recognized the first man, known as Eagle, from his documentation of other demolitions and evacuations. The other man was unknown to F.F. The second man yelled in Arabic at the Head of the Village Council, that they must evacuate immediately and challenged him as to why he had arranged for the press to be present.

The entire group (F.F. and seven journalists) were made to drive to a military camp in the area, called Un Zuchow. The group was forced to disembark, and their vehicles were confiscated. The IOF argued that the vehicles had been used to enter a firing zone during an evacuation. The group was held in the camp without a supply of water being provided by the military, without access to food, denied the use of their phones, and with no indication as to how long they would be held. Even with sunset and the time to break the Ramadan fast, the military refused to supply any food. The group were finally given back their IDs and was released at 20:30 that same day. However the journalists were not allowed to retrieve their vehicles.

Analysis

Palestinians in the OPT are regarded as protected persons under international humanitarian law, specifically Article 4(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention. As such, the Occupying Power is bound by its obligations under international humanitarian law, as well as international human rights law towards the protected Palestinian population. Article 46 of the Hague Regulations, also constituting customary international law, demands respect for the protection of family honour and private property. Similarly, Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention obliges the Occupying Power to respect family rights. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Commentary to the Fourth Geneva Convention further provides that family home and rights are protected and cannot be subject of arbitrary interference. Critically, the use of civilian homes and private agricultural lands for military training not only violates provisions of international humanitarian law protecting private property in occupied territory, but further constitutes an arbitrary interference with Palestinians' rights to privacy, family, and home as guaranteed by Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 17(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁴³

In the face of persistent and escalating denial and repression of Palestinian human rights, it is imperative that human rights defenders, and media, be facilitated in their work in monitoring and documenting the abuse of Palestinian human rights. By detaining and harassing human rights defenders and media workers as they engage in their necessary and legitimate work, the IOF are actively shrinking the space available for Palestinian civil society to operate in Area C.

Case 2: The Arrest of a Photojournalist

Description of Events

On Saturday, 26 October 2019, at 10:45, M.F.,⁴⁴ an independent photojournalist, was in the Hama area in the north of the West Bank to cover a protest, organized by the Committee for the Resistance of the Wall and Settlements, against the establishment of a settlement outpost in the Hama area. About 100 people gathered to participate at the protest and were met by approximately 40 to 50 members of the IOF.⁴⁵ With a Panasonic P2 video camera slung over one shoulder, M.F. documented the gathering that included several solidarity groups comprised of a large variety of nationalities. In addition to M.F., there were several journalists from other agencies present, including from Al-Ghad TV.

⁴³ See Al-Haq, "Palestinian Families Evicted for Israeli Military Trainings" (21 May 2018), available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6202.html>

⁴⁴ Name redacted to protect the identity of the photojournalist.

⁴⁵ Affidavit on File with Al-Haq, No 2019/422.

While filming two soldiers harassing and chasing an older protestor, M.F. was approached by six Israeli settlers wearing civilian clothes and under the protection of the Israeli military. One of the settlers put a hand on the camera screen to prevent the filming. Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers verbally harassed M.F., as he attempted to continue filming.

After about 30 minutes, an Israeli soldier came and confiscated the IDs of M.F. and the other journalists present at the scene. In an affidavit to Al-Haq, M.F. recalls how the journalists were also forced to hand over their press cards. The IOF further confiscated the keys to two cars belonging to Al-Ghad TV's satellite channel and to the municipality of Aqaba. Later, the cars were picked up by a tow truck and taken to an unknown Israeli camp.

At 12:15, after checking up on his own car, M.F. went to the soldier to ask for his ID back. M.F. was told that he could pick up the ID at 15:30. Shortly after this exchange, the IOF called out the names of M.F., four journalists, and nine foreign solidarity group members, and ordered them to board a bus and to hand over their video cameras. The bus was then driven to the Ariel settlement under military escort.

At around 18:00, the group finally arrived at the Ariel settlement police station. Once there, the people on the bus were detained at the police station, checked in, and manually searched. After another four hours of waiting, a police investigator arrived and began detaining people one at a time for interrogation. It was 00:30 on Sunday by the time M.F. was called in for interrogation.

M.F. was asked to describe his work to the investigator, who then charged him on three counts including presence in a 'closed military zone', obstructing the movement of an Israeli soldier, and participation in a 'subversive event'. The investigator asked M.F. to sign a document in Hebrew, which M.F. refused because of his lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language. The investigator proceeded to take his fingerprints and saliva for DNA.⁴⁶ At 03:30, on Sunday morning, M.F. was finally released after 14 hours of detention for covering a peaceful protest. M.F., and the other journalists were placed back on the bus and released in the area, without transport home.

A second journalist, H.M.,⁴⁷ gave a statement to Al-Haq two days after his release.⁴⁸ He outlined that the IOF had not returned the confiscated property, nor were they given any indication on how long the property would be held, or given any record of the confiscated material from the IOF. The items unlawfully requisitioned, included a vehicle, photo and video cameras and other camera equipment. He explained how he was unable to conduct his normal work which threatened his ability to provide for his family.

⁴⁶ Affidavit on File with Al-Haq, No 2019/422.

⁴⁷ Name redacted to protect the identity of the journalist.

⁴⁸ Affidavit on File with Al-Haq, No 2019/423.

Analysis

Notably, international law specifically protects journalists as civilians.⁴⁹ Repression of, and silencing of journalists, amounts to a violation of Article 19 of the UDHR which holds that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” According to Article 19 of the ICCPR, the right also includes “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.”

Further, Article 79(1) of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, provides that “journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians”. If there is any doubt as to the character of journalists as civilians, they are always accorded civilian status under international humanitarian law.⁵⁰ Additionally, Rule 34 of the ICRC on the customary rules of international humanitarian law requires that “civilian



Ayman Noubani © 2019

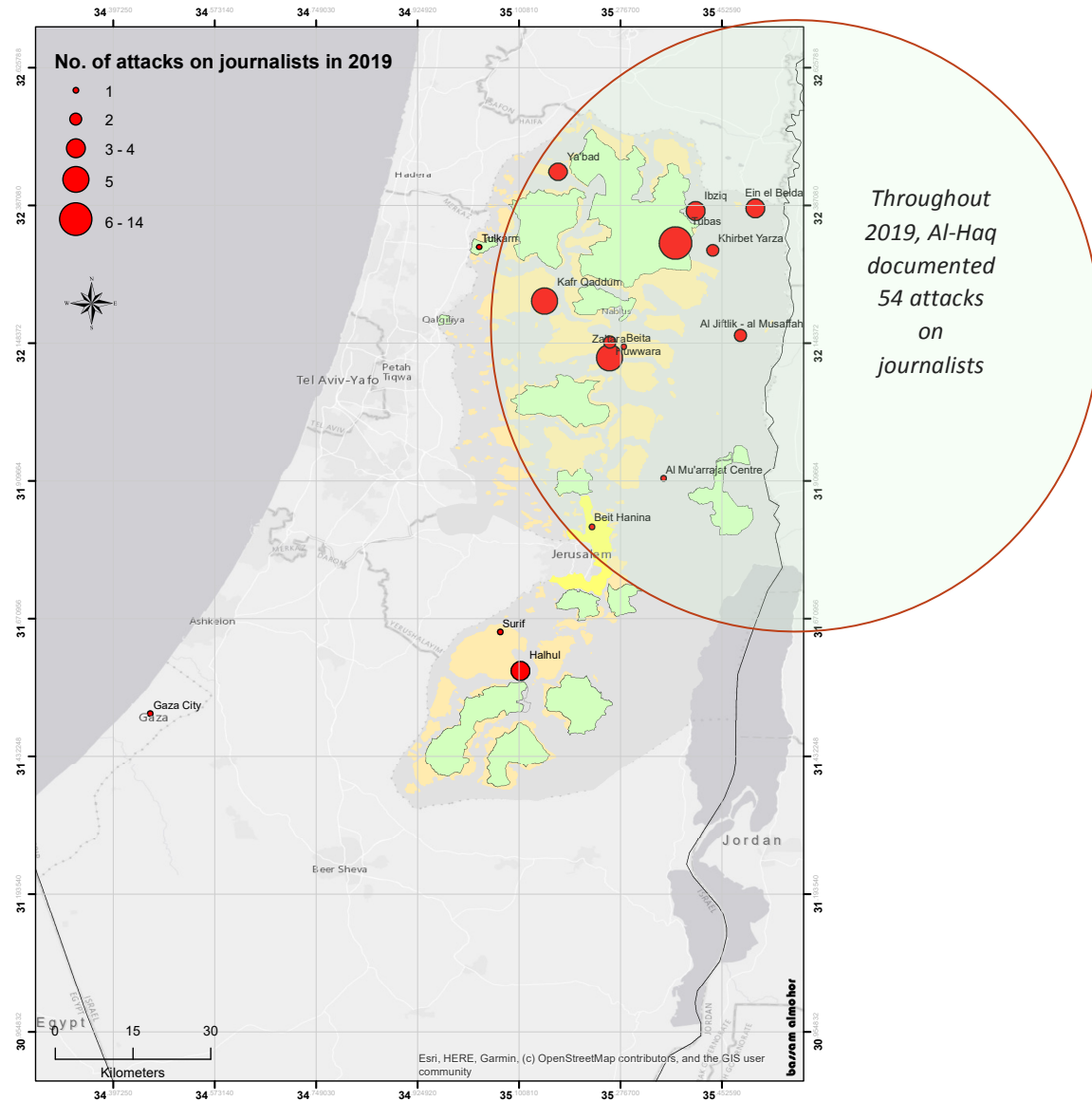
journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict must be respected and protected as long as they are not taking a direct part in hostilities.” This protection is echoed in UN Security Council Resolution 1738 (2006) and UN Security Council Resolution 2222 (2015) on the protection of journalists and media professionals in armed conflicts.

The deliberate targeting of journalists carrying out their work in the OPT is an intentional measure to silence media coverage and circumvent the media documentation of Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people. It must be noted that journalists have an important role as

⁴⁹ See Al-Haq, “Israeli Occupying Forces Target Journalists Covering Gaza Protests, Killing One and Injuring Others” (12 April 2018), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6244.html>>

⁵⁰ Rule 6, ICRC IHL Database, Customary IHL, available at: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule6>.

documenters of evidence, for use in international tribunals and courts, and this is particularly significant in light of the Situation in the State of Palestine at the ICC.⁵¹



⁵¹ See, Al-Haq, “Response to Arguments Raised in Amici Curiae Submissions in the Situation in the State of Palestine Before the International Criminal Court” (2020), available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/publications/16797.html>; Al-Haq, “Palestine and Territorial Jurisdiction at the International Criminal Court” (2020), available at: http://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/2020/04/29/qa-interactive-1588137302.pdf

Case 3: Obstructing the Palestinian Medical Relief Society



Palestinian Ambulance Destroyed during Israel's 2014 Military Offensive on the Gaza Strip.

Al-Haq © 2014

Description of Events

The Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) in the Jenin district, in the north of the West Bank provides critical medical services for Palestinians in Area C, such as the provision of free medicine by a mobile pharmacy facility, and the services of a general practitioner, a gynaecologist, and public healthcare professionals. In total the unit comprises six PMRS staff. An interview with Dr. M.A.,⁵² a health worker at the PMRS in Jenin, highlighted the persistent and deeply disruptive harassment, which medical staff are subjected to by the IOF as they attempt to go about their work.⁵³

Dr. M.A. explained that PMRS staff cannot undertake the necessary travel within the West Bank to carry out their work unless they are granted permits by the Israeli authorities to gain access to areas where their services are required. An example of one area which they have been obstructed from servicing, is Barta'a, a Palestinian village in Area C located within the Green Line, but on the west side of the Wall. In June 2019, COGAT, the authority governing the IOF in

⁵² Name redacted to protect the identity of the health worker.

⁵³ Al-Haq Field Report "Report on Israeli Attacks on Journalists, Medical Personnel and Human Rights Activists in the Jenin Area" (28 October 2019), including interview with Dr. M.A., on file with Al-Haq's Monitoring and Documentation.

the West Bank delayed the issuance of the necessary access permit for over six weeks. During that time, the PMRS staff were unable to supply villages around Barta'a with crucial medical care.

In addition to delays in permits, PMRS staff have been subject to unnecessary searches at the Barta'a military checkpoint. The Barta'a checkpoint includes separate lanes for vehicles and pedestrians. After obtaining a permit to access the areas behind the Wall, PMRS staff should technically be allowed to travel by taxi and to cross the Barta'a checkpoint without delays. In many incidents, however, Israeli security company personnel hired by the Israeli government to man the Barta'a checkpoint⁵⁴ have searched the vehicles and the medical staff, and examined access permits, before authorizing them to pass through the checkpoint by car. However, since early July 2019, Israeli security company personnel have deliberately forced PMRS staff to cross the pedestrian lane after being searched and examined. This is now the case every time the PMRS staff travel to Barta'a and other communities behind the Wall, resulting in major delays.

On Wednesday, 23 October 2019, PMRS staff arrived at the Barta'a gate at 08:30. The Israeli security personnel took almost one and a half hours to examine and search the staff. Dr. M.A. recalled that the PMRS staff had presented their ID cards, which state their occupation and reasons for accessing communities in Area C. Nevertheless, the private security personnel do not take these cards into consideration and treat PMRS staff the same as other residents of communities across the area. Consequently, working hours at the healthcare clinic were reduced from five to three hours.

Dr. M.A. finished his statement under oath with one more example. On 17 October 2019, the Barta'a checkpoint and gate were closed to all persons who are not residents of areas behind the Wall. The PMRS staff arrived at the Barta'a gate in order to access and organize a medical day in one of these areas. However, the security company personnel denied access to the medical staff, depriving patients in areas isolated behind the Wall from their right to access medical care on that day.

Analysis

While COVID-19 has shed a glaring light on the detrimental impacts of Israel's apartheid regime on the right to health of the Palestinian people as a whole, the above case study illustrates the routine denial of the Palestinian capability to provide basic medical care for people in Area C.⁵⁵ Notably, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated: "health is a human

⁵⁴ As of 2016, 14 checkpoints have been completely privatized in the OPT. Who Profits Research Centre "Private Security Companies and the Israeli Occupation" (January 2016), available at: <https://whoprofits.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/old/private_security_companies_final_for_web.pdf> 15.

⁵⁵ See also Al-Haq, JLAC, MAPS, "COVID-19 and the Systematic Neglect of East Jerusalem" (14 July 2020), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/publications/17118.html>>

right and health care workers are human rights defenders”.⁵⁶ This requires that the government, and in this respect in Area C, Israel as Occupying Power, must “protect professionals who deliver these services.”⁵⁷

In this vein, international humanitarian law requires Israel, as the Occupying Power, to ensure the food and medical supplies of Palestinians to the fullest extent possible, and to maintain medical services, public health, and hygiene in the OPT, with particular reference to the adoption of preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of infectious diseases.⁵⁸ Israel is also bound under international human rights law to uphold the right of the Palestinian people to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including the underlying determinants of health and well-being, which include the right to adequate food, water and sanitation, housing, and work, and ultimately require the realisation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.⁵⁹

What the example of the PRMS’s repression at the Barta’a gate illustrates, is that not only is Israel actively disregarding its legal obligations to ensure healthcare for Palestinians, the occupying forces are directly denying Palestinians the ability to provide even the most basic services for themselves.

Case 4: The Attack by Settlers on Volunteers

Description of Events

The village of Al-Jab’a was a part of the Hebron governorate until 1990, when Israel, the Occupying Power chose to amalgamate it with the Bethlehem governorate. Al-Jab’a is located 15km south of Bethlehem and is surrounded by four settlements, built on land seized from the village. This essentially isolates the village from the rest of the West Bank, fragmenting the territory.

⁵⁶ UN News, “INTERVIEW: Health care is a human right, senior UN official says; urges protection for medical workers” (24 October 2017), available at: <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/10/569162-interview-health-care-human-right-senior-un-official-says-urges-protection>>

⁵⁷ UN News, “INTERVIEW: Health care is a human right, senior UN official says; urges protection for medical workers” (24 October 2017), available at: <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/10/569162-interview-health-care-human-right-senior-un-official-says-urges-protection>>

⁵⁸ Article 56, Fourth Geneva Convention (1949); UN OHCHR, “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/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25728>>

⁵⁹ Article 25, Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948); Article 12, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); OHCHR, “CESCR General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Art. 12)” (11 August 2000), available at: <<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838d0.pdf>>; Diakonia, “Health-Related Duties and Obligations of an Occupying Power During a Pandemic” (8 April 2020), available at: <https://www.diakonia.se/en/IHL/News-List/opt_covid-19/>

To leave their village, Palestinians must often cross a settlement road at the Gush Etzion crossing. The locals refer to this crossing as the crossroads of death, because the road is so dangerous and those who choose to cross it are at risk of being shot. Moreover, there is no public transport for the villagers. This means that the villagers must own a car or borrow one to leave town.

In a statement, Z.S.⁶⁰ told Al-Haq under oath, that in addition to heavy Israeli military presence at Al-Jab'a and the dangers of attempting to cross the road in safety, the villagers are subjected to settler violence.⁶¹

Al-Jab'a is a rural farming village, with its olive trees located a little way away from the village. COGAT has denied the inhabitants the right to build on their farmland. In fact, according to Z.S., the villagers are restricted to building on only 700 dunums of the 13,000 dunums within the village limits. While outside the village limits, the IOF permit villagers to cultivate an area of 2,000 dunums near the village's boundary. This leaves the remainder of their land vulnerable to appropriation by illegal Israeli settlers.

As the Occupying Power, Israel also controls and restricts when the farmers can access their lands. Z.S. explains that the farmers can only access the lands for harvest and for about a month after the season is over. By this time, much of the crop has already decayed or has been stolen by settlers. When the villagers do go to collect their crops they are often harassed, attacked, and insulted by the settler population residing therein. According to Z.S., the aim of these attacks is to drive the villagers off their own land.

In response to this violence, a campaign was titled, "We are with you" was launched. This campaign brings volunteers to the village from the West Bank and from abroad to assist in the harvest and to provide moral support.

On Saturday, 19 October 2019, 40 French and Palestinian volunteers, including Z.S., went to help the villagers harvest the olives. The group was attacked by settlers from the neighbouring settlement who threw stones at the group, cursed at them, and encircled them in an attempt to drive them from the land. After some time, the Israeli military showed up and managed to convince the settlers to retreat, allowing the volunteers to safely leave the village's agricultural area. However, the villagers and their supporters were unable to return to harvest safely.

⁶⁰ Name redacted to protect the identity of the landowner.

⁶¹ Statement on File with Al-Haq, "Violations against human rights defenders in the Bethlehem Areas of Area C" 2/11/219.



In 'Asira al-Qibliyya village in Nablus, Israeli settlers backed by the IOF suppressed an event to plant olive trees, organised by Palestinians in protest of their lands being threatened with confiscation for nearby settlements. Jaafar Ashtiyeh (AFP) © 2019

Analysis

Israeli settlements in the OPT have been recognized as illegal under UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016), in addition to violating international humanitarian law provisions governing the appropriation of property, pillage, destruction of property and unlawful transfer.⁶² Further, settlements impede the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, restrict their access to and sovereignty over their natural resources, including water, and restrict their movement, while dispossessing them of their land and causing their displacement.⁶³ In addition, settlements foster an environment which allows for increased and direct settler violence against Palestinians.⁶⁴

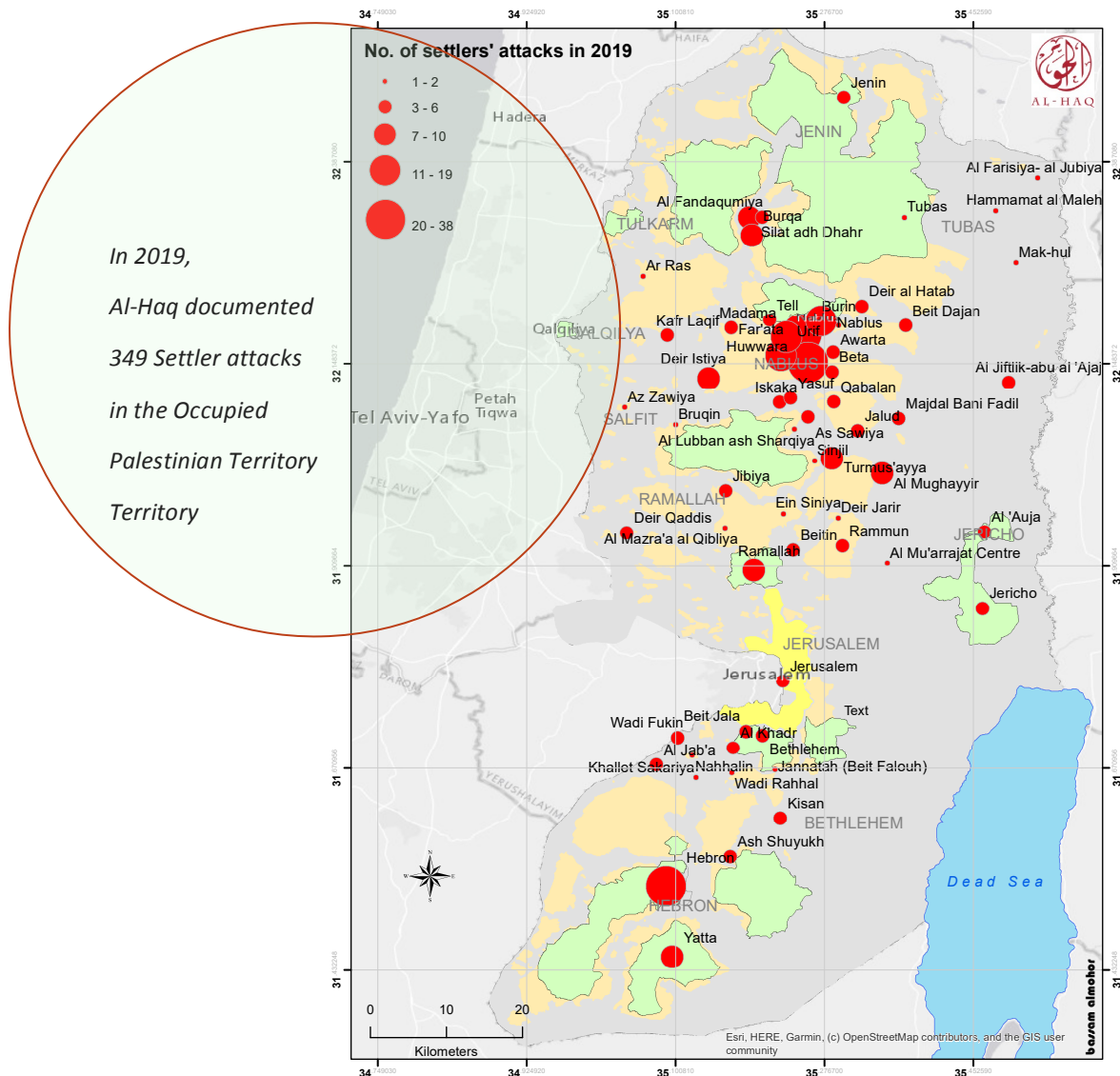
Violence and frequent harassment of Palestinians by settlers is frequently documented by Al-Haq, and represents a particular layer of dominance over and threat to the lives of Palestinians,

⁶² UNSC/RES/2334 (2016); Articles 46, 47, 52, 53, 55, Hague Regulations (1907); Articles 53, 49 Fourth Geneva Convention (1949).

⁶³ Al-Haq, "Israeli Settlements and Settler Violence in Hebron" (26 May 2015), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6534.html>>

⁶⁴ Al-Haq, "Institutionalised Impunity: Israel's Failure to Combat Settler Violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" (27 November 2013), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/6699.html>>

particularly in Area C.⁶⁵ Incidents of settler violence, perpetrated with impunity, continue to deprive Palestinians of their right to self-determination, including the principle of sovereignty over land and natural resources. As seen above, settlers regularly deny Palestinians their right to freedom of movement and their right to access their own property. As Occupying Power, Israel has an obligation under international humanitarian and human rights law to safeguard the rights of Palestinians in occupied territory, including their access to private and public property.⁶⁶



⁶⁵ See for example, Al-Haq 'Israeli Settlements and Settler Violence in Hebron' (26 May 2015), available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6534.html>

⁶⁶ Article 43, Hague Regulations (1907).

The ICCPR recognizes the inherent dignity of the human person. In 2012 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in its Concluding Observations on Israel's periodic report, drew attention to General Recommendation 19 (1995) concerning the prohibition of all policies and practices of racial segregation and apartheid. The Committee expressed extreme concern at: "the consequences of policies and practices which amount to de facto segregation, such as the implementation by the State party in the Occupied Palestinian Territory of two entirely separate legal systems and sets of institutions for Jewish communities grouped in illegal settlements on the one hand and Palestinian populations living in Palestinian towns and villages on the other hand."⁶⁷ The Human Rights Council's 2013 Fact-finding Mission Report on Israel's settlement activity, emphasized the prevalence of settler violence, frequently in the presence of Israeli police and military: "the identities of settlers who are responsible for violence and intimidation are known to the Israeli authorities, yet these acts continue with impunity. The Mission is led to the clear conclusion that there is institutionalised discrimination against the Palestinian people when it comes to addressing violence. The Mission believes that the motivation behind this violence and the intimidation against the Palestinians as well as their properties is to drive the local populations away from their lands and allow the settlements to expand."⁶⁸

Conclusion

On 11 June 2020, the European Court of Human Rights found in favour of the right of human rights activists to mobilise for Palestinian liberation, ruling that their peaceful protests in advocating for boycotting, divesting from and imposing sanctions on Israel, are protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.⁶⁹ This judgment is a welcome signal that the shrinking space for human rights defenders, whether in Palestine or internationally, does not have to be an ever more repressive phenomenon.

As the case studies presented in this report indicate however, the ability of Palestinians to exercise, defend, or protect their basic human rights is under widespread and immense pressure. Across the spectrum of Palestinian society, Israel targets human rights defenders, including *inter alia* smearing civil society organisations, directly targeting human rights workers who document and monitor human rights violations, journalists during their reporting, preventing healthcare workers from carrying out their work, and attacking individual activists who volunteer to defend and protect the human rights of Palestinians. The objective is to

⁶⁷ Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Israel, CERD/C/ISR/CO/14-16 (9 March 2012) para 24.

⁶⁸ Report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, A/HRC/22/63 (7 February 2013) para 107.

⁶⁹ Al-Haq, "Freedom of Expression Victory for Palestinian Human Rights Activists in European Court of Human Rights case Baldassi and Others v France" (12 June 2020), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/16977.html>>

control every aspect of Palestinian life and quash any perceived voices of resistance to Israel's unlawful settler-colonial enterprise.

Actors actively involved in the shrinking space within which Palestinian civil society can operate include the Israeli occupation forces and armed settlers who operate with impunity within a system of physical infrastructure, including the unlawful settlements, the Annexation Wall, and the discriminatory permits system, each of which contributes to the fragmentation of Palestinian communities. Meanwhile, attacks on Palestinian human rights defenders continue. At dawn on Thursday 30 July 2020, the IOF arrested Mahmoud Nawajaa, a 34-year-old activist and coordinator of the Palestinian National Committee of the BDS Movement from his home near Ramallah city.⁷⁰ The following day, on 31 July, the IOF raided Palestinian cultural centres in Jerusalem, detaining staff and seizing property.⁷¹ The shrinking space for Palestinian society to survive under occupation continues to destroy lives and to perpetuate the denial of Palestinian human rights.

⁷⁰ Al-Haq, "PHROC condemns the arrest of human rights defender Mahmoud Nawajaa", (6 August 2020), available at: <<http://www.alhaq.org/palestinian-human-rights-organizations-council/17191.html>>

⁷¹ Frontline Defenders, "Raid at Yabous Cultural Centre and judicial harassment of its director Rania Elias", (31 July 2020).