

Re: Immediate Effective Measures Needed to Halt Escalating Israeli Violence against Palestinians

Date: 18 April 2022

Your Excellency,

Al-Haq expresses its alarm at the rising escalation in attacks against Palestinians by both the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) and illegally transferred colonial settlers, currently taking place in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.¹ Since the start of the holy month of Ramadan on 2 April 2022, Al-Haq has monitored a worrying increase in killings, excessive use of force, settler colonial violence, attacks on holy sites and worshippers, and collective punishment measures against Palestinians including widespread raids, arbitrary arrests, and movement restrictions.²

On 4 April 2022, a provocative visit by Israel's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Yair Lapid, to Damascus Gate in Jerusalem further aggravated the already deteriorating situation, which include inhumane acts of apartheid by the IOF.³ Al-Haq is gravely concerned with inflammatory and inciting statements emanating from senior Israeli political representatives. On 30 March 2022, Israel's Prime Minister, Naftali Bennet released a lengthy recorded address to the nation, calling on civilian volunteers, to mobilise and arm, stating: "We are also currently evaluating a larger framework to involve civilian volunteers who want to help and be of assistance. What is expected of you, citizens of Israel? Alertness and responsibility. Open your eyes. Whoever has a license to carry a weapon, this is the time to carry it".⁴

On 8 April 2022, in a joint statement, Israel's Prime Minister and Minister of Defence announced: "We are granting full freedom of action to the IDF, the ISA and all security forces in order to defeat the terrorism. There are no restrictions in this war nor will there be."⁵ The following day, Israeli Minister of Defence, Gantz warned that the IOF "will continue and intensify" operations in the OPT.⁶ While on 10 April, at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Bennet granted unlimited authority to the Israeli forces to act,

¹ Al-Haq, 'Action Alert: International Community must Intervene to Stop Escalating Violence Against Palestinians by Israeli Occupying Forces and Colonial Settlers' (11 April 2022) <<https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/19878.html>>

² Al-Haq is continuing to collect further information as the escalation continues to develop. Further statements with verified statistics will be given as events unfold.

³ Times of Israel, 'Provocative incursion': Palestinians condemn Lapid's visit to Damascus Gate' (4 April 2022), <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/provocative-incursion-palestinians-condemn-lapids-visit-to-damascus-gate/>>

⁴ Prime Minister's Office, 'Recorded Statement by PM Bennett' (30 March 2022), <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/spoke_statement300322>/

⁵ Prime Minister's Office, 'PM Bennett's Statement at the Kirya in Tel Aviv with Defense Minister Gantz and Public Security Minister Barlev' (8 April 2022), <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/spoke_statement080422>

⁶ Aaron Boxerman, 'Israel tightens restrictions on West Bank's Jenin, source of terrorism and clashes' (*The Times of Israel*, 9 April 2022) <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/gantz-indicates-easing-of-ramadan-restrictions-to-continue-despite-terror-attacks/>>

stating: “The State of Israel has gone on offense... I reiterate: There are no restrictions on the IDF, ISA and other security forces”.⁷

There is further evidence of a “shoot to kill” policy authorised by Prime Minister Bennet. In his address to the nation, Prime Minister Bennet explained how “after a long night, our forces got their hands on the terrorist and eliminated him. This is what we expect of our forces”.⁸ In particular, Al-Haq’s concern is drawn towards IOF attacks and collective punishment measures launched on Jenin refugee camp, which have killed and wounded several Palestinians, restrictions on Palestinians working inside the Green Line⁹ and the authorisation of punitive house demolitions.¹⁰ In addition to the attacks, the IOF has closed two checkpoints (Al Jalma and Barta’a) in Jenin for the first two weeks of April, preventing access to healthcare, education, employment, and worship sites across the Green Line, and denying Palestinian families, separated by the illegal annexation wall, their freedom of movement.¹¹

Since the start of Ramadan on 2 April 2022, the IOF shot and killed 17 Palestinians in the West Bank.¹² Two of those killed include two Palestinian women. Ghada Ibrahim Sabatien, 45, a widow and mother of six children was shot and killed by IOF on the 10 April 2022, in Husan, near Bethlehem. Ghada was unarmed and posed no threat to the Israeli soldiers.¹³ Maha Kazem, 25 was shot and killed by IOF in Hebron after an alleged attack on an Israeli soldier. In addition to the shoot to kill policy, the repeated denial and delays of medical treatment by Palestinian and Palestinian Red Crescent ambulances to those shot has endangered the lives of victims of indiscriminate and disproportionate uses of IOF force. In both crimes mentioned above, medical assistance was initially denied by the IOF.¹⁴

In Jerusalem, excessive use of force and arbitrary arrests by Israeli police have intensified since the start of the month, accompanied by provocations and threats by colonial settlers to occupy Al-Aqsa Mosque on 15 April 2021 to perform sheep sacrifice ahead of Passover. Events culminated in the violent attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque before dawn prayers on 15 April, whereby the Israeli police raided Al-Haram Al-Sharif (Al-Aqsa compound), fired sound cannisters, and severely beat with batons, clubs and rifle ends, any Palestinian in the compound, regardless

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘PM Bennett’s remarks at the start of the weekly Cabinet meeting’ (10 April 2022), <<https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/pm-bennett-s-remarks-at-the-start-of-the-weekly-cabinet-meeting-10-apr-2022>>

⁸ Prime Minister’s Office, ‘PM Bennett’s Statement at the Kirya in Tel Aviv with Defense Minister Gantz and Public Security Minister Barlev’ (8 April 2022), <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/spoke_statement080422>

⁹ Middle East Monitor, ‘Israel imposing ‘collective punishment’ on Jenin’ (11 April 2022), <<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220411-israel-imposing-collective-punishment-on-jenin/>>

¹⁰ Field documentation on file with Al-Haq; See generally, France 24, ‘Israel army raids W.Bank town that Tel Aviv gunmen hailed from’ (10 April 2022), <<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220410-israel-army-raids-w-bank-town-that-tel-aviv-gunmen-hailed-from>>; Al-Jazeera, ‘Israeli forces kill three Palestinians in the occupied West Bank’ (31 March 2022), <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/31/israeli-forces-kill-three-palestinians-in-occupied-west-bank>>

¹¹ Field documentation on file with Al-Haq.

¹² Field documentation on file with Al-Haq.

¹³ Hagar Shezaf, ‘Israeli troops kill Palestinian woman after ‘suspicious’ approach near Bethlehem’ (Haaretz, 10 April 2022) <<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/palestinian-woman-shot-dead-by-israeli-troops-after-suspicious-approach-1.10732592>>

¹⁴ The killings of Ghada Ibrahim Sabatien, 45, and Maha Kazem, 25 are based on documentation on file with Al-Haq.

of their age. These attacks including journalists who were covering the violations. Many of the worshippers sought safety in the Al-Qabali mosque, which was then raided by the Israeli police. The police fired sound and tear gas canisters in the mosque, assaulted those inside, beating particularly their head and limbs, and tied and arrested a large number of those present. The Palestinian Prisoners Society reported that the police detained 450 Palestinians. The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that 157 Palestinians were injured, 80 percent of the injuries were caused by severe beatings on the upper parts of the body. While Al-Makassed Hospital reported admitting 35 to the hospital, eight of whom were admitted to ICU, and five to surgeries.¹⁵

The deteriorating situation in the OPT has been noted by a number of international observers, such as Sven Koopmans, the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process.¹⁶ Al-Haq calls on the international community to immediately act in the face of Israel's escalating attacks and persecution. It is incumbent on States to not be selective in their application of universal norms of international law. As such, Al-Haq calls upon your state to:

1. Denounce and bring to an end, the excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by the Israeli Occupying Forces and Israeli police against the Palestinian people;
2. Demand that Israeli authorities rescind the "shoot to kill" policy;
3. Call for the immediate and unimpeded medical assistance to those injured in acts of violence across the OPT;
4. Call for dismantling illegal colonial settlements and their infrastructure across the OPT, halting their planning, construction and expansion, and ending economic exploitation by transnational and Israeli businesses of the natural resources of the Palestinian people;
5. Call on Israel to cease the unlawful application of its domestic laws and policies to illegally annexed Jerusalem;
6. Put to an end colonial settler violence against the Palestinian people sustained with impunity, including by affording all victims of colonial settler violence access to justice and effective remedies, ensuring the investigation of incidents of attacks, the prosecution of potential perpetrators, and reparations for wrongful inaction;
7. Urge Israel to release Palestinians arbitrarily arrested and detained as part of Israel's collective punishment campaign;
8. Address the root causes of Israeli violations including by fulfilling third states' *erga omnes* obligations, arising from Israel's illegal denial of the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and the imposition and maintenance of an apartheid regime, including by not recognizing the illegal situation, not rendering aid or assistance in maintaining the situation and cooperating to bring the illegal situation

¹⁵ Field documentation on file with Al-Haq.

¹⁶ See Sven Koopmans on Twitter:

https://twitter.com/eusr_koopmans/status/1513560785208979464?s=21&t=TPdgJiNVFMK5V0PPkgqHEw

to an end. In so doing, we urge your state to take immediate positive and effective steps to overcome the illegal situation, including through the imposition of economic and diplomatic sanctions, severing cultural ties, ending all trade in weapons with Israel through a two-way arms embargo and ending military-security cooperation, and adopting legislation to prohibit trade with illegal Israeli settler colonies, in line with the example of the Irish Occupied Territories Bill.

9. Call on the International Criminal Court and the prosecutor to push forward with their investigation into the Situation in Palestine, so that justice and accountability can be given for the victims of Israel's war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Yours sincerely,

Shawan Jabarin

General Director, Al-Haq

