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**Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories**

**Joint written statement* submitted by Al-Haq, Law in the
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Center "SHAMS", Palestinian Centre for Human Rights,
Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue
and Democracy (MIFTAH), non-governmental organizations
in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Israel's Escalating Military Attacks in the West Bank

Since the start of Israel's genocide in Gaza on 7 October 2023,¹ during which at least 26,422 Palestinians have been killed and 65,087 Palestinians have been injured,² Israel has simultaneously escalated its oppression of Palestinians elsewhere in historic Palestine, including its employment of systematic use of excessive force, including lethal force in the occupied West Bank, including the eastern part of Jerusalem. This has, as of 28 January 2024, culminated in the killing of at least 352 Palestinians, including at least 91 children, and at least two women, by the Israeli occupying forces (IOF) in the West Bank.³ Alarming, Palestinians continue to face oppression even after they are killed. Currently, the Israeli occupying authorities are withholding the bodies of 206 Palestinian residents of the West Bank, including 25 children and six women; indefinitely deprived of dignified burial.⁴ In doing so, not only does Israel punish their families, in what amounts to prohibited collective punishment,⁵ but further punishes the dead "by deeming their bodies disposable, ungrievable, [unmournable] and unworthy of a dignified treatment, [which constitutes] a form of cruel dehumanization and othering that targets the erasure and expropriation of their memory and the disciplining of their community".⁶

Notably, many Palestinians were killed during increased large-scale, aggressive and lengthy IOF military attacks and raids across Palestinian cities, towns, villages, and refugee camps. Particularly focused in crowded refugee camps in the northern part of the West Bank, these raids and attacks are characterised by the overwhelming deployment of military force, including snipers; an array of vehicles, notably D9 bulldozers; and recourse to airstrikes. This disturbing escalation of military attacks resulted in the killing and injuring of Palestinians, the destruction of Palestinian homes, properties, and infrastructure, and obstruction of all aspects of life, including healthcare.

For example, in the early hours of 12 December 2023, the IOF initiated a military attack on Jenin city, including Jenin Refugee Camp, which lasted for 60 hours uninterrupted, during which 12 Palestinians, including four children were killed, at least 300 Palestinians were arrested, and several homes were destroyed and damaged.

The IOF raided Palestinian homes in the Camp, arresting residents, vandalising and destroying furniture and other contents, eating residents' food, and in some instances, deliberately urinating on their beds. The arrested then released Palestinians have reported that they were physically and verbally abused and ill-treated, blindfolded, handcuffed, held in open spaces for extended hours, deprived of proper bathroom facilities, and received limited and insufficient meals (once or twice at most per day). Some detainees mentioned that Israeli occupying soldiers intentionally searched their mobile phones, restricted their sleep to limited hours, and failed to provide basic medical needs for those requiring medical care.

During the attack, a group of Palestinians, including armed Palestinians, were targeted by an Israeli airstrike in the old city of Jenin, killing four, including two children, and injuring others. Israeli occupying soldiers and snipers also fatally shot Palestinians who were confronting the IOF by throwing rocks, bystanders, and even those based in the safety of their homes.

Moreover, the IOF routinely stopped and blocked ambulances in Jenin and positioned themselves around three out of the four hospitals in Jenin. This tactic, employed during recent attacks, involves stopping ambulances, checking the identities of transported injured, killed, or sick Palestinians, and impeding the work and access of ambulance teams. In one incident, the IOF forcibly obstructed the ambulance that was transferring to the hospital 34-year-old F.A., who was shot by an Israeli sniper in the pelvic area, and the bullet had penetrated a major blood artery, requesting F.A.'s ID. Lacking his ID, the IOF delayed the ambulance's departure for around 10-15 minutes until F.A.'s full name and ID number were provided by the paramedics through his brother. After confirming he was not "wanted", the ambulance was allowed to leave. Considering that the IOF were positioned

near Jenin Governmental Hospital, located only 200-250 meters away, the paramedics opted to transfer F.A. to a more distant hospital – Al-Razi Hospital, the only hospital where the IOF were not positioned in its vicinity – to avoid further obstruction. These delays deprived the critically-injured-F.A. of a swift transfer to the hospital. F.A. was pronounced dead shortly after his arrival.

In addition to hindering and obstructing the work and access of healthcare personnel, Al-Haq documented the use of a Palestinian paramedic as a human shield during a six-hour-long military raid on Tulkarem city, including Tulkarem and Nour Shams refugee camps on 27 December 2023, during which six Palestinians, including two children, were killed in an Israeli airstrike.

A.S., a Palestinian ambulance driver and paramedic, responded to a call involving a targeted Palestinian vehicle, accompanied by a colleague. Upon reaching the location, the IOF blocked the ambulance, instructing A.S. to turn off the engine and hand over the vehicle keys. Following disembarkation, IOF soldiers searched the paramedics, inspected the ambulance, confiscated their phones, and directed A.S.'s colleague back to the vehicle. A.S. was asked to accompany the IOF to an abandoned building, claiming an injured person was inside. With weapons aimed at him, A.S. was compelled to search the two-floored-building, informing the soldiers that no injured persons were found. Despite his reassurance, one soldier insisted that he search again and thoroughly. Throughout the 30-minute process, A.S. observed laser beams from the soldiers' weapons following him, sometimes directed at him and other times towards different areas inside the building. After completing the search, A.S. was given the keys of the ambulance and allowed to leave. In his testimony to Al-Haq, A.S. reaffirmed, "the soldiers used me as a human shield and did not enter the abandoned building until they forced me into it and compelled me to search it... I felt threatened, especially as the Israeli soldiers had their weapons aimed at me, ready to shoot at any moment."⁷

While all Palestinians, on both sides of the Green Line, continue to endure Israeli repression involving shoot-to-kill practices and excessive use of force, the disturbing targeting of Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank begs the following question: why after 75 years of ongoing Nakba, do refugee camps continue to exist, and refugees continue being denied their right of return? This reality underscores the acute failure of the international community to uphold and ensure the realisation of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right to return; as the continuous and systematic killing of Palestinians, including the ongoing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, stands as a direct consequence of the entrenched climate of impunity afforded by the international community to Israel.

Accordingly, we call on Member States of the Human Rights Council to:

- i. Uphold your legal obligation to end and prevent the ongoing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, and urgently urge Israel to immediately and unconditionally allow the unimpeded access of fuel, water, food and humanitarian aid, including medical supplies, into the Gaza Strip, as mandated by the International Court of Justice;
- ii. Recognise that Israel's systematic shoot-to-kill policy contributes to the maintenance of Israel's settler-colonialism and apartheid;
- iii. Refrain from rendering aid or assistance towards the maintenance of Israel's illegal occupation, and cooperate to bring it to an end, including through sanctions and arms embargoes;
- iv. Urge Israel to immediately bring their rules of engagement for the use of live fire in line with international human rights law, as recommended by the UN Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in the occupied Palestinian territory and adopted by Member States of the Human Rights Council in accountability resolution 40/13 of 22 March 2019;

v. Urge Israel to cease its policies and practices involving arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment, hindrance and obstruction of medical access, use of human shields, and the withholding of the bodies of killed Palestinians; and

vi. Support and enable the exercise of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people and the return of Palestinian refugees to their ancestral homes.

Law for Palestine, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

1 Al-Haq, “Palestinian Organisations Welcome Landmark ICJ Provisional Measures Order Finding That Israel’s Actions in Gaza Are Plausibly Genocidal”, 26 January 2024.

2 OCHA, “Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #104”, 28 January 2024.

3 According to Al-Haq’s documentation.

4 According to the documentation of Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center. Since 7 October 2023, Israel has been withholding the bodies of hundreds of killed Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip, without the ability to confirm the exact number due to Israeli-imposed restrictions. Notably, 191 unidentified Palestinian residents of Gaza have had their bodies released by Israel and were buried in Gaza in a mass grave.

5 Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 33.

6 Al-Haq, “Joint submission to EMRIP and UN experts on the Israeli policy of withholding the mortal remains of indigenous Palestinians”, 22 June 2020.

7 Testimony of A.S., 30, taken on 27 December 2023, on file with Al-Haq.