

SPECIAL FOCUS

SETTLER KIDNAPPINGS: TORTURE, SEXUAL ABUSE AND TERRORISATION OF PALESTINIAN ABDUCTEES AS ISRAEL DEEPENS ANNEXATION OF WEST BANK



AL-HAQ

“We will kill you. We won't leave any Arabs here, and we will deport the rest of the Arabs to Jordan.”

Introduction

As part of its continuing effort to erase the Palestinian people, Israel has escalated its settlement expansion since 7 October 2023, which has paved the way for increasing settler violence, as recognised by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its July 2024 Advisory Opinion. In *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, the ICJ found that Israel was carrying out acts of racial segregation and apartheid in the Palestinian territory and that its presence is illegal, breaching peremptory norms of international law, namely the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the prohibition against the acquisition of territory through use of force.¹ The latter norm is enshrined in Article 2(2) of the United Nations (UN) Charter and constitutes the very basis of the post-World War II international order, and has been recalled in countless resolutions from the UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions that condemn Israel's acquisition of territory by force and advancement of its settler enterprise therein.

More recently, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a report in which it concluded that the acceleration of settlement activity in the occupied West Bank . . . deepened the coercive environment that simultaneously displaced an unprecedented number of Palestinians and facilitated the further entrenchment of unlawful settler presence”.² In the same vein, Al-Haq further highlighted that, far from being isolated incidents, these violent attacks are “a direct result of Israel's aggressive campaign of settlement across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the wider imposition of its settler colonial apartheid regime”.³

This coercive environment thus serves the Zionist agenda to appropriate more Palestinians lands and engineer the demography in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Settler violence is backed by Israel through equipment, funding and training as well as officials' public statements. Afterwards, Israeli settlers' criminal conduct is never genuinely investigated by Israel's police, which upholds the long-standing culture of impunity for acts committed by Israelis against Palestinians, and bolsters further settler violence.⁴

Against this background, a pattern of incidents has emerged, involving abductions, detentions and beatings of Palestinians by settlers, in attacks carried out over hours, until the Palestinian

¹ ICJ, *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, Advisory Opinion, 19 July 2024, para. 148.

² Human Rights Council, “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights”, 4 February 2026, A/HRC/61/70, para. 44.

³ Al-Haq, “Al-Haq calls for immediate and effective measures from Third States and the EU to stop Israeli settler attacks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, 13 March 2026, available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/27420.html> .

⁴ Al-Haq, *The Killing of Awdah Hathaleen: Beyond a Settler Crime*, 28 July 2026, available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/FAI-Unit/27750.html>

Authority (PA) or Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) intervene. Al-Haq has collected testimonies documenting this pattern.

I. Abductions and Ill-treatment of Palestinians by Israeli settlers

1. Settler Attacks, Abduction and sexual assault of Palestinian Human Rights Defender

M.M., (47), an employee at the Wall and Settlement Resistance Commission, and Director for the Central West Bank Governorates, highlighted that settler attacks on the Wadi al-Siq Bedouin community, located on the lands of Deir Dibwan village, east of Ramallah, have increased—especially after settlers established a settlement outpost, so-called ‘Ben Baz Farm’ in February 2023. On 12 October 2023, settlers stormed the village and terrorised Palestinians for more than three hours, forcing 28 families to leave their homes out of extreme fear. As the villagers fled, the settlers positioned themselves at the entrance to the village, which branches off from the Alon settlement road, and assaulted the forcibly displaced Palestinians.

M.M. who was driving with his colleague, **M.N. (27)**, explained to Al-Haq that two settler cars had followed his car, and stopped right next to it. Around 10-12 settlers disembarked from the two cars, some from the open trunks. They were all armed with M16 rifles, and two or three of the settlers were masked. M.M. recalled:

They were wearing regular army uniforms, but I'm sure they were settlers because they arrived in settler vehicles, and some of their faces are familiar to us. They are settlers from several settlement outposts scattered throughout the area. They attacked us while we were outside our car, near the women and children.

Threatening M.M. and his colleague with their weapons, both men were ordered to lie face down on the ground, as settlers who wore boots and sneakers, proceeded to kick them in the sides and the head, and confiscated their money and wallets. M.M. recalled that: “*One of them, who was masked, was shouting at us in an Arabic dialect similar to that of the people of the villages near Nablus*”. M.M., described receiving at least ten hard kicks to the head, as settlers threatened:

“We will kill you. We won't leave any Arabs here, and we will deport the rest of the Arabs to Jordan.”

A masked settler ordered M.M. to unlock his mobile phone and when he refused the settler beat him with a rifle on both of his arms and shoulders, with around five blows. When M.M struggled to unlock his phone with an iris scan, the settler struck his head with the butt of the rifle, causing it to bleed. M.M recounted to Al-Haq:

My head was throbbing, and blood began to gush from my head, onto my eyes and face. Then I unlocked the phone for him using the passcode. The settler took the phone and walked away, while I remained lying face down on the ground. The other settlers took turns kicking me . . .

M.N was close to me, about five meters away, and I noticed he was also being beaten. I couldn't see him because my face was down, but I could hear him groaning in pain and the settlers hitting him. I kept bleeding, and the settlers didn't offer me any treatment.

Every time I raised my head and tried to wipe the blood from my face, they would stomp on my head and smear my face with dirt.

While the settlers were attacking them, one of the settlers shouted in Hebrew "He has a knife!". M.M described the life-threatening terror he felt in that moment:

At that moment, I felt that the settlers were going to kill me for sure and that they would claim I had tried to carry out a stabbing attack against them. I replied to him in Hebrew: "Look, what I have is a vegetable knife and kitchen utensils".

M.M explained that the belongings of the Wall and Settlement Resistance Committee, which had been in their tent, included chairs, sleeping bags, kitchen equipment, and a cooking gas stove. These items were in a bag in the trunk of the car that MM had been driving, and the trunk was locked. The settler insisted:

"No, this is a knife you want to stab us with". I saw him for a moment as all the car doors were open and everything inside was taken out. I heard the settler say he also had a stick to hit us with. I remembered I had a pickaxe stick with me, so I told him, "This is a stick for work." Then the settlers brought the sticks and started hitting M.N and me all over our bodies.

While M.M and M.N were being attacked and beaten by settler, two vehicles belonging to the Israel Civil Administration along with a settler guard arrived on the scene. When the cars arrived, the settlers stopped beating the men. M.M explained to the soldiers, that the settlers had taken their IDs, money and phones. The settlers told them they had a knife. The soldier checking the men's IDs said to the settlers that M.M and M.N had been previously detained on so-called "security charges", alleging *"These men were imprisoned on security charges. These are terrorists."* When M.M asked the soldier if the men who attacked him and M.N., were settlers or soldiers, the soldier replied that said they were soldiers. MM recalled to Al-Haq:

I asked him if they were soldiers or settlers, and he said they were soldiers, even though I was sure they were settlers. In front of the Civil Administration officers, the settlers tied my hands and Muhammad's behind our backs with ropes.

M.N. and M.M. were subsequently deprived of their liberty for about ten hours and subjected to further beatings. They were taken to an area with an empty sheep pen, away from the locals who were still in the area, and forced to lie face down with their hands tied behind their backs and eyes blindfolded. M.M, feared for his life— *"I knew the settlers would definitely finish us off."* The floor was *"littered with sheep feed scraps."* M.M recounted how:

A settler put his foot on my head and rubbed my face against the pen floor several times, saying, "Eat, eat!" He meant that he was treating me like a sheep, as there were remnants of hay and sheep feed on the floor. I don't know if he did the same to Muhammad, as I was in a state of panic, disorientation, and exhaustion at the time.

I had started to feel chest pain due to my previous heart problems. I told him in Hebrew that I had heart problems and had undergone heart surgery. He picked me up and asked me where, so I pointed towards my heart. He then kicked me in the chest area, saying, "Die, die!" He pushed my face back to the ground, then got up and started jumping on my back forcefully three or four times.

I felt as if my spine was going to break, and that the purpose of these blows was to cause me permanent disability. After that, he started kicking me in the side, towards my kidneys, and said to me: "You know the Jews have gone mad... We will kill you all... and send you to Jordan." Then he went outside the barracks, and M.N., was next to me. I could hear him being beaten and crying out in pain.

M.M recalls that another man was brought into the sheep pen, he could tell by his voice that he was Bedouin. He heard the settlers saying to each other, "Look at these terrorists, this is a Bedouin youth". M.M was continuously beaten for five minutes, after which someone poured cold water on his body, and he was then beaten with sticks all over. He could hear M.N and the third person (the Bedouin) crying in pain. The men were subjected to further beatings, smears and insults, and threats to their lives, with the settlers shouting:

"You're all garbage Arabs, you must die and go to Gaza!" After that, the beating continued in rounds, each lasting about an hour, with a few minutes' pause in between.

. . . a settler came and urinated on my head and body. I don't know if he urinated on the other two young men. He kept saying, "You must die." After that, he left us for about ten minutes. I started screaming from the intense pain in my hands. I felt excruciating pain, as if the blood had stopped flowing in them, and they were swollen and about to break.

After the beating a settler came and untied the ropes on M.M.'s hands, and then proceeded to tie his hands behind his back with braided construction wire, causing even more pain. He then resumed beating M.M. for a further ten minutes, "with a stick—wood or plastic". M.M. recalled to Al-Haq an attempted sexual assault by the settler:

After that, he placed the stick against my anus, over my underwear, without removing my underwear, and began to press, trying to insert the stick into my anus. I started pushing myself to prevent the sticks from entering, while he put all his weight on me and kicked me in the back to make me relax, but I refused. This went on for about two minutes, and with the pressure, I managed to move away from him. Then he started beating me mercilessly. I broke down and cried, "Just give me a bullet in the head so we can end this!" I stayed there for about half an hour, completely distraught, hearing Muhammad and the Bedouin shouting. It was a quarter to seven in the evening . . .

Once released, M.M., the Bedouin man, named M.K. and M.N. sought medical attention for the bruises all over their bodies. According to M.M.:

All three of us had very high levels of muscle enzymes due to the beating we had endured, in addition to damage to our kidneys and livers. We were given painkillers, IV fluids, and the necessary medications. My head wound was closed with four metal stitches. I stayed in the hospital for a day and a half, [M.N.,] for three days, and [M. the Bedouin man] for four days. Afterward, I went to an ENT specialist because I felt dizzy when standing. The examination revealed that my right eardrum was perforated as a result of being beaten.

*I filed a complaint with the Palestinian police and intend to file a complaint with the Israeli police.*⁵

2. Violent settler attacks on Palestinian Farmers

2.1 The Abduction, Detention and Degrading Treatment of I.Z from Beit Iksa

On 12 March 2026, **I.Z., (29)**, a local farmer, was abducted and detained for several hours by settlers from a newly established settlement outpost in Beit Iksa. The construction of the settlement outpost has prevented Palestinian families from accessing their agricultural lands. A military checkpoint further prevents access to Beir Iksa village, preventing Palestinian residents from reaching their homes or visiting their families, especially during the holidays, thus exacerbating the social and psychological impact of these violations.⁶

The settlement has also cut off I.Z and his family from accessing approximately 10 dunams (around two acres) of his agricultural land, and deprived Palestinian children of access to the natural spaces where they used to play “*affecting their sense of security and freedom within their environment*”.⁷ Four settlers, who are also members of the army, are stationed in the area and forcibly prevent the villagers from accessing their land. Palestinians, including I.Z., who attempt to access their agricultural lands are harassed and assaulted by settlers — some of whom are also soldiers in the IOF.

On 12 March 2026, I.Z., was attacked by settlers, handcuffed, had a bag covering his face, was stripped of his clothes, physically abused, and detained for several hours by Israeli settlers, who dragged him into the settlement outpost as he tried to access his agricultural lands. The settlement outpost had been established the night before the incident. His brother, **K.Z.** described witnessing the profound psychological consequences of the abduction on I.Z., stating:

What my brother endured was not merely a physical assault; it caused him and the entire family profound psychological trauma. He returned to us in a state of extreme exhaustion and fear, and he continues to suffer from clear psychological effects, including anxiety, sleep disturbances, and a persistent feeling of insecurity.

The incident has also deeply affected our parents, especially my mother, who lives in constant anxiety and fear for her children. On a social level, this incident has created a climate of tension and fear among the villagers, particularly the farmers who now hesitate to access their land for fear of similar attacks . . .

We used to use this land freely, including taking our children to play there, but now we can no longer approach it due to repeated attacks. Every time we try to reach our land, we are harassed and assaulted.

The objective is to impose control over the land by force through the implementation of discriminatory apartheid regime over the Palestinian people. By restricting their daily lives and depriving them of their resources, lands and livelihoods,⁸ State backed Israeli settler violence

⁵ Al-Haq, Affidavit taken from M.M., 47, resident of Kafr Aqab, on 17 October 2023, on file with Al-Haq, 2023-10-1021-RB-F-A1-IL-SET.

⁶ Al-Haq, Testimony taken from I.S., 29, resident of Humsa al-Tahta, on 24 March 2026, on file with Al-Haq.

⁷ Al-Haq, testimony taken from K.Z., resident of Beit Iksa, on 27 March 2026, on file with Al-Haq.

⁸ Al-Haq, testimony taken from K.Z., resident of Beit Iksa, on 27 March 2026, on file with Al-Haq.

creates coercive environments to repel the indigenous Palestinian population and force their transfer.

2.2 Attack on Farmer and Father of Three Children in Hamseh Al-Tahta

S.A. (29), from the Hamseh Al-Tahta community in the Northern Jordan Valley, is married with three daughters, and raises livestock as his sole source of livelihood. The family, along with the families of his brother, uncle and his father, live in tents made of canvas and metal on the land.

East of Hamseh Al-Tahta village is the settlement of Beka'ot, and its agricultural lands are now controlled by settlers. Over three years ago, settlers established a settlement outpost about 2.5 to 3 km away from the Hamseh Al-Tahta community and settlers have been bringing their cattle into the vicinity of the Palestinian farmers. The settlers demarcated grazing areas and fenced off the surrounding mountainous region, severely restricting access to grazing areas to Palestinian farmers. Settlers have carried out attacks against the community, using four-wheel drive vehicles and motorcycles— driving up to the tents where Palestinian communities live, provoking and intimidating the women and children.

On 13 March 2026, during the holy month of Ramadan, S.A., (29) was viciously attacked, sexually assaulted, humiliated and tortured by settlers in his tent, along with international solidarity activists who had been sleeping in another tent to protect the communities' lands. At around 1:00 am, as he slept in a tent near his livestock, and away from the family living tent, he heard a dog barking. When S.A. opened the tent flap, a number of masked people carrying sticks and sharp objects attacked him. They demanded his phone, and the phones of the solidarity activists who were nearby.

S.A., recalled to Al-Haq how he was violently sexually assaulted by the attackers, who restrained him with plastic ties:

I was then restrained with plastic ties, as were the foreign solidarity activists, who were beaten just like me and also restrained with plastic ties. However, I was severely beaten with their hands, feet, and the sticks they were holding until I completely collapsed. While they were beating me, one of them stripped me of my clothes using a knife they had, then tore my pants and underwear until I was completely naked.

Then one of them struck me on my genitals, and my genitals were also tied with plastic ties, as were my hands. After I was completely exhausted, these people—who were shouting and speaking to me in Arabic but conversing among themselves in Hebrew— At that moment, I realized they were settlers—and perhaps there were Arabs among them, or maybe they spoke Arabic just to avoid arousing suspicion. Four of them dragged me across the ground, pulling me by my penis after it had been tied with plastic ties; it was so painful that I felt as if they were going to cut it off. Others dragged the solidarity activists to the same spot.

S.A. was then brought by the attackers to the family tent. On his way he could hear the sound of his sheep being taken from their pens. He realised “*our sheep are being stolen*”, which again confirmed his suspicion that the attackers were settlers. As he approached the tent, he saw a child being pushed by the attackers until she fell to the ground crying. He recognised from her cries that it was his three-year-old daughter L. He was dragged into the tent with the women

and children. Anyone who cried or screamed was beaten by the attackers. S.A., was tied up by his genitals, beaten and left naked and humiliated in front of the women and children. S.A recalled to Al-Haq:

As soon as I entered, naked and tied up, my wife, N.H.A.K., started screaming and immediately someone approached her and punched her in the face . . . My niece, J.M.A.K., (3 years old), was also pushed to the ground, falling and rolling. Anyone who screamed was severely beaten, whether women or children. The beatings were with hands and feet, while the beatings for the men were with hands, feet, and sticks . . .

While we were inside the tent, I was in a very embarrassing and humiliating situation. I was completely stripped naked and tied up by my genitals in front of the children, women, and everyone else. On top of all this humiliation, I was severely beaten until I was completely exhausted and unable to move. I heard my brother's wife screaming and crying, saying that someone had snatched the ring from her hand and stolen it. We remained like this for about an hour . . .

Before they fled, the attackers threatened to burn, rape and kill the family.

One of them told us in Arabic, "If you stay here, we will return and burn your tents, rape your women, and kill your children." The whole time, they were hurling insults at us in Arabic ("You son of a whore!" and "You brother of a whore!") . . .

As soon as we were sure they had fled and we could no longer hear their voices and noise, we went out of the tent. I couldn't move, so they helped me up, and the restraints on my hands and genitals were removed with a knife by one of my brothers . . .

The family were left in a state of shock and exhaustion from the torture, intimidation and sexual assault. S.A., along with his father and uncle were taken to the Turkish Hospital in Tubas. The family were left traumatised, with S.A describing “*To this day, we are all in a very difficult psychological state. The children cannot sleep and cry constantly, especially in the evenings*”. The family have been left without their livestock and with no source of income to live off—“*five families have lost everything, including a flock of sheep*” — “*The situation here has become unbearable, and we might leave at any moment*”. S.A. cautioned that the sexual assault on him was intended to increase the fear amongst the remaining Palestinian families, to “*force them to leave through intimidation*”.⁹

II. Collusion in Joint Israeli Occupying Force (IOF) and Settler Attacks

3. Settlers and IOF abduction of Palestinian father M.B.H.A and his Uncle A.

3.1 Testimony of M.B.H.A, aged 35

M.B.H.A., (35), a Palestinian father to B., aged 6, recounted to Al-Haq how he and his uncle were abducted, detained, and tortured by Israeli settlers for about two hours on 26 April 2026. On Saturday, 26 April 2026, at around 2:30 pm, as M.B.H.A., was at home when his son B. came to him saying that he had seen armed men near the house. B. was extremely frightened. When M.B.H.A reached the street in front of his house, he heard someone shouting at him in

⁹ Al-Haq, testimony taken from S.A. (29), resident of Hamsa al-Tahta, on 13 March 2026, on file with Al-Haq.

Hebrew—something along the lines of “*Come here*”. When M.B.H.A., turned round he saw a man aged between 20 and 30 wearing a military uniform resembling that of the regular Israeli military. He was carrying a long rifle and wearing a green cap. He stood in front of M.B.H.A., about 10–15 metres away, hiding behind a tree. He raised his weapon, aimed it at M.B.H.A. and then started to run towards M.B.H.A, shoved the rifle in his mouth and threatened him. M.B.H.A., recalled to Al-Haq:

When he reached me, he put the muzzle of the rifle in my mouth and said to me in Arabic, “Shut up, don’t say a word.”

Less than a minute later, two settlers arrived at the same and started to beat him.

I recognised them as settlers from their clothing and appearance. Both were armed with long rifles. As soon as they reached my position and that of the man in military uniform, they both grabbed me by the hands—each taking one—and placed my hands behind my back, I felt a hard blow to my right shoulder from behind; it was clearly from the settler in military uniform, as he was behind me, and it was clearly the butt of his rifle. One of the settlers then struck me across the face with the flat of his hand.

Then they forced me to lower my head. One of them placed his hand on my head while the other two pushed me from behind. They forced me to walk in that position for about 20-25 meters, then sat me down on my knees under a tree and forced my head down again. At that point, one of them placed his knee on my back.

M.B.H.A recalled that by then they had reached his uncle’s house. The settlers took his phone and began searching through it. The man in the military uniform left with another settler, while five settlers remained with M.B.H.A. Ten minutes later, the man in military uniform and the other settler returned, leading M.B.H.A.s’s uncle to the same spot. They sat him down next to M.B.H.A in the same position and asked him about his phone, which he didn't have. The man in military uniform and the other settler then forcibly took him to his house to get it. When they returned, the men were forced to sit in the same place for about 30-40 minutes. M.B.H.A recalled to Al-Haq:

During that time, the seven settlers would sometimes hit us and sometimes insult us . . . Every time I tried to ask why they had taken us, they would tell me to be quiet, point their weapons at me, and threaten to kill me. After 30-40 minutes, two settlers grabbed me by the hand and did the same to my uncle. They began pulling us roughly with their hands, then started running, forcing my uncle and me to run faster to keep up . . . After walking about 500-600 meters along a very rough path, the settlers sat us down again, this time under an olive tree . . .¹⁰

Three of the settlers then returned to the outpost and another two settlers remained with M.B.H.A and his uncle. About five minutes sitting under the olive tree, a white four-wheel-drive vehicle arrived at the spot. The soldier driving the vehicle asked M.B.H.A and his uncle what their names were, whilst sitting in the car. The vehicle then moved forward a little and then returned,

¹⁰Al-Haq, affidavit taken from M. A. (36), resident of Kobar (26 April 2026), on file with Al-Haq, 2025-04-051-RB-F-T2-IL-SET.

remaining there for approximately 30 minutes. M.B.H.A heard the person driving the white car – whom he believed to be a soldier from his uniform – speaking to the settlers in Hebrew, telling them to wait 10 minutes before leaving the area. The car then left, heading towards the outpost. The settlers proceeded to blindfold M.B.H.A and brought him to the outpost where he was then questioned by Israeli soldiers. M.B.H.A recounted:

They then pulled off my top and used it to blindfold me; they also placed both my hands behind my back, tied them with plastic ties and tightened those ties around my wrists very tightly. They then led me towards the outpost, and on the way, I would suddenly bump into rocks, or a very sharp metal fence, or find myself falling onto sharp grass. They led me along for about 10–15 minutes, then made me sit on the ground and told me not to move. As soon as I sat down, I heard a clear voice – that of a girl – asking me, ‘What is your name?’ . . .

When they lifted my T-shirt from over my eyes, I saw in front of me about seven soldiers in full military uniform, with all their military gear; among them were two female conscripts. A soldier asked me my name and, in Arabic, asked me, ‘Why are you throwing stones?’ I replied that they had arrested me in front of my house and that I hadn’t been throwing stones. . .

Two female conscripts lifted me off the ground and led me towards a military vehicle parked 10 metres away. They covered my eyes with a white cloth and put plastic ties back on my wrists, but this time my hands were tied in front of me.¹¹

The military vehicle set off along a rough road and drove for approximately 10–15 minutes, to the ‘Nehla’el’ settlement, the closest settlement to the village of Kober. M.B.H.A remained bound and blindfolded as four soldiers surrounded him, pulling the ties around his wrists tighter. When he asked to go to the toilet, he was told to be quiet, but eventually they brought him. He was kept in this room for three hours— “every time I dozed off, one of the soldiers would come over and kick me.” After some time, three female soldiers entered the room, and one returned M.B.H.A.’s phone. He was then led out to a black car, which was not a military vehicle, and sat in the back seat. M.B.H.A explained:

They took my phone again, opened the car windows and turned on the air conditioning, whilst I was wearing nothing on my upper body but my underwear. After driving for about 15 minutes, the car stopped. They made me get out and told me to raise my hands and place them on the car. One of them cut the plastic ties they’d used to bind my hands; I then lifted the blindfold from my eyes and asked the three female conscripts where I was. One of them told me to “shut up” in Arabic, then they gave me my phone and left the scene.¹²

M.B.H.A flagged down a Palestinian car near the village of Ras Karkar. He later learned that the settlers and IOF had allowed his Uncle A. to leave the area after they had arrived together at the outpost.

3.2 Testimony of Uncle A., aged 54

A.A., (54), also testified to the attack which occurred on the same day and was committed by settlers coming from a settlement outpost illegally established close to their village. A.A., a painter and a farmer, father to a 22-year-old daughter and 17-year-old son, lives in the Al-

¹¹Al-Haq, affidavit taken from M. A. (36), resident of Kobar (26 April 2026), on file with Al-Haq, 2025-04-051-RB-F-T2-IL-SET.

¹² *Ibid.*

Duharat area of Kobar. To the south of his house, about one kilometre away, Israeli settlers established a settlement outpost less than two months ago.

On Saturday 26th April, A.A. (hereafter Uncle A.) went outside to see what was happening and found two settlers leading his nephew, M.B.H.A. (35 years old), down the street in front of A.'s house. They had taken him from his house, which is about 30 meters away from A.A.'s, and were leading him towards the olive groves in the direction of the settlement outpost . . . A.A. was surprised to find two settlers outside. In his confusion, he couldn't tell if they were the same settlers who had taken M. or different ones. Uncle A., described to Al-Haq how the settlers were outside waiting for him:

As soon as I left my house and walked about five meters, they grabbed me, each by the shoulder, so tightly that their fingers left marks on my body. They hurled vile insults at me, mockingly saying in Arabic, "Where are the men? Where are the men?" They then dragged me to the farmland . . .

Both were carrying long rifles, and they pointed them at me as soon as they grabbed me. One of them pushed the muzzle of his rifle against the back of my head, near my right ear. The two of them led me away, each holding me by the shoulder. I kept asking them what was going on, but they wouldn't answer. They just kept saying, "Where are the men? There aren't any men here . . . We're right here, let the men show themselves." They took me to where M. was, and I found them making him sit on his backside on the ground, slapping him on the neck. They forced me to sit in the same position. There were about seven settlers, including the two who had led me away . . .

The settler asked A.A. about his phone, and A.A. told him: "I don't have it with me, I left it at home." The settler told A. to go and get the phone, and made him walk ahead of him while he followed behind, all the while pointing his weapon at A.A. . . . The settler came into the living room of A.A.'s house, where the women were, and A.A. saw him pointing his weapon at them. He asked where A.A.'s phone was, and A.A.'s daughter immediately gave A.A. his phone. The settler took the phone from A.A., then closed the living room door and the main door, took the main door key with him, and threw it outside. A.A. could not recall the settlers features as he was in a state of shock and confusion.

Afterwards, the settlers took him back to M. who was still sitting on the ground with the marks of a blow on his head. The back of his head and neck were very red, and M. was heard saying to the settlers, "I didn't do anything, I was just by my car," and the settlers ignored him. Afterwards, the settlers forced M. to stand. Uncle A. described to Al-Haq his violent abduction into the settlement outpost:

Each of us was held by a settler, and M. and I were led through the agricultural lands towards the settlement outpost. The procession was violent; the settlers deliberately grabbed me painfully, sometimes by the neck, sometimes by my clothes, and sometimes by my hand, twisting it sharply behind my back . . . The settlers led us for about ten minutes through rough terrain, among wild trees, thorns, and rocks. It was clear that the settler leading me was deliberately pushing me towards thorns or stones, which I could have avoided.

When we reached about 400 meters from the outpost, the settlers forced us to sit on the ground again and started cursing us with obscene language. They were saying to us in

a provocative tone, "This land is all ours." Then he forcibly tore off my shirt, tearing the button, and they blindfolded me with the shirt, covering my nose and mouth with it. . . . I could tell from the way I was walking; I felt like I was climbing toward the outpost. Along the way, I was being pushed hard in the back with a rifle. Sometimes I was grabbed violently by the shoulder, their fingers digging into my flesh. Other times, I was released and beaten with the rifle, falling to the ground among the rocks and thorns. During this time, I felt short of breath, especially since I had undergone a catheterization procedure a few months prior due to heart problems.

The settlers continued to beat A.A. Then one of them grabbed A.A.'s hand forcefully, lifted him up, and forced him to continue walking. After walking uphill for a while, A.A. was forced to sit on the ground. When the settlers removed his blindfold, he saw that he was in the settlement outpost. The settlers warned Uncle A:

"Don't let any of the young men throw stones. If any of them do, you'll be held responsible," he told me. I replied, "I'm not the government; I can't stop people." He nodded and remained silent. I told him I wanted my wallet and phone back, which the settlers had taken.

One of the settlers then told Uncle A. to leave the settlement outpost. As soon as he reached his village, he was taken to the Istishari Hospital near Ramallah, where he was found to have "bruises (contusions and discoloration) on my shoulder, lower back, and left leg, caused by the blows" he had received. A.A., explained that the settler violence was deliberate to prevent farmers from attending their cultivated lands:

What happened to me and M. was a rampage and a show of force by the settlers to terrorise the farmers and prevent them from reaching their cultivated agricultural land there. It should be noted that I own around 17 dunams in my own name, in addition to land registered in the names of my brothers and relatives. My own land contains 250 olive trees . . . It is situated approximately 800 metres west of the settlement outpost; in other words, the outpost lies roughly halfway between my home and my land. I am now afraid to go there, as anyone who goes cannot be sure of returning safely due to attacks by the settlers.

III. General Context

Israel's decades long effort to erase Palestinians through intimidation, violence and forcible displacement has escalated since 7 October 2023. In this regard, Al-Haq recently warned against "escalating Israeli settler violence and terror being perpetrated across the occupied West Bank", highlighting the settler attacks that took place in Huwwara and Abu Falah in early 2026, "with the support of and under the protection of Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF)".¹³ The monitoring conducted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reveals a steady increase in injuries caused to Palestinians as a result of settler attacks, ranging "from an average of one injury every three days in 2020 to two injuries per day in 2025 and

¹³ Al-Haq, "Al-Haq calls for immediate and effective measures from Third States and the EU to stop Israeli settler attacks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", 13 March 2026, available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/27420.html> .

more than three per day so far in 2026”. OCHA added that “since the beginning of 2026, more than 1,330 such incidents have been recorded across 250 Palestinian communities, averaging more than six incidents per day.”¹⁴

A key element driving this escalation is the illegal establishment of settlement outposts by settlers and *de facto* tolerated and supported by Israel. For example, Israel provides the settlement outposts “with infrastructure to enable their maintenance, thereby facilitating the unlawful transfer of its population into the occupied territory and further integrating this territory into Israel.”¹⁵ Further, the erection of settlement outposts is “followed by sustained harassment, violence and seizure or denial of resources by settlers against Palestinians to induce their displacement”¹⁶, acts of violence which are supported by the IOF, with impunity.

A report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted that, between 1 November 2024 and 31 December 2025, 84 settlement outposts were established across the OPT, “bringing the total number to more than 300”.¹⁷ Under international law, both settlements and settlement outposts are illegal.

IV. Legal Analysis

The incidents documented above illustrate an emerging pattern of arbitrary and illegal abductions and detentions of Palestinians for several hours, during which Israeli settlers inflict acts amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment and torture upon them. Such acts carried out to entrench and expand Israel’s settler colonial apartheid regime, illegal occupation and annexation of the OPT, comprise diverse violations of international law and international crimes.

Under international human rights law, the kidnapping and detention of Palestinians breaches their right to liberty and security, protected under Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This conduct further constitutes the crime against humanity of enforced disappearance, prosecutable under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹⁸ Further, inhumane acts carried out with the intention of maintaining the domination of one racial group over another, when carried out in the context of a widespread

¹⁴ OCHA, “oPt: Humanitarian Situation Report | 23 July 2026”, 23 July 2026, available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/opt-humanitarian-situation-report-23-july-2026>.

¹⁵ Human Rights Council, “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights”, 4 February 2026, A/HRC/61/70, paras 14-15.

¹⁶ Human Rights Council, “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights”, 4 February 2026, A/HRC/61/70, paras 14-15, para. 30

¹⁷ Human Rights Council, “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights”, 4 February 2026, A/HRC/61/70, para. 14.

¹⁸ Article 7(1)(i) of the Rome Statute defines enforced disappearance as “arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of, a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time”.

and systematic attack on the civilian population, may amount to the crime against humanity of apartheid.

A pattern followed in all these incidents is the abduction, violent beatings, verbal threats and humiliation of Palestinian men. Depending on the seriousness of the ill-treatment of abducted Palestinians, it can amount to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment, which are both prohibited under Article 7 of the ICCPR. Article 1 of the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines torture as conduct inflicting severe psychological and physical pain or suffering, committed, *inter alia*, with the consent of a person acting in an official capacity, with intent and the purpose of discrimination or punishment.

The conduct exposed above has undoubtedly inflicted severe pain upon Palestinians abductees that may meet the threshold required for torture. M.M., for instance, was beaten for ten minutes, which caused him suffering for several days despite the medication he was provided. Further, his attempted rape by a settler, undoubtedly caused significant trauma and fear that he might be subjected to the same treatment or worse in the future. In the case of M.B.H.A, he and his uncle were beaten, verbally abused and threatened to be killed with weapons pointed at them. Settlers pulled their hands, ran and made them run as well to keep up. This conduct certainly amounts to cruel treatment. The statement of the victims testifies to the settlers' cruelty and intent to inflict the ill-treatment upon them. As recalled by I.Z., these mistreatments add another layer to the pre-existing suffering of Palestinian communities who already suffer from the restrictions and strategic fragmentation imposed by Israel's apartheid regime.

As mentioned above, Israeli authorities do nothing to prevent these attacks from occurring and even encourage them. The intent to inflict suffering upon Palestinian abductees is evidenced from the above testimonies-- the purpose is the discrimination of Palestinians because they are Palestinians. In terms of psychological trauma caused by these abductions and beatings, one must note that they are aimed at spreading terror amongst the targeted Palestinians communities to create coercive environments to force Palestinians to leave their land. Notably, "acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population" are prohibited under Article 51(2) of Additional Protocol I of 1977.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As the above state sanctioned settler crimes including harassment and intimidation of Palestinians continues unpunished, the international community remains complicit, and even a co-perpetrator, in Israel's illegal annexation of the West Bank. Crucially, the severity of the situation warrants concrete and effective measures going far beyond the mere sanctions of violent settlers, as these sanctions myopically suggest Israel's lack of involvement in the settler violence. Rather, settler violence and acts of terror are state-sanctioned crimes, which demand a robust answer from Third States in line with international obligations. We therefore recommend Third States to:

- Recognise settler violence in the OPT as state sanctioned settler crimes;
- Sanction the State of Israel, applying diplomatic, economic and military sanctions and countermeasures;
- Impose a two-way arms embargo on Israel;

- Ensure that businesses and financial institutions within their jurisdiction do not participate directly or indirectly in the maintenance and expansion of Israel's illegal settlement enterprise in the OPT;
- Act jointly to terminate economic relations with Israel, including by terminating the EU-Israel Association Agreement with Israel, considering that human rights are violated by Israel, which warrants the termination of the agreement under Article 2 of said agreement;
- Demand Israel's dismantling of the apartheid regime on both sides of the Green Line, and immediate withdrawal of its illegal presence, in light of its blatant violation of the UN core values and principles, including the right of people to self-determination; and
- Initiate proceedings to unseat Israel at the UN General Assembly.