



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

ISRAEL EMBOLDENED BY DECADES OF INTERNATIONAL INACTION



ISRAELI SNIPERS OVERLOOKING AND TARGETING CIVILIANS AT THE FENCE IN GAZA DURING THE GREAT MARCH OF RETURN

As Palestinians continue their call for the right to return to their home and an end to Israeli occupation at the Great March of Return, Israeli forces continue using excessive force in the form of live ammunition, plastic-coated steel bullets, and tear gas canisters, as a means to police the unarmed protesters. The victims include children, women, paramedics, and journalist. Reports show that from 30 March 2018, Israeli forces have killed 280 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Of the total fatalities, 203 were killed at the protests, including 44 children, two women,

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three paramedics, and two journalists. Additionally thousands have been wounded.

Moreover the Occupying Israeli forces target ambulances with live ammunition, tear gas canisters and rubber-coated metal bullets, and systematically attacks and blocks access to ambulances in violation of international customary

law. According to the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, ambulances are protected objects and must under no circumstances be subject to attacks. To illustrate, in 2018, 82 ambulances in Gaza and 14 in the West Bank were damaged or attacked.

ICSFT is deeply concerned at the continued, deliberate attacks on unarmed protesters, including children, paramedics and journalists. Palestinian protesters are not posing any serious or imminent threat to the Israeli forces and thus must not be shot. Palestinians are exercising their right to peaceful assembly and free expression which are fundamental rights and must be respected by the occupying Israeli forces.

Israel, as Occupying Power, is bound by its obligations as set forth under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In particular, the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and Article 3 of the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials restricts the use of firearms to situations of “self-defense or defense of others against imminent threat of death or serious injury” when it is “strictly necessary”.¹ As well Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) finds that everyone has the right to life and “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life”. However Israeli forces’ use of lethal force was

¹ Section 9 of the Special Provision, Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990) and Article 3, Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials (1979)



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neither strictly necessary nor in self-defense of imminent threat to life; hence a direct breach of international law.

UN Commission of Inquiry reported that Israeli forces have committed serious violations of international law in their response to the Palestinian protests, including by applying lethal and other excessive and unnecessary force, and called for accountability to these rights violations. In this context, ICSFT stresses its call that the international community ends its silence on the aggravating human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories, in particular Gaza. The lack of effective action encourages human rights abuses. Impunity and lack of accountability is a major factor in ensuring the continued use of excessive lethal force against the protected civilian population by the Occupying Israeli forces.

The international community shoulders a large portion of the blame for the ongoing situation faced millions of Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and must take clear and urgent action. Mere condemnation of the abuses is not enough.

Systemic human rights violations by the Occupying Israeli forces including among others, collective punishment, confiscation of property, excessive use of force and unlawful killings, lack of freedom of movement and steady settlement expansion, must end.

ICSFT strongly condemns the use of excessive and other unlawful force by the Israeli forces, including sharpshooters, to police demonstrations.

We urge on all stakeholders to pursue coherent and consistent policy that ensures human rights are protected and promoted for all without any double standard and selective criteria.

We call on the UN to keep the independent monitoring of protests so that ongoing abuses are properly documented and perpetrators are held to account.

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Most importantly, as per the Rome Statute we urge the International Criminal Court to exercise its jurisdiction by credibly investigating and prosecuting those who are committing serious human rights violations.

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