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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Joint written statement* submitted by Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 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.

[23 May 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Israel's Violent Attacks on Palestinian Lives and Freedom of Expression

Since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, which started on 2 April 2022, attacks by the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) and illegally transferred in colonial settlers have intensified in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.¹ Such attacks have included, excessive use of force, colonial settler attacks, attacks on holy sites and worshippers, and collective punishment measures against Palestinians including widespread raids, arbitrary arrests, and movement restrictions.² The Israeli government and political representatives have been issuing inflammatory and inciting statements, further aggravating the already deteriorating situation.³ Israel's escalating unnecessary and disproportionate use of force against Palestinians, enabled by its system of apartheid and the inaction of the international community in preventing its impunity, has led to unprecedented numbers of Palestinian killed between 1 March and 22 May 2022, documented at 42.⁴

Increased of Arbitrary Lethal Force Against Palestinians

Between 1 January and 22 May 2022, Al-Haq documented the killing of 52 Palestinians, including eleven children, by Israeli forces in the OPT.⁵ Patterns of violence against Palestinians while suppressing protests and resistance, reflect a planned and intentional policy of shooting to kill or maim Palestinians, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁶ Measures of collective punishment have also been utilized by the IOF on Jenin refugee camp since April 2022. Between 1 April and 22 May 2022, Al-Haq documented the killing of 18 Palestinians and more wounded during military operations in Jenin, and punitive house demolitions were authorized.⁷ The checkpoints of Al Jalma and Bart'a were arbitrarily closed, which denied Palestinians separated by the illegal annexation wall their freedom of movement during the holy month of Ramadan.⁸

Attacks on Holy Sites and Worshipers

According to Al-Haq's monitoring and documentation, every day between 15 April and 21 April 2022, between 6:30 am until around 12:00 pm, the Israeli police raided Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, closed the gates of the compound preventing Palestinians from entering, forcibly emptied Palestinians from the compound, and forcibly held worshipers in mosques in the compound, while allowing entry of Jews to the compound. The police severely and excessively beat with batons, clubs and rifle ends Palestinians at the compound, heavily fired rubber bullets and sound canisters, targeted the upper body parts and faces of Palestinians, leaving them with severe injuries and burns in the face and chest. The raid on Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound on 15 April 2022 by the Israeli police was particularly violent. The Palestinian Prisoners Society reported that the police detained 400 Palestinians on the day, while the Palestinian Red Crescent reported that 161 Palestinians were injured, including 27 children. Of these, 129 injuries were caused by rubber bullets and 11 were caused by severe beatings. Some 126 of the injured were transmitted to hospitals.⁹

On 23 April 2022, marking Holy Saturday for Christians, the Israeli police in a new precedent, tried to limit the number of celebrants inside the Old City and inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Israeli police deployed dozens of checkpoints at the entrances of the Old City of Jerusalem and its surroundings and closed many gates of the Old City for several hours. During the restrictions, verbal altercation occurred between the police and the celebrants in order to open closed gates, and events developed into an attack by the Israeli police on those gathered in the Old City. Tens of thousands were unable to reach the Church at the height of the celebrations, disturbing the atmosphere of celebrations. Dozens of Palestinian and foreigner celebrants were injured as a result of the aggression of the Israeli police. Hundreds of pilgrims were seen crying as IOF forces prevented them from participating in the celebrations, especially at the moment of the appearance of the Holy Fire.¹⁰

Instigation of Violence from the Israeli Government

This alarming surge of violence against Palestinians has been incited by emboldened Israeli authorities, and the shoot-to-kill policy. On 30 March 2022, Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennet released a lengthy recorded address to the nation, calling on civilian volunteers in Israel to mobilise and arm themselves, stating: "What is expected of you, citizens of Israel? Alertness and responsibility. [. . .] Whoever has a license to carry a weapon, this is the time to carry it."¹¹ On 8 April 2022, in a joint statement, Israel's Prime Minister and Minister of Defense announced: "We are granting full freedom of action to the [Israeli Defense Forces] (IDF), the [Israel Securities Authority] (ISA), and all security forces in order to defeat the terrorism. There are no restrictions in this war nor will there be."¹² Two days later, Prime Minister Bennet granted unlimited authority to the Israeli forces to act, stating: "The State of Israel has gone on offense [. . .] I reiterate: There are no restrictions on the IDF, ISA and other security forces."¹³ This instigation of indiscriminate violence against the protected Palestinian population catalyzed systematic Israeli use of force and extrajudicial executions, which has especially targeted those exercising their freedom of assembly and expression.

Attacks on Palestinians' Freedom of Expression

Israel's is systematically targeting journalists to silence Palestinians' opposition and freedom of expression, and documentation of international crimes. Israel's recent willful killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh, and its refusal to investigate her killing, is not only a blatant attack on journalists and freedom of expression but is also a war crime under the Rome Statute. Similarly, during the violent attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque on 15 April 2022, journalists who were covering the violations, were targeted and beaten by Israeli police. In April 2022, several international organizations, joined by the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate, submitted a formal complaint to the ICC, detailing Israel's systematic targeting of Palestinian journalists on behalf of four Palestinian journalists killed or maimed by Israeli snipers while covering demonstrations in Gaza.¹⁴ The complaint highlights the reality faced by journalists and Palestinians alike: a systemic violent obstruction to the freedom of expression that is enabled by Israel's system of apartheid and settler-colonial violence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The deteriorating situation in the State of Palestine is made possible by Israel's oppressive system of apartheid and its continued impunity, unrestrained by the international community. Those exercising their freedom of expression to speak out against the injustices they face are targeted with unnecessary, disproportionate force and intimidation. It is imperative that third states carry out their obligations under international law and dismantle Israel's system of apartheid to protect Palestinians from Israel's ongoing use of unnecessary, excessive and indiscriminate attacks that threaten Palestinian lives, freedom of expression, and right to self-determination.

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

1. Denounce and bring to an end, the unnecessary, disproportionate, excessive, and indiscriminate use of force by the IOF and Israeli police against the Palestinian people;
2. Urge the ICC Office of the Prosecutor to expedite the investigation into the Situation in the State of Palestine, investigate the killings of Palestinians, and take concrete measures to identify perpetrators and issue arrest warrants;
3. 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 the imposition of economic and diplomatic sanctions, 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 settlements; and

4. Urge Israel to release Palestinians arbitrarily arrested and detained as part of Israel's collective punishment campaign.

Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association The Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

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. Ibid.
3. Al-Haq, 'Al-Haq Calls for Immediate Effective Measures by the International Community to Halt Escalating Israeli Violence against Palestinians' (18 April 2022) <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/19927.html>
4. Field documentation on file with Al-Haq.
5. Field documentation on file with Al-Haq.
6. These practices are consistent with prohibited acts of "murder" and "other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health" or the "infliction upon the members of a racial group or groups of serious bodily or mental harm" enumerated in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Apartheid Convention.
7. Field documentation on file with Al-Haq.
8. Ibid. n. 3.
9. Field documentation on file with Al-Haq.
10. Field documentation on file with Al-Haq.
11. Prime Minister's Office, 'Recorded Statement by PM Bennett' (30 March 2022), https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/spoke_statement300322
12. 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
13. 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>
14. International Federation of Journalists, 'Palestine: ICC case filed over systematic targeting of Palestinian journalists' (26 April 2022), <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/palestine-icc-case-filed-over-systematic-targeting-of-palestinian-journalists.html>