



General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 March 2024

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-fifth session

26 February–5 April 2024

Agenda item 7

Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Written statement* submitted by Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), a non-governmental organization 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.

[12 February 2024]

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



Womanhood Denied: The Status of Palestinian Women amid a Genocide

Introduction

The Palestinian people have been living under Israeli settler-colonialism, discriminatory apartheid, and a brutal military occupation for decades. While Israeli policies and crimes affect all Palestinians, there is a disproportionate impact on women, who face a multitude of challenges in a hierarchy of oppression.

Israeli crimes have been escalating at an alarming and unprecedented rate since October 7th, 2023. In Gaza, Israel is committing the crime of genocide, with around 100,000 Palestinians (or more than 4% of the total population in the Gaza Strip) now killed or wounded, or are missing. Around 70% of the Palestinians killed or injured are women and children, including at least 7,750 women killed. (1)

In the occupied West Bank, the Israeli government and state-backed settlers are exploiting the ongoing genocide on Gaza to kill and oppress more Palestinians, while stealing more land and resources, causing immense physical, material and psychological impact on women. Israel has launched a mass arbitrary arrest campaign all over the occupied West Bank, with women reporting widespread and cruel torture and ill-treatment in Israeli captivity through horrifying testimonies and first-hand accounts.

Displaced Women:

Since the start of the ongoing genocide, over 1.7 million people, 75% of Gaza's population, have been internally displaced in Gaza. (2) Under the threat of Israeli aerial bombardment, naval missiles and artillery shells, these people left their homes and are now displaced all along southern Gaza. Half a million of these people will have no home to return to as their homes have been destroyed by Israeli bombardment. (3)

Nearly half of those displaced are women and girls. The majority of these women are living in makeshift tents and overcrowded shelters, with no access to water. This is especially difficult for menstruating women who have no access to bathrooms, or to running water. For women in shelters, there is one shower for every 700 people. (4) The lack of privacy and sanitary products are leaving a grave physical and psychological impact on women and may lead to increased gender-based violence.

Attempting to Give Life Amid Death:

The UN estimated that there were more than 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza, with more than 180 births occurring each day. (5) With a completely collapsed health sector, there are no fully operational hospitals in all of Gaza, with only 36% of hospitals functioning partially. (6) Women are left with no choice but to give birth on streets, hospital floors, in shelters or tents. For women who have been able to give birth in hospital, doctors have been performing cesarean sections without anesthesia, and women who have just given birth had to be discharged just hours after due to the overwhelming number of patients. Miscarriages have gone up by 300% since October 2023. (7) Pregnant women are also facing still or premature births, and doctors are performing hysterectomies to save the lives of pregnant women who are injured. There is no pre or postnatal care for pregnant women. Pregnant women are falling ill and are not receiving the vitamins and care they need to bring a baby to life. Testimonies from women reveal that they have nothing to wrap their newborn babies in, and nothing to feed them. (8)

The UN reports that 40% of the population in Gaza are at risk of famine, as Israel continues to prevent aid trucks from entering besieged Gaza and employs starvation as a weapon. (9) People are turning to drastic measures such as turning animal feed into flour. New mothers are malnourished and not drinking enough water or eating enough food to breastfeed their babies. Over 20,000 babies have been born in Gaza since October 7th, 2023.

These babies are born to malnourished and traumatized mothers and most are not receiving vaccines or medicine, or warm clothing. Their mothers are unable to clean them because of the lack of water, and they cannot be breastfed as their mothers are unable to produce milk to feed them.

Settler Terrorism in West Bank

State-sanctioned settler terrorism has been at an all time high, peaking at a daily average of 7 attacks as opposed to 3 attacks per day prior to the war on Gaza. (10) These settlers are not only protected and joined by the Israeli military, but they are themselves a part of the Israeli military and put on military uniforms. The number of attacks on Palestinian communities have already been increasing since Israel's new right wing government took office in the beginning of 2023, but this increase has been even greater since October 7th, 2023. The number of Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank displaced between January 2022 - October 7th 2023 were 6. The number of communities fully or partially displaced between October 7th and today, are 28. (11) These communities are home to nearly 200 Palestinian families and over 1,200 people, including 586 children. (12)

Harassment by Israeli settlers causes grave physical and material harm to Palestinian women and girls in particular. Most attacks happen on agricultural lands located nearby the illegal settlements while male members of the family are outside the house for work, leaving women and girls vulnerable. Our documentation reveals that 100% of Palestinian women who live near a settlement will not leave their homes without male accompaniment.(13) As a result, many women end up having less economic opportunities and independence. Palestinian girls are subject to harassment by settlers, and Israeli soldiers at military checkpoints on their way to school, and are thus discouraged from pursuing education. This directly affects the socio-economic status of women and girls, leading to further challenges in society.

Record Army Raids in the West Bank

2023 has been the deadliest year for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank since the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) began recording casualties in 2005. The total number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank in 2023 was 507. (14) Since October 7th, 391 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli occupation forces. This comes with increased Israeli army raids on Palestinian cities, villages and refugee camps all over the occupied West Bank. The number of Palestinian political prisoners has more than doubled since October 7th, at 9,000 total political prisoners, 70 of these being women. (15) Many women whose husbands and/or sons are imprisoned or killed by Israel find themselves being the sole breadwinner and caretakers of their families, having to juggle between responsibilities and placing additional economic and societal pressures on them.

Recommendations:

Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH) urges UN member states to:

- Meet their responsibilities to put an end to Israel's impunity and hold it accountable for its persistent crimes, including the crime of genocide, the crime against humanity of apartheid, through the adoption of effective and concrete measures;
- Ensure the realization of the Palestinian people's rights to self-determination and return;
- Ensure the urgent implementation of UNSCR 1325 to provide immediate protection for Palestinian women and to put an end to Israel's impunity considering its ongoing crimes against humanity and war crimes;
- Support the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967 and expand their mandate to include both sides of the Green Line and the State of Palestine's refugees in exile;

- Support the Commission of Inquiry and provide it with political and financial support to fulfill its mandate; and
 - Support the provisional measures order issued by the International Court of Justice.
-

1. State of Palestine Ministry of Health, “Daily Report on the Effects of the Israeli Aggression in Palestine”
2. UNRWA, “UNRWA Situation Report #74 on the Situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including EastJerusalem”
4. ReliefWeb, “Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel: Flash Update #44 [En/Ar/He] - Occupied Palestinian Territory.”,
6. State of Palestine Ministry of Health, “Daily Report on the Effects of the Israeli Aggression in Palestine” February 11th, 2024.
7. Truthout, Zhang, Sharon, et al. “Miscarriages in Gaza Have Skyrocketed by 300 Percent under Israel’sSiege.”,18 Jan, 2024.
10. United Nations, “Rise in Intimidation, Settler Violence in the West Bank, Warns Ocha in Palestine.”
11. B’tselem, “Forcible transfer of isolated Palestinian communities and families in Area C under cover of Gaza fighting”
12. State of Palestine Ministry of Health, “Daily Report on the Effects of the Israeli Aggression in Palestine
13. MIFTAH, Fact Sheet on the Violations against Palestinian, November 2022
14. State of Palestine Ministry of Health, “Daily Report on the Effects of the Israeli Aggression in Palestine”
15. Addameer, Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association. February 12, 2024