

Special Sitting of the Commission on Human Rights
60th Session
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Joint Oral Intervention by Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, Habitat International Coalition & Housing and Land Rights Network (HIC-HLRN), International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), Norwegian People's Aid, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

Mr. Chairman, we are gravely concerned at the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) which has necessitated this special sitting of the UN Commission on Human Rights. We would like to begin by emphasising that this is not solely about a person or a group, but rather about Israel's policy of targeted killing of Palestinians. Further, as national and international human rights organisations, we condemn all attacks on civilians, whether they are carried out by state or non-state actors, as violations of the right to life. Israel has a right to protect the security of its citizens in its territory. However, this must be exercised in accordance with its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. As the need for this special sitting demonstrates, Israel is flagrantly disregarding these obligations through its policies and actions.

Since the outbreak of the current *intifada* in September 2000, Israeli security forces have extra-judicially executed over 200 Palestinians. More than 100 other Palestinians were killed as bystanders during such attacks, including dozens of children, and hundreds more have been injured. Israeli authorities have carried out such extra-judicial executions using rockets fired from helicopter gunships, sniper fire, planted explosives, missiles fired from tanks and, more recently, F16 fighter jets. In the last attack, eight (8) Palestinians were killed in Gaza City, with at least 15 others injured.

Israel's policy and actions are a gross violation of both international human rights and humanitarian law. Both human rights and humanitarian law are concurrently applicable to the OPT, as affirmed by the UN treaty monitoring bodies and special rapporteurs.¹ Such extra-judicial executions deny those targeted their rights to be investigated and tried in accordance with human rights standards. Further, they are a flagrant violation of the right to life of all those who are killed or injured by such attacks.²

Israel's policy of targeted killings is also a grave breach of international humanitarian law. The indiscriminate nature and extent of such attacks contravene the core principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality, and flagrantly disregard the obligation to protect civilians. We would like to emphasise that the practice of extra-judicial executions has been strongly condemned by this Commission³ and the UN Human Rights Committee. Despite this, Israel continues to carry out this policy, even during the present session of this body, in flagrant disregard of its fundamental obligations under international law.

We fear that these actions, rather than bringing security to Israel and its citizens, will contribute to further escalation of violence in Israel and the OPT.

These violations also occur in a climate of denial of human rights and a worsening humanitarian crisis. We are gravely concerned that these violations contribute to the continuation and intensification of a seemingly endless cycle of violence and that without respect for human rights, there can be no prospect for a just and enduring peace.

¹ Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations: Israel, CCPR/C/79/Add.3, 18 March 1998, para 10, and CCPR/CO/78/ISR, 21 August 2003, para 11; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations: Israel, E/C.12/1/Add.90, 23 May 2003, paras 15 and 31.

² Art. 6, ICCPR, Art. 23, HC IV, Common Art. 3 Geneva Conventions.

³ Commission on Human Rights Resolution of 24 April 2003.

We, therefore, urge the Commission to:

- Condemn the unlawful policy of targeted killings and to call on Israel to desist from all forms of violations of human rights in the OPT.
- Request the UN treaty bodies and special procedures, including the UN Special Rapporteurs on Extra-judicial, Summary, and Arbitrary Executions and on the Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, to closely monitor the situation and to call on Israel to fully cooperate with these mechanisms.
- Call for the inclusion of human rights norms and a dedicated human rights monitoring mechanism in a peace negotiation framework.
- Call on Israel to withdraw from the OPT and end the illegal occupation.