



Gaza's Hot Winter

The North Governorate of Gaza was exposed to the worst breach during the last Israeli Military invasion of the Gaza Strip. The violation began on Wednesday the 27th of February 2008 in Jabalia area, North of Gaza, the only justification being concern for "Israeli Security".

All Israeli practices toward Palestinian civilians are clear first degree violations of all international norms, human rights agreements and the international humanitarian law. The latest breach on Jabalia resulted in 120 deaths and a large number of injuries amongst Palestinians most of them being children, women and unarmed men. Israeli troops committed these crimes without any apprehension to the international laws and regulations cited by the International Human Rights laws. Furthermore, they demolished houses occupied by civilians, destroyed the streets, tore down mosques, one of them being "Bader Mosque" in Rafah, all of which lead to serious damage to the area. Israeli forces forbade Ambulance's and Paramedics to reach the damaged areas and help the wounded, most of whom bled to death. To make matters worse, Israeli forces also prevented any supplies and relief aid from reaching areas in need.

Israeli troops opened fire on the relief crew which is considered insubordinate according to article number 59 in the fourth Geneva Convention. Article 59 of the Fourth Convention clearly states "Where a territory has been occupied, the occupying authority is obliged to accept relief action if the population has insufficient supplies"¹ which plainly was overlooked by the Israeli forces.

Sharek Youth Forum is concerned about these repetitive Israeli invasions and lack of respect and commitment to the International Human rights Laws and Geneva Agreement. We ask the international community to interfere abruptly in order to prevent these violations from reoccurring and we call for the following:

1. Sharek Youth Forum calls on all contracted participants in the fourth Geneva Convention to take legal and moral responsibility and commit to the first article of the convention in efforts to assure Israel's respect for this convention and to fulfill it in all occupied Palestinian territory.
2. The Forum emphasizes on the urgency for immediate and efficient intervention to offer protection to Palestinian civilians and to prevent further crimes, some reaching the level of war crimes, from occurring. This is especially vital in a time of increased slaughtering and destruction carried out by Israeli forces against innocent Palestinian civilians.
3. Sharek Youth Forum stresses the important role of the International Civil Society, including Human Rights Organizations, Attorney's Union, and Solidarity Committee's among others, in demanding action from International governments to oblige Israel and guarantee its respect for Human rights in the occupied territories.

Article 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention retrieved from ¹
<http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/57JPF6>

Stories from Gaza

Broken furniture....crumbling walls....devastation in every corner.... This is what we have seen in the home of Ezzedine Abed Rabbo, a six-year old child from Gaza. We have seen in his eyes a detailed account of what happened during the Israeli military invasion on Jabaliya city, which continued unrelentingly for three consecutive days....

My brothers and I were sleeping soundly in our room when suddenly I awoke to an explosion which shook the foundations of our home. I couldn't see any thing because the smoke filled my eyes, I started screaming and shouting and calling my two brothers: Ala' and Na'el..... I groped around in the dark and began to fear the worst for my family. Finally my father came and he managed to retrieve Na'el and myself from the room and save us, even though the room had been destroyed by a direct rocket attack. Ala' survived but he suffered severe injuries from the rocket shrapnel and still remains in Al-Awda hospital today.

After the initial rocket attack the Israeli soldiers stormed the three-story house and transformed it into a military barracks. But that was not the end of it; the Israeli soldiers gathered together the 25 men and women who live in the building and forced them to remain in a 16 meter squared room for two whole days without any food or water and without permission use the toilet. Furthermore the Israeli soldiers took three youths as hostages, handcuffed them and used them as human shields for their continuing military assaults.

After having victimized and tormented the three youth, the Israeli soldiers shot and seriously injured two of the youths and left them bleeding in the street. Riad, a young man who had escaped without been shot and whom we met at the hospital, showed us the marks left on his wrists by the handcuffs. He described to us what had happened to him, and how his and the other youth's human rights had been so brutally violated. After the other two youth were shot the Israeli soldiers left the area and he managed to rescue the other two youth and take them to the hospital. The other two youth were very seriously injured and till this moment they remain in hospital care.

The crimes of the Israeli military did not stop here and the suffering of Riad continued, when he learned that the Israeli military destroyed the small market at the corner of the street which belongs to Riad and his family. This market was the only source of income for Riad's family and now they are left with nothing to provide for themselves.

We visited the house where the attacks had happened and we saw how they had been rendered uninhabitable by the Israeli military. We were shown several gaping holes in the wall where the Israeli soldiers had smashed holes to get from one apartment to another. To add insult to injury, the father Mahmoud Abed Rabbo discovered that money and jewels to the amount of 10,000 Jordanian Dinars (approx. \$14,000) were stolen by the Israeli soldiers.

The Abed Rabbo family is just one example of what so many families suffered at the hands of the Israeli military following their incursion into the Gaza Strip. These stories can only begin to reflect the tragedy and suffering of residents in Jabaliya, one of many areas where several human rights violations were committed by the Israeli military. The soldiers may have retreated but the suffering of the Gaza Strip residents remains.

Sharek Youth Forum's field office in Rafah damaged by Israeli incursions into Gaza in March

One of Sharek's most active field offices suffered structural damage as a result of the Israeli military incursions into Gaza at the beginning of March. The Rafah centre, which houses a computer lab, homework centre and offices for Sharek staff and volunteers, was damaged by heavy fighting in the area. As a result, Sharek had to suspend its activities until such time as the office is repaired and staff and youth and children can safely return to the premises.

