

**Shadow Report for Consideration Regarding Israel's Sixth Period  
Report to the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of United Nation  
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women**

**October 2017**

**A joint Submission by<sup>1</sup>**



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***And***



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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 2 for Compilation organizations' brief narrative

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This submission has been prepared by the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), in cooperation with the General Palestinian Union, to assist the CEDAW Committee (the Committee) in their review of Israel in October 2017. It is based primarily on first-hand accounts gathered by WCLAC from Palestinian women from January 2015 to August 2017 and is supplemented at times by secondary figures and reporting. Some of this information has been brought to the attention of the Committee in WCLAC's submission for the pre-sessional working group.<sup>2</sup>
2. The situation between Israel and Palestine is one of conflict. In preparing this report, therefore, we have utilised and been informed by CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. Reference to provisions of CEDAW violated by Israel will be made where relevant.
3. The report focuses on:
  - Night-Raids;
  - Settlements and Settler Violence;
  - Female Prisoners;
  - Property Destruction and Residency Revocation; and
  - The Blockade on Gaza.

## NIGHT RAIDS

4. Israeli military night raids on Palestinian homes continue to be a major concern for women in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Of the 389 women WCLAC interviewed over the period January 2015 – August 2017, 305 (78%) have experienced a raid on their home.
5. The evidence gathered by WCLAC reveals common characteristics of these raids: they usually occur between 02:00 and 04:00 AM; they are conducted by a large number of heavily armed soldiers in full combat clothing, often including gas masks; property is intentionally damaged; and residents may be physically intimidated with weapons pointed in their faces, or by being hit or pushed to the ground. Doors are often blown off hinges with no prior warning, dogs are often used in the raids, and women may be forced to strip for degrading bodily searches.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ISR/INT\\_CEDAW\\_NGO\\_ISR\\_24245\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ISR/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ISR_24245_E.pdf)

6. These are terrifying and humiliating experiences for the targeted household, especially where women and children are involved. Many reports include evidence of long-term psychological damage and physical after-effects on children such as bed-wetting or an inability to sleep. They have a particular impact on mothers who are forced to witness their young children being beaten, arrested and taken away, with no information as to the reason for the arrest or the location they are being taken to.
7. Following the upsurge in violence in October 2015, WCLAC noted a sharp increase in the frequency and intensity of night raids in the West Bank. Rather than simply arresting suspects, however, the evidence disclosed an increase in gratuitous property damage, such as throwing clothes and kitchen items on the floor, as well as the making of death threats against women and family members who attempted to ask the soldiers for information. In the month of October 2015 alone, WCLAC recorded death threats being made by soldiers in 42% of night raid cases documented by the organisation.
8. This year has again seen an increase in violence across the OPT, culminating with the recent deaths around the Al-Aqsa compound in Jerusalem. As before, the Israeli response has been extreme: collective punishment, night raids and arrests. Reports from a number of Palestinian NGOs reveal 1,268 Palestinians arrested in June and July of this year, the highest seen since October 2015.<sup>3</sup> Many of these arrests take place in night raids, impacting the whole family and, as WCLAC's testimonies demonstrate, causing extreme distress to women and girls who are made to witness their family members being beaten, restrained and taken away to unknown locations.
9. Yet, in 31% (94 out of 303) of the night raid cases documented by WCLAC over the period January 2015 – August 2017 no arrests were made. Where arrests *were* made, the suspects were often released without charge after a period of detention. Many raids, these figures suggest, are simply to intimidate the community. This is further supported by evidence (i) that night raids temporarily increase in frequency and intensity when new military units are rotated into the area and (ii) that the vast majority of night raids happen in areas within 2KM of Israeli settlements.<sup>4</sup> As will be further detailed in the following section on settlements, they are an aggressive means to emphasise the military presence<sup>5</sup> and support the settlement project.

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Jazeera, 'Israel's arrests of Palestinians "highest in years"', accessed 10.8.17, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/israel-arrests-palestinians-highest-years-170809090949701.html>

<sup>4</sup> In a WCLAC submission on night raids made in 2016 to the UN Special Rapporteur, it was revealed that approximately 1,360 night raids take place each year across the West Bank. Of the 20 towns from which the testimonies came, the average distance to a settlement was 1.41 KM.

<sup>5</sup> See for example testimonies provided by former Israeli soldiers to the group Breaking the Silence. Available at: <http://is.gd/7EZvf>

10. Night raids are denying Palestinian women their privacy, a fundamental right protected under Article 3 of CEDAW. They create inadequate living conditions (Art. 14(2)(h) CEDAW) and regularly submit women to gender-based violence in their own homes. The longer-term effects, such as depression and insomnia, are also a significant restriction to the development of young girls, for example in education (Art. 10 CEDAW).

#### *Recommendations:*

11. *respect the right of Palestinian women to private and family life and cease their practice of night raids altogether;*
12. *Where there is a valid arrest due to take place, adopt less intimidating, violent, damaging and invasive methods, in favour of methods compliant with the rule of law;*
13. *During such arrests, ensure that Israeli forces provide the individual being detained, and other interested parties such as the individual's mother, with information as to the reason for the arrest, the individual's rights, and the destination of detainment;*
14. *Demand that Israel seeks to provide reparations for victims of night raids, and seeks to hold accountable any State actors responsible for excessive use of force (physical and non-physical).*

## SETTLEMENTS AND SETTLER VIOLENCE

15. It is widely acknowledged that Israeli settlements in the OPT are a violation of international humanitarian law<sup>6</sup>. Alongside this, they are a constant source of friction between Israelis and Palestinians and they underpin many of the abuses of women's rights raised in this submission. As the UN reported in 2015, settlements are fragmenting the West Bank, eroding faith in a two-state solution to the conflict, and preventing Palestinian enjoyment of basic human rights – freedom of movement, the right to education, and access to water and sanitation.<sup>7</sup> Crucially, as noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, they are also placing immense psychological strain on women and families in general, constantly disrupting and inhibiting everyday family life.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> UN HRC, Report of The Secretary General, 'Israeli Settlements in The Occupied Palestinian Territory', 2016. P.2

<sup>7</sup> Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the Occupied Syrian Golan', A/HRC/31/43, 20 Jan 2016, paras 5-7.

<sup>8</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on her mission to Israel, 8 June 2017, A/HRC/35/30/Add.1, paras 35 and 36

16. Whilst the fenced areas of the settlements cover 3% of the West Bank, in total 43% of the territory is allocated to settlement local and regional councils. By most recent estimates, the current settler population in the OPT numbers approximately 600,000 and counting. As with night raids, the communities most affected by settler violence are those situated close to settlements or roads used by settlers.
17. Against this backdrop, violent attacks carried out by Israeli settlers in the OPT against Palestinians and their property continue to be one of the major concerns of women interviewed by WCLAC. During the period January 2015 – July 2017, WCLAC interviewed 19 women who had direct experience of a settler attack. Such attacks might involve arson, physical violence, car ramming, or destruction of property.
18. According to data compiled by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), there were 224 Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians and their property across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in 2015. Of these, 89 resulted in Palestinian injuries and 135 in damage to property. After 2016 showed a decrease in attacks, 2017 has seen a dramatic rise and return to violence. Between January and June of this year, OCHA documented 89 incidents attributed to Israeli settlers resulting in Palestinian casualties (33 incidents) or in damage to Palestinian property (56 incidents). This is an increase of 88% compared with 2016 and represents a general rise in tension and hostility across the OPT. In these incidents in 2017, three Palestinians were killed and 48 injured, including seven children. These incidents also resulted in damage to over 2,700 trees and 52 vehicles, amongst other consequences. The figures do not include incidents of threat and intimidation, trespass, or other restrictions that do not lead to immediate damage, which, according to OCHA, are more frequent but difficult to monitor systematically.<sup>9</sup>
19. Despite these figures, only minimal numbers of complaints lead to investigation or indictment. One Israeli organisation, Yesh Din, reported that, between 2005-2015, the Israeli police “has an 84.9% failure rate in the investigation of ideologically motivated crime perpetrated by Israeli citizens against Palestinians in the West Bank.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, further demonstrating the prevailing impunity for such violence, in many testimonies gathered by WCLAC, there was evidence of Israeli military or police presence around the time of the attacks. The tragic and shocking case of the Dawabsheh family, for example, who were firebombed by settlers in 2015, killing three family members including their 18-month-old infant, invoked international condemnation of the Israeli police’s lack of response<sup>11</sup> and only led to indictments after such international pressure. Following the attack the UN Security Council issued a statement condemning “in the strongest terms

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<sup>9</sup> OCHA, ‘Increase in Settler Violence During First Half of 2017’, *Monthly Humanitarian Bulletin*, July 2017. Available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/increase-settler-violence-during-first-half-2017#ftn2>

<sup>10</sup> Yesh Din, Law Enforcement on Israeli Civilians in The West Bank, October 2015. Available at: [http://files.yesh-din.org/userfiles/Datasheet\\_English\\_Oct%202015.pdf](http://files.yesh-din.org/userfiles/Datasheet_English_Oct%202015.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> UN Doc A/HRC/31/43, Paragraphs 35 and 36, 20 January 2016

the vicious terrorist attack and underlining the need to bring the perpetrators of this deplorable act to justice.”<sup>12</sup> The nature of the Dawabsheh attack in July bears a chilling similarity to two cases documented by WCLAC in March 2015, to the brutal kidnapping and burning alive of 16 year-old Mohammed Abu Khdeir outside Jerusalem, and to numerous other cases that display a total lack of accountability. This impunity has been noted elsewhere, by the UN Human Rights Committee<sup>13</sup> and the Committee against Torture<sup>14</sup>.

20. Israel is responsible for the actions of these attackers, and for ensuring they comply with the CEDAW Convention.<sup>15</sup> Yet, this is more than an oversight on Israel’s part. The high frequency of violence near Israeli settlements and the impunity for these attacks suggest Israeli state complicity. They place the attacks into the aforementioned system of state-sponsored oppression and intimidation of the Palestinian people, with the intention to force Palestinians off their land.

21. It is important to highlight the effect this violence has on women specifically. Iman K, whose car was rammed in 2016 in Nablus while the whole family was inside, “hugged the children for protection and started to scream out of fear.”<sup>16</sup> Hasna D, whose home was firebombed at 3 AM in Duma, Nablus in 2016, can no longer stay at her house out of fear. Her daughter “wets herself involuntarily” and Iman is “chronically exhausted from lack of sleep and anxiety”.<sup>17</sup> The suffering and indignity experienced by women who see their families attacked, their homes burned, or their cars rammed cannot be understated.

### *Recommendations*

22. *Put an end to the continued construction of settlements in the OPT;*

23. *Recognising the extreme strain such violence places on women, deploy neutral police forces, to prevent violence on Palestinians living near settlements;*

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<sup>12</sup> Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the arson attack in the West Bank, 31 July 2015. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2015-07-31/statement-attributable-spokesman-secretary-general-arson-attack-west>

<sup>13</sup> ICCPR, Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Israel, CCPR/C/ISR/CO/4, 21 November 2014, Para. 16: ‘The Committee is concerned at the acts of violence perpetrated by the State party’s settlers against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and at the lack of effective accountability and protection from such acts by the State party’s authorities, partly due to deficiencies in investigating such cases.’

<sup>14</sup> Committee Against Torture, Concluding Observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of Israel, UN Doc CAT/C/ISR/CO/5, Paragraphs 38 and 39: ‘The Committee is concerned at allegations that acts of violence by settlers of the State party against Palestinians continue to be committed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (art. 16). [39] The State party should take more effective measures to prevent acts of violence by settlers.’

<sup>15</sup> CEDAW, General recommendation No. 30, CEDAW/C/GC/30, para. 10.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1703>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1788>

24. As required by General Recommendation 30, end the impunity enjoyed by state and non-state attackers of Palestinians and ensure redress for the acts of private individuals or entities, as part of their due diligence obligation.<sup>18</sup>

## PROPERTY DESTRUCTION AND RESIDENCY REVOCATION

25. According to UN data, Israeli authorities demolished or seized 1,093 Palestinian-owned structures throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 2016. They displaced over 1,600 Palestinians and affected the livelihoods of more than 7,000 others. These figures are nearly double those of 2015 and are highest since 2009, when OCHA began the systematic monitoring of demolitions.<sup>19</sup>

26. Housing demolition remains a constant fear, and daily reality, for women interviewed by WCLAC. From November 2013 until June 2017, 49 interviews<sup>20</sup> were published with women who experienced housing demolition, or threat of demolition. As revealed in the interviews, families are given a choice: either have Israeli forces demolish their house for an extortionate demolition fee, or to do it themselves. This is a degrading and heart-wrenching task with profound economic, social, and psychological consequences for women and their families, who may be left homeless or forced to live in inadequate conditions.

27. Destruction notices are usually issued due to lack of building permits, which are notoriously difficult to obtain<sup>21</sup>. Only 13% of East Jerusalem's land is allowed for Palestinian construction<sup>22</sup>, whilst only 7% of permits are granted to Palestinians<sup>23</sup>. Overcrowding makes it difficult to obtain justification for a permit application. Resubmissions or oppositions of permit orders can cost thousands of shekels, leading to impoverishment, displacement, and mental strain especially on wives and mothers who are responsible for their family's welfare.

28. In contravention of customary humanitarian law,<sup>24</sup> property demolitions are also denying Palestinian access to humanitarian relief. As noted by OCHA, "nearly 30% (308) of the structures demolished in 2016 were donor-funded humanitarian assistance

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<sup>18</sup> CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 30*, CEDAW/C/GC/30, para. 17.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/record-number-demolitions-and-displacements-west-bank-during-2016>

<sup>20</sup> Women's Voices, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling, Nov. 2013 – June 2017, [http://www.wclac.org/english/einside.php?tag\\_id=17&srcopt=1&page=15&srckey=Keywords&fromdate=From%20Date&todate=To%20Date&art\\_field=](http://www.wclac.org/english/einside.php?tag_id=17&srcopt=1&page=15&srckey=Keywords&fromdate=From%20Date&todate=To%20Date&art_field=)

<sup>21</sup> Jerusalem Women – Issues of Concern, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling, May 2017, <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/JERUSALEM%20WOMEN-ISSUES%20OF%20CONCERN-MAY%202017-Final.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Policies of Neglect in East Jerusalem: The Policies that created 78% Poverty Rates and a Frail Job Market, The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, May 2012, [http://llp.iugaza.edu.ps/Files\\_Uploads/634742470406612100.pdf](http://llp.iugaza.edu.ps/Files_Uploads/634742470406612100.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Only 7% of Jerusalem Building Permits Go to Palestinian Neighborhoods, Haaretz, 07 Dec. 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.690403>

<sup>24</sup> Rule 55, ICRC Review of Customary Law. [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1\\_rul\\_rule55](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule55)



structures. This figure is nearly three times higher than that for 2015 (108 structures) and the value of the assistance destroyed or seized is estimated at over €655,000.”<sup>25</sup>

29. Closely related to this is the constant threat of residency revocation. East Jerusalem, where this is particularly prevalent, has been described by Human Rights Watch as having a “two-tiered system” with “one set of rules for Jews and another for Palestinians.”<sup>26</sup> It is based not on residency or property law, but on punitive measures and collective punishment fed by “entrenched discrimination.”<sup>27</sup> Such collective punishment, supported by evidence from OCHA<sup>28</sup> and Human Rights Watch<sup>29</sup>, is a violation of Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, a war crime.
30. According to official figures<sup>30</sup>, between 1967 and the end of 2016, 14,595 Palestinians from East Jerusalem had their residency status revoked, mostly due to a failure to demonstrate a ‘centre of life’ in East Jerusalem. Yet residency is offered, and revoked, at Israeli discretion<sup>31</sup>. It is not hereditary and, in some cases, can be revoked for a failure to show a “minimal obligation of loyalty to the state of Israel” – an authoritative and degrading criterion for occupied Palestinians.
31. The effect of residency revocations is to force people from their own homes. This leads to traumatic fears of separation from children for mothers and, contrary to Art. 5(a) of the Convention, an entrenching of patriarchal practices across society. Palestinian women living in Jerusalem lose residency rights if their husbands divorce or remarry (Art. 16(1)(h) CEDAW). There is no real choice for children and their best interest is not considered (Art. 5(b) CEDAW): if they remain with the father, the mother will no longer be allowed to reside in the same city as them or even visit. Limiting their access to justice, and contrary to GR 30, female victims of domestic violence fear going to authorities lest they are forcibly transferred away from their children<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin, January 2017. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/monthly-humanitarian-bulletin-january-2017>

<sup>26</sup> ‘Israel: Jerusalem Palestinians Stripped of Status’, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/08/israel-jerusalem-palestinians-stripped-status>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> A Palestinian man from East Jerusalem rammed an Israeli vehicle on 8 January 2017, killing four soldiers and injuring 15 more. The following day, fifteen members of his family were told their residency permits would be revoked. Ultimately, before the end of January, thirteen of his family had their residency removed and were evicted from East Jerusalem. On the decision, Aryah Deri, Israeli Minister of the Interior said: “*let this be known to all who are plotting, planning or considering carrying out an attack, that their families will pay a heavy price for their actions and the consequences will be severe and far-reaching.*”

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Israel: Jerusalem Palestinians Stripped of Status’. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/08/israel-jerusalem-palestinians-stripped-status>

<sup>30</sup> Hamoked, Update 6.4.17. Available at: <http://www.hamoked.org/Document.aspx?dID=Updates1864>

<sup>31</sup> section 11a of the Entry into Israel Law: “The minister of the Interior may at his discretion cancel any permit of residence granted under this law.”

<sup>32</sup> CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 30*, CEDAW/C/GC/30, para. 81(k).

32. If a Jerusalemite woman has been residing with her husband outside the city, but divorces and returns to the city, she will have no residency rights, devoid of fundamental liberties such as the right to movement or work (Art. 11 CEDAW). She is unable to access health insurance or social security benefits (Arts. 12-13 CEDAW), and loses her financial independence. According to a report by HaMoked, in May 2016 there were 9,900 Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem without residency rights, and with the social limitations outlined here.<sup>33</sup>
33. The Israeli residency system discriminates against female Palestinians. It divides families and causes traumatic complications for women attempting to remain with their families in both Jerusalem and the West Bank. These residency revocations are forcible transfer: a 'coercive act' with no grounds under international law<sup>34</sup>. Since they form part of a widespread and systematic policy to transfer the protected Palestinian population, they may amount to a crime against humanity.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Recommendations:*

34. *Immediately cease the practice of residency revocations and review the Entry into Israel law, which allows the Ministry of the Interior complete discretion to revoke the residency rights of Palestinians;*
35. *Reinstate the residencies of all Palestinians who wish to reinstate their Jerusalem residency status and give all current residents of Jerusalem indefinite right-to-remain;*
36. *Grant Palestinian spouses of Jerusalem I.D holders Jerusalem residency status;*
37. *Immediately cease all collective punishment practices and repeal laws allowing the Israeli military to punitively demolish and seal houses of Palestinians, and to confiscate the land on which the house is built;*
38. *Stop the practice of forced eviction and demolition threats which negatively impact the physical and psychological well-being of Palestinian women and their families. As required by GR 30, recognize the particular disadvantages that women face in claiming their right to inheritance as well as their land in post-conflict contexts.*<sup>36</sup>

## FEMALE PRISONERS

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<sup>33</sup> HaMoked, figures released 18 May 2016, available at: <http://www.hamoked.org/Document.aspx?dID=Updates1729>

<sup>34</sup> Art. 7(2)(d) Rome Statute

<sup>35</sup> Article 7(1)(d) of the Rome Statute,

<sup>36</sup> CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 30*, CEDAW/C/GC/30, para. 65(b)

39. On 8 March 2017, Adameer reported<sup>37</sup> that 55 Palestinian females were being held in Israeli prisons. Among these, 12 female children and 16 mothers of 58 children. One girl, D al-Wali, aged 12, was detained in 2016 for 2.5 months<sup>38</sup>. As of July 2017, the number of female detainees had risen to 62<sup>39</sup>.
40. The majority of these are detained in Hasharon and Damon prisons located inside Israel, an unlawful transfer in violation of Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 8 of the Rome Statute. Across such a heavily controlled border, female prisoners are separated from both their lawyers and their families.
41. There is only one prison in Israel – Neve Terza Prison in Ramleh – that is designed to meet the gender specific needs of women. Hasharon and Damon are not equipped for female prisoners and reports are rife of degrading and humiliating practices such as bodily searches that discriminate against women. With inadequate conditions for women, basic health care needs go untreated.
42. Contrary to the requirement outlined in CEDAW Recommendation 35—that “a gender sensitive approach is required to understand the level of pain and suffering experienced by women and that the purpose and intent requirement of torture are satisfied when acts or omissions are gender specific or perpetrated against a person on the basis of sex<sup>40</sup>”—there are reports of inhumane treatment and routine psychological abuse on sexual grounds. Prolonged isolation, sleep deprivation, denial of access to sanitation, stress positions, beatings, sexual harassment: these are commonplace for Palestinian female prisoners

### *Recommendations:*

43. *Cease the practice of transferring Palestinian female prisoners out of Palestine, a practice illegal under international law;*
44. *Grant all Palestinian detainees access to legal services and to their family during family visits. Accommodate such access with complementary practices at all relevant checkpoints;*
45. *treat all Palestinian female detainees with dignity and respect, and with an acknowledgement of their gender-specific requirements;*

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<sup>37</sup> Al-Jazeera, ‘55 Palestinian Women and Girls in Israel Prisons on International Women’s Day’. Available at: <http://www.addameer.org/news/addameer-and-codepink-55-palestinian-women-and-girls-israel-prisons-international-womens-day>

<sup>38</sup> Al-Jazeera, ‘Meet the Youngest Palestinian Female Prisoner’. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/meet-youngest-palestinian-female-prisoner-160425060347954.html>

<sup>39</sup> Adameer, ‘Imprisonment of Women and Girls’, available at: [http://www.addameer.org/the\\_prisoners/women](http://www.addameer.org/the_prisoners/women)

<sup>40</sup> CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19*, CEDAW/C/GC/35, Para. 17.

46. *Cease and strictly enforce a ban upon all methods of inhuman and degrading treatment upon Palestinian female detainees.*

## GAZA

47. The 2014 war crippled Gaza. Some of its effects, reported by the International Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict (the Commission of Inquiry) in 2015, can be summarised as follows:

- a. 2,251 Palestinians were killed during the 51-day military attack on the Gaza Strip, including 1,462 (65%) civilians, 299 women (20%) and 551 children (38%). A further 11,231 Palestinians were injured: 3,540 women (32%) and 3,436 children (31%). 1,500 children in Gaza were left orphaned by the war.
- b. Civilian infrastructure was obliterated: 18,000 housing units destroyed in whole or in part; much of the electricity, water and sanitation infrastructure incapacitated; and 73 medical facilities and many [ambulances](#) damaged. At the height of the hostilities, the number of internally displaced persons reached 500,000 – 28% of the population of Gaza.
- c. Many of the attacks launched by Israel on residential buildings occurred at dusk and dawn, increasing the likelihood that families would be at home and rendering women particularly vulnerable to death and injury.<sup>41</sup>

48. On 15 January 2015, [WCLAC submitted a 55-page report](#) to the Commission of Inquiry highlighting the cases of 36 women from Gaza and including their eyewitness testimonies of their experiences during the 51-day conflict. Many of the issues referred to by the Commission of Inquiry are included in these testimonies.

49. Following the 2014 war, the imposition of heavy restrictions on the free movement of goods, services and people in and out of Gaza have led to shocking socio-economic conditions for the Palestinians living there.

50. Checkpoints are policed vigorously, with constant reports of humiliating and invasive bodily searches, even in humanitarian cases. Long delays are rife and are seriously impacting the health of emergency cases or those who must travel to Israel regularly for ongoing treatment. There are tragic reports of cancer patients not being granted permits and missing chemotherapy appointments.<sup>42</sup> The movement of health workers, medical equipment, and even basic female sanitary products, is also limited.

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<sup>41</sup> Report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict, A/HRC/29/52. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/ColGazaConflict/Pages/ReportColGaza.aspx>

<sup>42</sup> UN OCHA, Monthly Bulletin, May-June 2017. Available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/access-medical-care-outside-gaza>

51. While the population of Gaza continues to increase, the Israeli blockade only gets stricter. In May 2017, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process pointed out that despite a doubling of the Gazan population since 2000, the same period has seen a decline in functioning healthcare clinics from 56 to 49. During the hostilities of 2014, 17 hospitals and 56 primary care clinics were damaged, and with Israeli authorities limiting the import of rebuilding materials, reconstruction of damaged health facilities is impossible. Gazan hospitals and care facilities therefore lack modern equipment, in stark contrast to the facilities settlers enjoy in the neighbouring settlements.
52. According to Head of the Women’s Health Centre in Gaza, the situation is particularly detrimental to pregnant women who are subjected to dangerous risks due to a lack of services and equipment (Art. 12 CEDAW). Abortions, premature births and labour complications are at an increase. Many women are giving birth in shelters, and the few that give birth at hospitals are evacuated immediately post-labour, even those who have undergone a caesarean section.<sup>43</sup>
53. Gaza is suffering an infrastructure crisis as a direct result of the Israeli blockade. Chronic electricity shortages (18-20 hours a day) and inadequate sanitation are facts of everyday life. In such infrastructure crises, women and girls are at the front line of suffering, bearing the brunt of the socioeconomic dimensions. The UNDP, in a recently published report, highlighted the conditions in Gaza as increasingly “unliveable”, an “open-air prison” with 56% youth unemployment and a shocking 78% of young women unemployed (Art. 11 CEDAW).<sup>44</sup> As WCLAC’s testimonies demonstrate, and as supported by recent OCHA findings, this is a particular concern to women, often the keepers of the home, who are unable to provide for their families. As reported by the UN in 2015, the humanitarian crisis “has forced thousands of women to neglect their own needs to save and support their families, with large numbers of them suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and, in many cases, permanent disabilities.”<sup>45</sup> As mothers, daughters and wives, it is, and will continue to be, women who endure the implications of such inadequate housing and living conditions.

### *Recommendations:*

54. *End the blockade of the Gaza Strip;*

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<sup>43</sup> Al-Monitor, ‘Gaza’s pregnant women suffer’. Available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fr/originals/2014/11/gaza-pregnant-women-lack-medical-services.amp.html>

<sup>44</sup> UNDP Report: ‘Three Years After the 2014 Gaza Hostilities - Beyond Survival: Challenges to Economic Recovery and Long-Term Development’. Available at: <http://www.ps.undp.org/content/papp/en/home/library/poverty/beyond-survival--challenges-to-economic-recovery-and-long-term-d/>

<sup>45</sup> UN Report of the Secretary-General: *Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015. P. 41.

55. *Guarantee full access for the Palestinian population to all basic services necessary to ensure the implementation of their rights to food, water, sanitation, and to the highest attainable standard of health;*
56. *Ensure safe and unhindered access to all humanitarian personnel and humanitarian assistance to the civilian population, and allow the movement of necessary medical, food, and infrastructure resources;*
57. *Provide unhindered access for Palestinians to Israel in medical cases, and provide safer crossing services for the ill, injured, and pregnant.*
58. *In line with GR 30, ensure that economic recovery strategies promote gender equality as a necessary pre-condition for a sustainable post-conflict economy.*<sup>46</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

59. It is worth highlighting CEDAW General Recommendations 30 and 35. In relation to GR 30, the ongoing conflict, and particularly the heavy-handed tactics Israel employs in response to escalations in violence, is exacerbating existing gender inequalities and heightening the risk of gender-based violence for women and girls.<sup>47</sup> Gaza in particular has seen a destruction of infrastructure, leading to a breakdown of socioeconomic, family and health conditions for women and girls.<sup>48</sup>
60. Contrary to GR 35, gender-based violence committed by Israelis against Palestinians remains pervasive throughout Palestine. In some cases—night raids, property destruction, treatment of female prisoners, and checkpoint violence—this is committed directly by State actors. In other cases—settler violence—it is committed by non-State actors but endorsed by the State by their failure to prosecute the Israeli perpetrators. Israel is obliged to prevent these acts. They must “investigate, prosecute and apply appropriate legal or disciplinary sanctions as well as provide reparation in all cases of gender-based violence against women.”<sup>49</sup> Rather than legislating against these practices, Israeli law actively asserts them.
61. From the evidence outlined above it is clear that Israel has failed to implement any of the Committee’s concluding observations from their previous report. The State is failing to reflect the provisions of CEDAW in its treatment of Palestinians. Its practices are

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<sup>46</sup> CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 30*, CEDAW/C/GC/30, para. 52(b)

<sup>47</sup> CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 30*, CEDAW/C/GC/30, para. 34.

<sup>48</sup> CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 30*, CEDAW/C/GC/30, paras. 48-50.

<sup>49</sup> CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19*, CEDAW/C/GC/35, Paras 21-24.

denigrating Palestinian women and preventing them from having any realistic prospect of equality with their male counterparts. This occupation causes consistent violations of human rights. It is gendered; its structure and its effects are especially damaging to women, who do not have the access to justice or the social platform to address the imbalance. It exists, substantiating and reinforcing the patriarchal society in which Israel and Palestine find themselves.

## Annex 1 – List of Evidence

### Night Raids

#### **i. Nawal N., Anabta, Tulkarn, West Bank; 17 July 2017:**

*“My name is Nawal, I am a 57 year old housewife. I have two sons, Mohammed (28) and Imad (26), and a daughter Ghaydaa (29), who is married with one child (12). I live with my husband and sons.”*

*“On 17 July 2017 at around 3:00 a.m., the time my husband usually goes to work, I was awake when I heard a loud sound of the front door being taken off its hinges. My husband called out who was there but no one answered. He went over to the door to find 15 Israeli soldiers in full military gear with a large dog inside the house”.*

*“My children were asleep in their room, and Ghaydaa was staying over with her child. The commander addressed himself and told us to gather everyone in the living room. I woke up my children to follow orders: my grandchild remained sleeping. Two soldiers had their guns aimed at us.”*

*“The other soldiers spread across the house and we heard my grandchild screaming and crying. The soldiers came to us with my grandchild who was shaking with fear. He said “the dog attacked me and scratched my leg”. The commander took my son Mohammed into another room, I could hear him shouting, it sounded like a soldier was hitting him. I began to cry as they wouldn’t let me go to my son.”*

*“The soldiers searched the house for a long time, they took nothing but they broke the doors and messed up the cupboards.”*

*“At about 4:00 a.m. using plastic ties, a soldier tied Mohammed’s legs and his hands behind his back. Mohammed was not allowed to say goodbye. He wanted to give my husband the 1000NIS a soldier had taken, but it was never returned to us.”*

*“The soldiers left with my son and never informed us of the reason he was arrested.”*

*On the same day, 17 July 2017, at about 9:00 a.m., my husband called the prisoner’s association and they responded the next day, 18 July 2017, to tell us Mohammed was held in Jalame prison. The association provided a lawyer and on 19 July 2017 he called and informed us that Mohammed will be held for 12 days for interrogation. Until now we don’t know why he was arrested.”*

*“I miss my son dearly and I don’t sleep at night because I worry about him. My grandchild is still terrified.”*



**ii. Sadaa S., Az Zawiya, Salfit, West Bank; DATE:**

*"My name is Sadaa, I am 54 years old. I live with my husband: all our five children are married and each live in their own homes with their families."*

*"On 13 July 2017, at around 2:00 a.m., as I woke to do my morning prayers, I heard an explosion coming from the main door of the house. I got extremely afraid and woke up my husband."*

*"As we went out to the living room, we were shocked to see about 20 Israeli soldiers in full military gear inside the house. Two of them were female, and they also had a sniffer dog."*

*"The commander presented himself and ordered us to sit in the living room; four soldiers stood to guard us, they were pointing their weapons towards us to prevent us from making any movement. They yelled at us whenever we tried to talk."*

*"The rest of the soldiers spread all over the house to search it; I could hear them smashing things: they damaged the doors and threw kitchen utensils to the ground."*

*"My husband suffers from diabetes, so I asked the commander if I could bring him his medication. He didn't let me, and yelled at me to sit still. I felt exhausted because of the way the soldiers treated us, and I was worried that something bad would happen to my husband."*

*"The two female soldiers took me to my bedroom and wanted to search me. I was alone with them and I felt choked and extremely nervous. They asked me to strip down, even to remove my underwear. They searched me using a machine that they passed over my naked body. The strip search lasted for about 15 minutes."*

*"After it was over, I went back to the living and sat next to my husband, feeling humiliated and sad, like my freedom had been taken away."*

*"At around 4:00 a.m., I estimated the time because the dawn prayer had started, the soldiers withdrew from the house. They left everything in a state of chaos, sugar, flour and oil was thrown on the ground, nothing was left in place. I saw the main door now and it seemed like they had used an explosive that breaks the door open."*

*"The commander didn't hand us a search warrant, or tell us why they raided and searched the house."*

*"This was the first time that soldiers raided my house. I was terrified and worried for my husband. Until now I can't sleep at night, I feel unsafe and terrified that they might come back."*

**iii. Linda E., Beitin, Ramallah, West Bank; 6 June 2017:**

*"My name is Linda, I am a 42 year old housewife. I live with my husband and our three children, Elwan (23), Ahmad (17), and Yasmine (16)."*

*"On 6 June 2017 at about 4:00 a.m., when we could hear the call for morning prayer, my family was woken up by a knocking on the front door. My husband went to open the door and I followed him; we were shocked to see 10 Israeli soldiers, in full military gear, and a sniffer dog."*

*"The commander identified himself and entered the house; he told us we must all get out of the house. My husband questioned him but the commander just told us to "get out on to the street quickly"."*

*"We all went out on to the street in front of our house. On the road there were more than 40 soldiers and 3 military jeeps and a soldier's carrier. I didn't know how many of them were in my house at this point."*

*"Four soldiers stopped in front of us and pointed their weapons at us to prevent us from moving. When we tried to talk we were shouted at. We had to sit still for a long time, I was extremely stressed: I felt that my heart might stop from fear for my family. I tried to control my nerves and stay quiet."*

*"A while later the soldiers came out of our house. The commander asked us about Ahmad's whereabouts, while Ahmad was sitting with us. Then one of the soldiers took his hands and tied them with a plastic tie behind his back. We were not given any arrest warrant."*

*"My husband asked the commander what Ahmad had done and why they were arresting him. The commander said nothing, the soldiers left with Ahmad in their jeep. I looked at my clock and it was 6:00 a.m."*

*"When we went back inside the house we saw all the damage. There was nothing left untouched. The soldiers broke all the furniture, doors, cabinets, and kitchen utensils. It was all destroyed."*

*"On the same day, 6 June 2017, at 9:00 a.m. my husband called the prisoners association to tell them about Ahmad's arrest. They responded the next day, 7 June 2017, that he was held in the Al-Maskubieh prison in Jerusalem for interrogation. The association provided us with a lawyer."*

*"After 20 days, Ahmad was moved to Ofer prison on 26 June 2017 and had a hearing set for 28 June 2017. I went with the lawyer to the hearing but it was postponed four times; to 5 July 2017, then to 12 July 2017, then to 19 July 2017. I attended the hearing where*

*my son was charged with throwing stones and Molotov cocktails. The hearing was again postponed to 22 August 2017.”*

*“I feel pain. I feel numb knowing that my son is so far from me, he was taken away from me so aggressively. I miss Ahmad a lot and I hope this will all be over soon.”*

**iv. Nadia H., Balata Camp, Nablus, West Bank; 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017.**

*“My name is Nadia and I am a 56 year old widowed housewife. I live with my four children, the oldest is Mohammad (30) and my youngest is Mahmoud (20). My son Ahmad’s (26) wife Samah (25) and their two kids Nana (5) and Rahaf (4) also live with us.”*

*“On 15 May 2017 at 1:30 a.m., I woke to the sound of a big, loud explosion. I know the precise time because I checked it from my phone. Disturbed, I quickly got dressed and went into my living room and was shocked to find 40 Israeli soldiers, in full military gear, spread inside my house.”*

*“The soldiers had used a device that removes the hinges of the door making a sound of an explosion. I realized this after I saw the state of the door once the soldiers left.”*

*“The commander identified himself and ordered that my children and I sit in my bedroom. Using his weapon, a soldier hit my sons Mohammad, Ibrahim, and Mahmoud, who has Down syndrome. He had no consideration to their condition.”*

*“The commander asked about Ahmad, I told him that he was not in the house because he was arrested by the Palestinian authority.”*

*“I shouted at the soldier, Samah and my grandchildren were shaking from fear. Three soldiers stood as guards, with their weapons aimed at us, to prevent us from moving.”*

*“I cried for my sons and for my grandchildren because they were so scared of the soldiers. Samah, was shaken, and we were exhausted from fright.”*

*“The soldiers searched the house, smashing the doors and cupboards, throwing clothes and kitchen utensils on the floor. They left nothing untouched. I could hear them from the bedroom.”*

*“At about 4:00 a.m. the soldiers withdrew from the house, leaving the house in chaos. We were not allowed to go outside behind them. The soldiers didn’t arrest anyone, and they didn’t tell us why they asked about Ahmad. We also didn’t see any search warrant.”*

*“To this day my granddaughters are unable to sleep from fear. I feel unsafe daily.”*

**v. Nisreen A., Ithna, Hebron, West Bank; 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017:**

*Nisreen is 38 years old and lives in Ithna town near Hebron with her husband Khalil (39) and their three children, Islam (11), Mohammad (10), and Ethar (3) on the second floor of a two-story building.*

*“On 1 May 2017, at around 2:00 a.m. my husband and I woke up terrified to hear loud banging on the main door of our house. Israeli soldiers were yelling at us in Arabic to open the door.”*

*“I heard cries from my children’s bedroom, they had woken up terrified from the noise. I rushed to them and tried to calm them. My husband went to open the door.”*

*“My heart then stopped when five soldiers, with full military gear, entered my children’s bedroom. My children were frozen with fear.”*

*“One of the soldiers spoke in Hebrew to my husband and although I couldn’t understand what he said, I could sense the anger in his voice. My husband told me that the soldiers wanted all of us to go down to the first floor so that they can search the house.”*

*“As we were going down the staircase, my heart started to beat fast out of terror when I saw around 20-30 more soldiers surrounding my house.”*

*“We were ordered to sit in the living room on the first floor, whilst three soldiers remained to guard us with their guns aimed at my children, husband and I.”*

*“The remaining soldiers went upstairs to search my house. Furniture was tipped up and the house was turned upside down, mess everywhere. No search warrant was ever given, and none of us were arrested that night. At around 5:00 a.m. the soldiers left the house.”*

*“We went back upstairs and saw the chaos that was made from the soldiers. My children became upset again and I wasn’t able to sleep that night from fear.”*

**Settler Violence**

**vi. Hasna D., Duma, Nablus, West Bank; 20<sup>th</sup> July 2016:**

*Hasna is a 29 year old mother of 3 children aged 10 to 2.5 from the village of Duma in the West Bank.*

*“On 20 July 2016, at around 3:00 a.m., I was still up in my bedroom, as I have been experiencing problems sleeping at night ever since settlers burned down my neighbor’s house about a year ago. I am hyper-vigilant and I wake up to the slightest sound at night.”*

*"I suddenly heard unusual noise around the house, I woke my husband up and we both looked out the window but we couldn't see anything. My husband told me not to worry and said he wanted to go back to sleep."*

*"I left my husband in the bedroom and went to check on my children, who were sleeping in their bedrooms; I wanted to make sure they were all right. All of a sudden I heard our neighbor's dogs barking loudly so I looked out again but it was too dark to see. Then I heard some movement under the trees and I heard people talking. They were speaking softly so I couldn't understand what they were talking about."*

*"Seconds later my husband came rushing into the children's bedroom yelling and shouting saying settler had thrown flammable material inside our bedroom. My husband and I quickly picked the children up and went to the roof and I started to call for help. Our neighbours heard and came to the rescue and helped us try to put out the fire. By this time the perpetrators had already gone."*

*"Then we went outside. The house was badly damaged by the fire but thankfully no one was hurt. My husband and I took the children to his parents' house which is not too far away, while people who came to help continued to try to put out the fire."*

*"About two hours later three Israeli military jeeps showed up in front of my husband's parents' house. About 10 Israeli soldiers in full military gear stepped out of the jeep and we went outside to see what they wanted."*

*"The commander asked for my husband then gave orders to the soldiers to arrest him. The soldiers led my husband towards the jeep without telling us the reason. About three hours later, my husband came back home and told me that he was detained and questioned at Al-Maskubieh in Jerusalem."*

*"He told me that during the questioning, the officer tried to put words in his mouth; hinting that the fire was a result of an electric short or a gas explosion. My husband held on to his story and insisted that the arson was deliberately caused by settlers."*

*"I am not at all surprised by the incident as my husband and I suspected the settlers would attack our village again and again. We also knew our house was going to be targeted because my husband was a witness in the first case when our neighbour's house was burned down and three family members died as a result. It is worth mentioning that the house of the other witness was also burned by settlers about 3 months ago."*

*"I have been staying at my husband's parents' house since the incident which is hard for me and the children. My younger daughter Majeda wets herself involuntarily. My other children have problems sleeping at night. I am chronically exhausted from lack of sleep and anxiety. I worry all the time."*

**vii. Iman K., Rantis, West Bank, 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016:**

*Iman lives in the village of Rantis with her husband and two children – Elen, who is 3-years-old, and Bassam, who is 4-months-old.*

*“On 15 February 2016, at about 8:00 a.m., we were driving with the children home from a family visit to another village. I was sitting with the children in the back seat while my husband drove. We were travelling at a regular speed when just before we reached our village a settler drove into the back of our car.”*

*“I immediately hugged the children for protection and started to scream out of fear. I thought our car was about to flip over. The settler then drove off without caring what damage or injury he had caused. My husband then pulled over and we inspected the damage to our car which was severe.”*

*“My husband stopped a passing car going towards our village and me and the children received a lift home. Meanwhile, my husband stayed with our damaged car. When we reached home my mother-in-law was there and I felt like collapsing.”*

*“For two days after the crash I had headaches and felt too scared to leave the house. I am really scared now of travelling on the roads outside our village and Elen does not like to be in a car.”*

**Property Destruction**

**viii. Shireen H., Silwan, East Jerusalem; 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016:**

*Shireen is a 36 year old mother of six children aged 19 - 9 from the neighbourhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem.*

*“On 18 July 2016, at around 1:00 a.m. we received a phone call from our neighbors alerting us that Israeli policemen were surrounding our house. Seconds later I heard loud banging at the front door. My husband Arafat rushed to answer.”*

*“A large number of policemen and Special Forces were standing outside the door and on the staircase; together with about five intelligence officers, and about 15 other officials. They searched the house, without explanation and then left.”*

*“At around noon on the same day, as I came back home, I saw a large number of Israeli policemen, hundreds of them, surrounding the house. Some were installing cameras while others filled the streets and the neighbors’ roof tops.”*

*"I went into my house and told my children to get ready to go outside, moments later I heard loud banging at the front door. My son Mohammed answered and asked the officer if they had any written documents. The officer responded with a no. I told the officer that my husband wasn't home and therefore I could not let him in, but he told me that he didn't need my permission and that he was going to search the house*

*"A large number of police, intelligence, and Special Forces officers entered my house and started to search it; they caused damages to the furniture, they search as if they were looking for something but they did not tell us what they were looking for."*

*"When Mohammed asked the policemen to take it easy while searching the house, a policeman attacked him and beat him. My daughter Tamara (13) wanted to defend her brother but a policeman pushed her away and she fell to the ground, then a policeman threw a piece of wood at her but luckily it didn't hit her."*

*"My son Shadi came back home and was surprised to see Israeli policemen inside our house, the minute he got inside the house four soldiers held him and started to beat him without justification."*

*"I felt totally helpless as I stood aside and watched my children being beaten in front of my eyes. Then the policemen made me take them around the house, so they could search it."*

*"When they were done searching, they arrested my sons, Shadi and Mohammed, without telling us why and without giving us any written documents. Then they told us my sons were accused of obstructing their work."*

*"At about 9:00 pm on the same day, again, I heard loud banging at the door. My husband turned on the lights and opened the door. There were 8 Israeli officers. My husband did not allow them in, and they left."*

*"At around 4:45 a.m. my husband and I woke up to unusual sounds in the neighborhood. We looked out the balcony and saw Israeli officials demolishing our storerooms which my husband rents out to earn us some money. They had two bulldozers and military jeeps and two GMC cars."*

*"My husband ran outside but the officials did not allow him to get near the site. One of the soldiers pointed his flash light at me while I was still standing on the balcony and ordered me back into the house, but I refused. The demolition process started at 5:00 a.m. and was over by 7:00 a.m."*

*"My sons were released within 24 hours. Over the past 5 years we have received multiple warnings for building without permits. My family and I feel stressed and terrified that the Israeli officials might come back and demolish the house that we live in. It is almost impossible to obtain building permits; that is why we are left without a legal option."*

**IV. Name: Amal K. Age: 40 Location: Northern Gaza Date:**

8 July 2014 On 8 July 2014, Israeli forces commenced bombarding Gaza from land, sea and air. A woman describes the terror of living in Gaza. Amal lives in the north of Gaza with her husband and five children. "At around 7:30 p.m., on 8 July 2014, I was in the kitchen preparing our evening meal when I heard a roaring sound I'd never heard before. I realised it was the sound of an Israeli fighter jet overhead and I knew something very bad was about to happen. A few seconds later I heard a loud explosion nearby. I immediately took to the ground and so did the rest of my family who were sitting around the dining table. My mother-in-law, who is an elderly woman, was with us that evening. I saw her flat on the ground in the corner looking absolutely petrified. I felt deeply sad and terrified at the same time." "Then I could smell burning bread that I left in the toaster. I got to my knees and tried to get to the toaster to prevent a fire. My two younger children, Mahmoud who is 10 and Bara' who is 7, were crying hysterically. My older daughter, who is 20, was in shock and could not speak for days. Her face turned yellow. We both started crying too and wanted to get out of the house but there was no safe place for us to go." "My husband then suggested we split up and each go and stay with various relatives in the south of Gaza. He suggested that our older children go to their uncle's house, me and the little children to our in-laws' house and he would stay in our house. It was a tough decision to separate from each other but we felt we had little choice. We waved down two cars that happened to be in the area and jumped in quickly. Shortly afterwards the shelling started again. It was getting dark and the whole atmosphere was just so scary. I screamed from fear and shouted at the driver telling him to go faster and to get us out of the area as quickly as possible. We were all crying in the car as if it was the last moment in our lives." "We were very lucky to arrive safely. I then started to worry about the rest of my family. I had no news from them for a few hours. I was finally able to call my husband who remained in the house. He told me our house had been damaged. I thanked God I wasn't there to see it. My husband is now thinking of leaving himself. My daughter-in-law is nine months pregnant and it is a nightmare situation to even think about what to do with her when she is due. This is what my life in Gaza is like: fear and no sense of security. We live in sheer terror."

**X. Miriam M. Age: 46 Location: Gaza Date: 9 July 2014 On 7 July 2014,**

Israeli commenced bombarding Gaza from land, sea and air. A woman describes living under these circumstances. Miriam lives in Gaza with her husband and her two children. "My husband is a doctor and because of the current situation he spends most of his time at the hospital tending to the injured. This causes my husband and us, the family, a lot of stress. Also because my husband is away from home most of the time I am left alone with the

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<sup>50</sup> More testimonies available at <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1451>



children which makes me more nervous and anxious.” “During the night the Israeli bombardment increases. I cannot fall asleep and I keep my eye on the news updates all the time. I hear the news on the radio or I use my mobile phone and check the updates on the internet. What makes it worse is when the power cuts off during the night, leaving us without any source of news. I become more terrified when there is no electricity in the house when the only light we see is the flash from Israeli bombs exploding. I am constantly terrified and anxious.” “Every time my son, Omar, hears the bombings he starts to jump up and down out of fear. My daughter has stopped attending university because of the attacks. During these horrible days everything shuts down and we all stay at home and wait for the attacks to finish. When the attacks began on 7 July, I went to check on my mother. As I was parking the car in front of my mother’s house I saw a missile pass overhead and I couldn’t tell where it was going to land. I panicked and had a nervous breakdown. I was hardly able to move. Eventually I managed to make into my mother’s house. I was not able to feel my legs, and I lay down on the bed, with the help of my mother, and tried to relax a bit.” “Like most people in Gaza, we can’t afford the fuel to run our electric generators. We sometimes have emergency power for a bulb, but not enough for the fridge and other appliances. Accordingly, we can’t store much food during these difficult and dangerous times.” “I hope this chaos will be over soon. We have no future and our destiny is heading into the unknown, we never feel safe.”

**XI. Name: Louna M. Age: 30 Location: Central Gaza Date: 9 July 2014**

On 9 July 2014, a woman and mother of two small children in Gaza describes the terror of the nightly bombardment. Louna lives in Gaza with her husband and two sons aged 4 and 6. “Our house is located along the coast in the centre of Gaza. I am eight months pregnant with our third child. The past two weeks have been sheer terror for me and my family, especially my two boys.” “On 9 July 2014, a few days into the latest war in Gaza, I woke up at 3.00 a.m. to the sound of a very loud explosion and breaking glass. I was terrified out of my wits and jumped out of bed. Seconds later I heard the sound of crying children and terrified parents coming from all directions in the building which is home to nearly 30 families. My two boys were crying hysterically and shivering out of fear not comprehending what had happened. I later found out that the police academy not far from where we live was bombed by Israeli fighter jets. Most windows in my house were shattered and the doors were lifted from their hinges. Even the door to the elevator was bent out of place and the elevator stopped working. The elevator was out of use even before the bombing because of frequent power cuts. I live in the fifth floor and it is very hard for me to go up and down the stairs especially now that I am eight months pregnant.” “When I jumped out of bed I badly injured my back and couldn’t move. All the other families rushed downstairs but I decided to stay at home. My back was aching and I felt extremely vulnerable. I tried to calm the boys down but to no avail. I tried to assure them that nothing bad will happen. I washed their faces with some water. They stayed in the bathroom for a while and refused to come out. I was worried that I might deliver because the shock and fear I felt was

unbelievable. Shortly afterwards our neighbours came to check on us. They thought we were hurt because they didn't see us downstairs." "There is no safe place in all of Gaza, and I have no other place to go to. It is hard to explain to the boys what is going on. They keep asking me about the loud explosions and I don't know what to say. I don't want them to be scared. I finally decided to leave the house and go to the storage room downstairs. The house was badly damaged. Most of the windows are smashed and the front door does not shut. My husband and I are still paying loans for the house. Now we have to pay a lot of money to fix the damage to the windows and the doors which we won't be able to do until this war ends. The whole situation is unbearable."

**XII. Fatina K. Age: 56 Location: Gaza Date: 10 July 2014**

On 10 July 2014, an extended family of 50 receive a recorded phone message from the Israeli military at 3.00 a.m. giving them 15 minutes to leave their apartment building before it is destroyed. Fatina lives with her extended family in a five storey apartment building near the northern border in Gaza. In total around 50 people live in the apartment building. "My family works in agriculture," says Fatina. "We own some land and we grow cucumber, tomato, onions and potato. We also have three wells on the land to irrigate the crops." "On 10 July, our area came under an intense Israeli bombardment. At around 3.00 a.m. we received a phone call from the Israeli army warning us to leave the building in 15 minutes because they were about to bomb it. All 50 members of my extended family left the house in five minutes, including three pregnant women. We all started to run from the building. Every few meters we would stop to make sure that we hadn't lost any of our children." "We were terrified and very scared. Other people were filling the streets, and they also looked lost and terrified; desperate to find a safe place. There was a sense of impending disaster; no lights, no safety and terrified people running through the streets. Somehow we managed to reach Gaza City and we slept in the street for the rest of the night. Later that morning we headed towards our relative's house. Our relative's house was packed so we ended up splitting into groups and going to different schools that had been opened as shelters. Once inside the shelters we only received two mattresses, so our men would sleep on the floor and the women and children would use the mattresses." "During this attack we lost our house and our crops. We also lost 200 tons of tomatoes that we had refrigerated. On top of all this we also lost 20 sheep."

**XIII. Name: Lubna Age: 19 Location: Beit Lahiya, Gaza Date: 10 July 2014**

On 10 July 2014, a pregnant woman and her husband are forced to flee their home in the north of Gaza to escape heavy Israeli bombardment. Nineteen-year-old Lubna lives in Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip. She is married and expecting her first baby. "On 10 July, Israeli bombardment in the area increased significantly and we began to receive messages from the Israelis to evacuate the area. My husband and I left our house in a hurry and joined the terrified crowds in the street who were running from the area. I remember that it was late at night and we kept running as far away as we could. At first I didn't feel tired, as all I

could think about was to get as far away from the area as possible and worrying about where we could go. I expected to be caught up in an explosion at any moment.” “We eventually arrived in Gaza City at around 3.00 a.m. We could still hear the sound of bombing and explosions. It was then that I started feel tired and experienced labor pains. I fainted and fell on the ground. When I woke up I found that my husband had carried me to somebody’s house. Although I was still in pain, it was far too dangerous to leave the house and go to the hospital. However, then I started to experience pain in my kidneys and I couldn’t handle it anymore so my husband took the risk and we went to the hospital. When we arrived at the hospital I was diagnosed with renal colic.” “I was given some medication and we then sought shelter in a school. Two days later, we were still staying at the school, I started to feel pain again but this time it was worse. The doctors now say that I may lose the baby. I constantly feel death is near and I feel helpless as everything around us has been destroyed.”

**XIV. Name: Bessan Q. Age: 30 Location: Gaza Date: 12 July 2014**

On 12 July 2014, a mother describes life in Gaza under constant Israeli bombardment by land, sea and air. Bessan lives in Gaza with her husband and two daughters, Salma (4 years) and Elia (1 year). “Although this is not the first time we have gone through an Israeli aerial bombardment, this is definitely the worst I have experienced,” says Bessan. “Each time there is an air raid it feels like an earthquake, and then we hear the explosion moments later. My little daughters are petrified as the loud explosions are now occurring day and night. There is no break. My youngest daughter Elia is scared to even go near a window, as she believes that’s where the sounds are coming from. She constantly screams ‘I’m scared, I’m scared’. I try to calm her down but it doesn’t always work because I am also terrified and there is no place for us to take shelter.” “On the night of 9 July, there was heavy shelling. My daughter Salma woke up terrified. She came to my bedroom with her fingers in her ears because she could no longer stand it. At around 3.00 a.m. the shelling lessened and I told Salma to try to go back to sleep. She looked at me as if I was insane and said “why sleep when I will wake up again”. I didn’t know what to say to this logic. I definitely could not guarantee that no more shelling would happen that night and that she wouldn’t wake up terrified.” “I have been staying at my parents’ house because my husband is travelling. Two days ago I went back to my house to get some clothes and some other things for my daughters. There was such heavy bombardment nearby that I didn’t feel safe walking in the street. I took a back street through the cemetery. I thought to myself it was highly unlikely that the cemetery would be hit. I was scared of getting killed and thought of my daughters and their future. It is the hardest thing to be a parent in war time. I have become stressed and jumpy. The slightest sound scares me out of my wits, even if it is someone moving a chair in the kitchen.” “Life gets worse every day in Gaza and there is no hope of a ceasefire anytime soon. Life is unpredictable and the future looks dark. Anything could happen and my life would be turned upside down. All I can do is wait and hope that my family and I stay safe. I let the day go by one minute at a time.”

## Annex 2: Compilation of Organizations' Brief Narrative

### ***Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)***

The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), is an independent Palestinian, not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation that seeks to develop a democratic Palestinian society based on the principles of gender equality and social justice. WCLAC's vision is to see empowered women living in a just and equal Palestinian society where they enjoy all of their human rights. Established in Jerusalem in 1991, the organisation has special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). By forging a feminist vision based on equality and social justice, WCLAC plays a prominent role in addressing gender-based violence in Palestinian society in both the public and private spheres and under occupation through documenting violations against HR and IHL imposed by Israel occupation.

### ***General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)***

The General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), is a democratic grass roots organization established in 1965 as one of the main bodies of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It has branches wherever there are sizable Palestinian communities. Aims at empowering Palestinian women towards attaining equality in rights, responsibilities and decision making at all levels, and mobilizing them towards building a just, democratic and tolerant society and the achievement of the national rights of their people.