



20 July 2014

LPHR public statement on current military offensive on Gaza

As lawyers committed to the protection and advancement of Palestinian human rights, we reiterate our call upon the international community to act decisively to halt the latest resort to sustained military action in the Gaza Strip, following Israel's announcement on 8 July 2014 that they have launched a military operation codenamed Operation Protective Edge. The onset of an Israeli military ground offensive has, as feared, caused enormous harm to the civilian population of Gaza.

LPHR is gravely concerned by today's report from the [Palestinian Center for Human Rights](#) stating that as of 07:00am today, the total number of Palestinian civilian fatalities since the start of Operation Protective Edge is 368, including 84 children and 43 women. Another 2,340 people have been injured, of whom 679 are children and 478 are women. According to the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian Territory](#), as of 3pm today, over 100,000 Palestinian civilians have been forcibly displaced, including 84,000 hosted at UNRWA schools

LPHR strongly deplores the large number of civilian deaths and injuries caused by the overnight Israeli military attacks on the al-Shuja'iya neighbourhood in the east of Gaza City. We repeat in full the Palestinian Center for Human Rights description of this horrific incident and further humanitarian consequences of Israel's military offensive on Gaza:

Since last night, Israeli forces have launched unprecedented attacks on al-Shuja'iya neighbourhood in the east of Gaza City. The neighbourhood has been subjected to intensive aerial and ground shelling. Dozens of Palestinian civilians have been killed or wounded, and medical crews and the ICRC have not been able to attend them. Women were seen taking their children out to flee from the area, and some of them were killed. People who were not able to leave the area have been trapped under the Israeli shelling and their destinies are unknown. PCHR could document 29 Palestinian civilian deaths, including 5 women, 7 children, a paramedic and a journalist. There are reports that more than 50 people were killed and hundreds were wounded, but PCHR has not been able to verify this number because of the extremely dangerous situation in the area.

This morning, Israeli forces ordered Palestinians living in Khuza'a village, east of Khan Yunis, to leave their homes and move to the center of the town. The number of forcibly displaced Palestinian civilians in border areas has amounted to approximately 130,000. This number is expected to rise in light of the indiscriminate Israeli shelling of populated area, and threats to the populations to leave their homes. The majority of displaced people have sheltered in UNRWA schools and centers, which cannot provide them with minimum services. So, their living conditions are expected to deteriorate.

Due to the indiscriminate and intense Israeli shelling, several public and service institutions, including municipalities, have suspended their activities, as 3 municipalities workers were killed in Rafah al-Boreij. This decision will lead to a real crisis in regards to providing drinking water,

cleaning and sanitation. Additionally, more than one third of the Gaza Strip's population lack electricity supplies as Israeli forces damaged major electricity lines and obstructed their repair.

In light of the horrific military attack on al-Shuja'iya neighbourhood reportedly causing up to 60 Palestinian deaths, including 17 children and 14 women¹, LPHR is extremely concerned that civilians are being indiscriminately targeted by Israeli military attacks. LPHR also repeats its acute concern at the apparent systematic and deliberate targeting of family homes and civilian facilities in disregard for the protection of civilians.

Due to the apparently systematic and unlawful use of force against civilians and civilian objects causing civilian casualties, LPHR reiterates its urgent call upon the parties to military action, Israeli or Palestinian, to fulfil their binding legal obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and immediately refrain from the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilians or civilian objects.

LPHR further urgently calls upon the international community to ensure that credible investigations and full legal accountability is secured for all deaths and injuries caused by unlawful military actions.

LPHR shall continue to closely monitor the current military offensive on Gaza and will make further public statements as and when necessary.

¹ Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency Situation Report, 20 July 2014, http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_21_07_2014.pdf