



AL-MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان

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Joint Public Statement

Complaint submitted to the United Nations concerning large-scale destruction and damage to family houses in the Gaza Strip with associated profound loss of life and injury to Palestinian residents, during Israel's military operation between 7 July 2014 and 26 August 2014

London and Gaza City 25 September 2014 - Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR) and Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Al Mezan) have today submitted a [comprehensive joint complaint](#) to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing and the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, concerning the large-scale destruction and damage to family houses in the Gaza Strip with associated profound loss of life and injury to Palestinian residents, during Israel's military operation codenamed 'Operation Protective Edge' between 7 July 2014 and 26 August 2014.

The targeting of family homes in Gaza was a significant aspect of Israel's military operation. It caused the destruction or severe damage of approximately 18,000 housing units, the killing of at least 999 people inside their homes (including 329 children and 212 women) and the killing of an additional 233 people near their homes.

LPHR and Al Mezan's joint complaint clarifies the devastating human rights consequences for the residents of Gaza of Israel's large-scale, deliberate and systematic military targeting of family homes during their fifty day military operation, by highlighting forty grave violation incidents of the right to adequate housing and the right to life and physical integrity.

LPHR and Al Mezan's joint complaint further includes a detailed legal analysis on the critical issue of targeting family homes, and concludes with suggested recommendations for urgent action by the United Nations Special Rapporteurs in liaison with the United Nations Human Rights Council independent Commission of Inquiry.

LPHR and Al Mezan submit in the complaint that the vast destruction and damage caused to family houses in Gaza amounts to a gross, deliberate and systematic violation of the right to adequate housing. We further assert that the large-scale, deliberate and systematic targeting of family homes raises the extremely serious concern that international humanitarian law had been seriously violated with grave consequences for respect for the right to life and physical integrity. These actions may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

LPHR and Al Mezan request the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the OPT use this complaint as the basis for their own urgent investigation into the large-scale, deliberate and systematic targeting of family homes in Gaza by Israel's military forces, and take appropriate action pursuant to our suggested recommendations in liaison with the United Nations Human Rights Council independent Commission of Inquiry.

LPHR and Al Mezan's recommendations include issuing a clear condemnation to Israel of the large-scale, deliberate and systematic targeting of family houses by its military as conduct amounting to the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law; urging Israel to allow and facilitate access for all necessary construction materials to enter Gaza so that reconstruction can take place for the vast number of people whose houses have been destroyed or damaged; and publicly asserting the vital need for criminal investigations, accountability and state responsibility and reparations for all alleged serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

LPHR and Al Mezan assert that full and credible investigations and accountability are necessary to enable the victims of Israel's military operation in Gaza between 7 July 2014 and 26 August 2014 to obtain access to an effective remedy and justice, and to provide a robust deterrent against any horrific recurrence of unlawful military attacks against family homes with grave consequences for civilians.

The entire complaint is published by [LPHR](#) and by [Al Mezan](#) on their websites.

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About Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR)

[LPHR](#) is a lawyer-based legal charity in the United Kingdom that works on legal projects aimed at protecting and advancing Palestinian human rights.

About Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Al Mezan)

[Al Mezan](#) is a Palestinian non-governmental human rights organization that works for the protection and promotion of Palestinian human rights in Gaza as part of occupied Palestine.

More Information:

As of 25 August 2014, the United Nations verified at least 142 families had lost three or more family members in the same incident, for a total of 739 fatalities.¹ These victims include members of the most vulnerable groups of society: children, elderly people, and pregnant women.

¹ Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency Situation Report (as of 26 August 2014, 0800 hours); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_26_08_2014.pdf

As of 27 August 2014, Al Mezan's documentation unit reports that at least 999 family members had been killed inside their houses². This includes 329 children and 212 women. Two women with severe and complex impairments were killed in an attack on a residential centre for people with disabilities. An additional 233 people were killed in the vicinity of their houses. This includes situations where people were trying to flee from their family homes as a result of Israeli military attacks.

In total, over 58 per cent of the 2,116³ confirmed Palestinian fatalities during Israeli's military operation in Gaza between 7 July 2014 and 26 August 2014 were caused as a direct consequence of Israel's large-scale, deliberate and systematic military attacks against family homes.

The corroborated evidence of the alarming and grave consequences of the Israeli military targeting of family homes led the then serving United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, to express: 'what we are witnessing is the killing of whole families.'⁴

The United Nations estimates that alternative housing will be needed for the approximately 108,000 residents of Gaza whose family homes have been destroyed or severely damaged.⁵ This emergency situation has been described by a United Nations Relief and Works Agency spokesperson as a 'man-made homelessness crisis on an epic scale'.⁶ The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, has stated that 'reconstruction is the main priority'.⁷ The World Health Organisation has reported that injured persons whose families have been displaced are at particular health risk from medical complications following hospital discharge.⁸

² Al Mezan press release, 27 August 2014; http://www.mezan.org/en/details.php?id=19514&ddname=IOF&id_dept=9&id2=9&p=center

³ Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency Humanitarian Snapshot (as of 29 August 2014, 0800 hours); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/humanitarian_Snapshot_31_august_2014_oPt_V4.pdf

⁴ On 31 July 2014 as reported in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency Situation Report (as of 31 July 2014, 1500 hours); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_01_08_2014.pdf

⁵ Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency Situation Report (as of 27 August 2014, 0800 hours); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_27_08_2014.pdf

⁶ Chris Gunness statement to AFP on 9 August 2014; <http://www.thedailystar.net/gaza-blockade-must-end-un-36505>

⁷ On 18 August 2014 as reported in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency Situation Report (as of 19 August 2014, 0800 hours); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_19_08_2014.pdf

⁸ Situation Report #10 23-28 August 2014; Occupied Palestinian Territory; World Health Organisation; http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO_Sitrep_on_Gaza_-_10.pdf