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New report: Chronic impunity for attacks is keeping Palestinian health workers in the firing line

While the world celebrates fearless healthcare workers tackling the global Coronavirus pandemic, a new report has highlighted how chronic impunity for attacks on Palestinian health workers is keeping them in the firing line.

In 2015, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR) published a report on grave attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities during the 2014 military offensive on Gaza, and called for an end to impunity for such alleged serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Six years on from the offensive, however, there have been no criminal charges, prosecutions or convictions for these and other well-documented alleged serious violations. In the new report released today, [*Chronic Impunity: Gaza's Health Sector Under Repeated Attack*](#), the organisations provide updates to six emblematic cases of attacks on healthcare in 2014 and highlight how Israel's military investigations have uniformly failed to provide legal accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims. This important documentation of persisting impunity for attacks on healthcare reinforces long-standing concerns that Israel's military investigations are not genuine.

Released two years on from the start of the "Great March of Return" protests in Gaza on 30 March 2018, the new report further demonstrates how warnings over systemic impunity have gone unheeded by the international community, with foreseeable deadly consequences. At least three health workers have been killed and more than 800 injured by Israeli forces in the context of Israel's widespread and systematic use of excess force against civilian protesters. In the same period, 112 ambulances and seven health facilities were damaged. The report features the stories of those health workers who have died, and places their deaths in the context of other policies that breach international humanitarian and human rights law which have badly damaged the capacity of Palestinian healthcare, in particular Israel's illegal 13-year blockade and closure of Gaza.

Genuine criminal investigations into alleged serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law – leading to potential criminal charges, prosecutions and convictions – are essential for ensuring legal accountability and justice for victims, survivors and their families. They are also the most effective possible deterrent against the commission of future violations.

The organisations urgently call on the international community to end the grave cycle of chronic impunity and repeated attacks on Palestinian health workers, and also to transform the unliveable conditions in Gaza, including ensuring that its population can access effective and adequate healthcare. The imperative of concerted international action is rendered only more urgent by the battle to contain and respond to the coronavirus pandemic in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Issam Younis, Director of Al Mezan, said: *"Systematic denial of accountability for victims of the 2014 military attacks emboldened the Israeli military to continue unabated in perpetrating grave breaches of human rights and international humanitarian law against protected civilians and medical personnel. Only genuine accountability, which Israel has failed to provide time and time again, can put an end to this chronic impunity. Thus, it is now contingent upon the international community to act swiftly to hold perpetrators to account."*



Tareq Shrourou, Director of LPHR, said: *“This significant update to our 2015 “No More Impunity” report makes clear that the only realistic hope for legal accountability and justice for Palestinian victims, survivors and families is to be found by recourse to international justice avenues. The systemic impunity provided by Israel’s military investigation system must be countered otherwise it is tragically proven and foreseeable that grave attacks will egregiously recur.”*

Aimee Shalan, CEO of MAP, said: *“While we celebrate the work of brave health workers around the world battling coronavirus, we must remember that impunity is also infectious. If governments wish to ensure that medics around the world can continue their vital, life-saving work free from fear, they must ensure accountability wherever they come under attack. The occupied Palestinian territory must not be an exception.”*

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Notes for press

The report is available for download [here](#), and photos can be made available for media use. Spokespersons are available in the UK, Switzerland and Gaza.

[Al Mezan Center for Human Rights](#) 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.

Spokespersons available in Gaza contact:

Samir Zaqout (Program Director), samir@mezan.org

[Medical Aid for Palestinians](#) (MAP) works for the health and dignity of Palestinians living under occupation and as refugees.

Spokespersons available in UK and Gaza, contact:

Rohan Talbot (Advocacy & Campaigns Manager), rohan.talbot@map.org.uk

[Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights](#) (LPHR) is a lawyer-based legal charity in the United Kingdom that works on projects focused on protecting and promoting Palestinian human rights.

Spokespersons available in UK, contact:

Tareq Shrourou (Director), contact@lphr.org.uk