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Chronic impunity continues to prevail for grave attacks on Palestinian healthcare

On the five year anniversary of the start of the “Great March of Return” protests in Gaza, and nearly nine years on from Israel’s assault on Gaza in 2014, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR) today raise the alarm that chronic impunity continues to prevail across the board for grave attacks on Palestinian healthcare.

In 2015, our organisations published a report, [No More Impunity: Gaza’s health sector under attack](#), which called for an end to impunity for alleged serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Seventeen hospitals, 56 primary healthcare facilities and 45 ambulances were damaged or destroyed by Israeli military strikes during the 51-day military offensive on Gaza in 2014. The report provides detailed accounts of some of these incidents, including the destruction of Al Wafa, Gaza’s only rehabilitation hospital, and an attack on the Mebarret Palestine Centre for People with Disabilities in which two patients were killed and three injured. Sixteen health workers, many of them ambulance drivers, were killed while on duty treating, transporting or trying to reach the injured.

Data revealed in the report showed that 511 of the 2,217 Palestinians killed during the hostilities died without ever receiving medical assistance, due to obstruction of ambulances trying to reach the wounded or carry them to hospitals. In one particularly shocking case, ambulances did not reach Anas ‘Bader’ Qdieh, a seven-year-old boy from Khuza’a with a serious shrapnel wound to his abdomen, for nearly four hours. When paramedics eventually found him, they were held at an Israeli checkpoint for a further 27 minutes on the way to hospital, during which time he died.

In 2020, our organisations published a further report, [Chronic Impunity: Gaza’s Health Sector Under Repeated Attack](#), which provided updates to six emblematic cases of attacks on healthcare in 2014 and highlighted how Israel’s military investigations have uniformly failed to provide legal accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims. It demonstrated how warnings over systemic impunity have gone unheeded by the international community, with foreseeable deadly consequences that were borne out during the Great March of Return protests in 2018-2019, during which at least three health workers were killed and more than 800 injured by Israeli forces in the context of Israel’s widespread and systematic use of excessive force against civilian protesters. The report featured stories of those health workers who died whilst working at the protests, and placed their deaths in the context of other policies that breach international law and which have badly damaged the capacity of Palestinian healthcare, in particular Israel’s blockade and closure of Gaza.

Today, our organisations reiterate our serious alarm that there have been no charges, prosecutions or convictions for these attacks on healthcare, and other well-documented potential serious violations. Persisting impunity reinforces long-standing concerns that Israel’s military investigations are not genuine and provide only gross injustice for victims, survivors and their families.

On this solemn anniversary, our organisations today repeat our urgent call on all relevant international actors to end the grave cycle of chronic impunity and repeated attacks on Palestinian health workers, and also to act with urgency to fundamentally transform the unliveable conditions in Gaza, including ensuring that its population can access effective and adequate healthcare.

[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.

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

[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.