

Gaza's Territorial Waters: Fisherman Mohammed Baker Killed by Israeli Naval Forces

Open Fire at Him From 3-Meter Distance Without Posing Any Threat

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*Yesterday afternoon, 15 May 2017, Palestinian fisherman **Mohammed Majed Fadel Baker** succumbed to his wounds after the Israeli naval soldiers opened fire from a distance of 3 meters at the boat manned by him, his brothers and cousin in the northern Gaza Sea. This indicates a new crime committed by the Israeli forces though none of the fishermen posed any threat to the live of Israeli soldiers. This also emphasizes continuation of Israel's policy to target the fishermen and their safety and deny them from freely sailing and fishing within the allowed fishing area.*

According to PCHR's investigation, at approximately 08:30 on Monday, 15 May 2017, an Israeli gunboat accompanied with a rubber boat opened fire at a Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 3 nautical miles off al-Wahah shore, northwest of Gaza City. The boat was manned by 4 fishermen namely '**Omran Majed Baker** (33), his two brothers; **Fadi** (32) and **Mohammed** (25), and their cousin **Mohammed Zeyad Hasan Baker** (32), and all of them are from Gaza. The fishermen fled by their boat to the south, but the Israeli gunboat manned by 8 soldiers armed with automatic rifles chased the boat and were able to target directly its engine. As a result, the boat stopped off shore in front of the Intelligence Service office, west of Gaza, and 'Omran was hit with 2 metal bullets to the leg and abdomen. After that, a soldier opened fire from a 3-meter distance at the fishermen, wounding Mohammed Baker with a live bullet to the upper side of abdomen. Mohammed then fell down as part of his bowels got out. However, the soldiers forced the fishermen to move Mohammed to their boat and then sailed towards Ashqelon. At approximately 16:30 on the same day, Mohammed was announced dead succumbing to his wounds in Barzilai Hospital. His body was then transferred to al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza after coordinating with the Palestinian Liaison office.

Mohammed Zeyad Hasan Baker (32), said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

"At approximately 08:00, I sailed with my cousins 'Omran, Fadi and Mohammed Majed Baker from Gaza Seaport along with another fishing boat manned by 4 fishermen. After 15 minutes, We arrived at al-Sudaniya area sailing within 3 nautical miles off al-Waha shore about 1.5 miles off the allowed fishing area. When we started fishing, I saw an Israeli gunboat accompanied with a rubber boat coming from the north and speeding towards us. 'Omran turned on the engine, headed to the south and stationed off the Intelligence Service office. I then saw the rubber boat speeding towards us and arrived in less than 2 minutes. There were 8 navy soldiers, 4 of whom were masked. The

distance between us was about two meters when 2 soldiers randomly opened fire at us while we were trying to avoid being shot. Ten minutes later, the soldiers directly opened fire at us from a 3-meter distance. As a result, Fadi Majed Baker (32) sustained 2 rubber-coated metal bullets to the leg and abdomen. The Israeli gunboat continued chasing us, but suddenly appeared in front of our boat and the soldiers directly opened fire at the boat engine. As a result, the boat stopped, and Mohammed was wounded and fell down. We shouted to inform the soldiers that Mohammed is wounded. One of the soldiers then ordered us to come to the boat front while the other soldiers kept shooting above our heads. I carried Mohammed, who was wounded and part of his bowels were out. He was foaming and then went into coma. The soldier, who was driving the gunboat, ordered me to carry Mohammed while 2 other soldiers took him to the gunboat, sailing towards Ashkelon. Furthermore, the other Israeli boat dragged our boat, which was hit with 6 live bullets, to the Gaza Seaport after an hour, but we lost the fishing net.”

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) strongly condemns this new crime, which led to the death of fisherman Mohammed Baker. PCHR confirms that this crime falls under the continued Israeli attacks against Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip to terrify and deprive them of their right to sail and fish freely. PCHR hereby:

1. Calls upon the International community, including the High Contracting Parties to the 1949 Geneva Convention, to intervene to stop all Israeli violations against fishermen and their property and allow them to fish freely in Gaza Sea;
2. Demands Opening an investigation into the crime that led to the death of Mohammed Baker though he did not pose any threat to the safety and security of the Israeli soldier;
3. Calls for immediately ending the chasing policy of fishermen and allow them to sail and fish freely;
4. Releasing those fishermen arrested by Israeli forces; and
5. Compensating the victims of the Israeli violations for the physical and material damage.

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