

Israel Occupation Force Targets a Third UNRWA Shelter and Continue its Massacres in the Gaza Strip

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Press Release

IOF Targets a 3rd UNRWA Shelter and Continues its massacres in the Gaza Strip

The Int'l Community Must End Slaughtering Civilians Immediately

The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) has further escalated its attacks on the Gaza Strip at the start of the fourth week of its war on the Strip. According to Al Mezan Center's monitoring, the IOF has continued to destroy homes on their residents. For the third time, the IOF attacked an UNRWA shelter, killing two displaced children and injuring at least 15 people.

Al Mezan Center's monitoring also indicates that the IOF has continued to restrict ambulances' access to injured people, despite the intervention of the ICRC, causing them to bleed to death. Field information shows that the IOF has killed at least 1,191 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip since the start of its Operation Cast Lead on 27 December 2008. This includes at least 272 children and 85 women. The number of casualties is expected to be higher, since Al Mezan only reports on the cases which it has been able to verify. Moreover, 3,953 people have been injured; including at least 849 children and 481 women.

Since 1pm yesterday, the IOF has launched hundreds of attacks across the Gaza Strip. The following section provides some of the most deadly attacks, which resulted with death and destruction in all of Gaza's five districts.

North Gaza District:

At approximately 1:50pm on Friday, 16 January 2009, the IOF fired with artillery the vicinity of civilian houses inhabited by Bedouins in Al-Mghayir area, southeast Beit Hanoun town. The shelling injured Hmeed As-Sawarka, 30, who died of his serious wounds a few hours later.

At app. 2:30pm on the same day, the IOF fired artillery shells at civilian houses in eastern Jabalia and western Beit Lahia. The shelling lasted for half an hour and resulted in the injury of one person who was reported to have sustained serious injuries.

At app. 3pm also Friday, IOF tanks, which entered eastern Beit Hanoun town, advanced amid intensive fire into Al-Moghayir and Al-Kobtania area, southeast Beit Hanoun.

At app. 6:25pm on the same day, the IOF troops who had penetrated southwestern Beit Lahia town opened fire intensively at civilian houses at the end of Al-Hataba street in the town, injuring one person seriously.

Earlier, at app. 5pm on Friday, the IOF opened fire from eastern Gaza City at houses in Zemmo area in eastern Jabalia town; however, no injuries were reported.

At the same time, an Israeli aircraft fired a missile at Mahmoud Khader Bahr, 25, while he was returning to his house in Al-Karama neighborhood. Bahr was reported to have sustained critical injuries. At the same time, the IOF fired artillery shells that hit the house of Dr. Ezadin Abu Al-Eish, which is located on Salah Ad-Din Street in Jabalia refugee camp. The shelling killed three of Abu Al-Eish's daughters and their cousin, and injured three others, including two children, from the same family. Those who were killed were identified as:

- Bisan Ezadin Abu Al-Eish, 21;
- Mayar Ezadin Abu Al-Eish, 15;
- Aya Ezadin Abu Al-Eish, 14; and their cousin
- Nour Shihab Abu Al-Eish, 17.

At app. 5.35pm on Friday, the IOF, who were stationed in eastern Gaza City, fired artillery shells at civilian houses in Al-Jurun neighborhood in Jabalia town, injuring many people.

At app. 3pm, also on Friday, an Israeli aircraft shelled a group of people whilst close to their house in western Jabalia refugee camp, killing three; a woman and two children, and injuring six others. Those who were killed were identified as:

- Zakyia Abdul-Hai Eita, 60;
- Anwar Salman Rushdi Abu Eita, 6; and
- Malak Abdul-Hai Abu Eita, 2.5.

At app. 7.20pm on the same day, the IOF troops, who were stationed on Al-Kashef Hill, fired intensively at civilian houses in the areas of the former civil administration, As-Sikka, and Izbet Al-Kahlout east of Tel Az-Za'tar neighborhood in Jabalia refugee camp. Several houses were damaged as a result.

At app. 7:17pm on Friday 16 January 2009, Israeli helicopter gunships fired four missiles at the house of Mohammed Ali Jum'a, which is located near Taha Mosaque in At-Twam neighborhood in the southwest of Jabalia. The house was destroyed and 10 people who live in nearby houses were injured, including 2 children and a woman.

At 6pm on Friday, medical teams found the corpses of two men: Mazin Al-Shorbasi, 23, and

Mohammed l'kilan, 25. Both of them were killed by IOF in the Al-Karama neighborhood. They are believed to be resistance members.

At 9pm on Friday, medical sources announced the death of a child who had sustained injuries in an IOF attack in At-Twam neighborhood on 14 January. He was identified as Omar Mohammed Al-Mrannah, 17.

At app. 8:30pm, also Friday, Israeli helicopter gunships opened fire at the Mashrou' neighborhood in Beit Lahia, hitting houses and the yard of UNRWA's Beit Lahia Boys School, which shelters civilians. As a result, a girl child, 13-year-old Falastin Tanboura, was severely injured. Her leg was amputated at hospital later.

At app. 1:40am today, Saturday 17 January 2009, Israeli aircrafts raided the Taha Mosauqe in At-Twam neighborhood, destroying it completely and severely damaging 5 neighboring houses. One woman was injured in this attack.

At 3am on Saturday, IOF tanks and armored vehicles advanced into the eastern parts of Al-Atatra neighborhood. Eyewitnesses reported that the neighborhoods of Ghabon, Al-Amal and Tel Al-Thahab were shelled.

IOF troops also opened fire at the center of Beit Lahia, injuring many people and causing fires in seven houses.

At 6:30am, also Saturday, IOF fired a shell - believed to be white phosphorus - which landed in the UNRWA Beit Lahia Boys School, which shelters civilians. As the refugees tried to evacuate the school, an artillery shell struck a classroom, where civilians are sheltered. The shell broke through the roof and exploded on the ground, spreading its shrapnel into classrooms. Two children were killed and their mother; Nujoud Sha'ban Al-Ashqar, was injured. The children were identified as:

- Bilal Mohammed Al-Ashqar, 5; and
- Mohammed Mohammed Al-Ashqar, 4.

IOF then fired another shell that hit the school and injured 14 refugees; including 6 children. The refugees escaped from the school and went to the Kamal Udwan Hospital in Beit Lahia seeking safe refuge. Al Mezan's field worker reported that UNRWA responded quickly and opened another school for them in the An-Nazla area in Jabalia. Some refugees; however, returned to the same school, which sheltered 320 families (1,853 people).

At app. 7am on Friday, 16 January 2009, medical sources announced the death of Rajab Mahmoud Ulwan, 25, who was injured in an IOF attack on the An-Na'ouq family in the Al-Jurun Jabalia town earlier.

At 5:30am on Saturday, 17 January 2009, IOF troops fired artillery shells that hit houses in Boret Abu Ghazaleh area in the east of Beit Hanoun. A shell hit a water-well, near which a family house was damaged. As a result, a handicapped toddler, Aseel Al-Kafarneh, 1.5, died from a heart attack, according to medical sources.

Gaza City District:

At approximately 3pm, on Friday, 16 January 2009, an Israeli aircraft fired a missile at a group of civilians who were close to their houses on Al Mahata Street in At-Tuffah neighborhood, in eastern Gaza City. The shelling killed two of them who were identified as:

- Kamal Al Barawi, 15; and
- Ahmed Mansour Hassoun, 21.

At approximately 6:30pm on the same day, an Israeli aircraft fired a missile at Bilal Taiseer Mousa, 31, on An-Nafaq Street in Gaza City killing him immediately.

At approximately 7pm also on Friday, an Israeli aircraft fired a missile at a wake-tent on Al-Montar Street in the Al-Sheja'ya neighborhood in Gaza City. The attack killed ten mourners and injured seven others, including a child. Those killed were identified as:

- Mohammed Yaser Al-Qerim, 22;
- Shadi Al-Abed Bannar, 24;
- Ahmed Al-Abed Bannar, 18;
- Abed Ali Al-Abed Bannar, 48;
- Fayiz Ali Al-Abed Bannar, 35;
- Ashraf Rebhi Bannar, 35;
- Alaa Said Mudad, 37;
- Sobhi Mohammed Mudad, 38;
- Mos'ab Mohammed Mudad, 16; and
- Fayiz Said Shamali, 50.

At approximately 8:20am on 17 January 2009, an IOF aircraft shelled a group of people on An-Nafaq Street in the Ad-Daraj neighborhood in Gaza City, killing 24-year-old Ahmed Abdul-Hai As-Safadi.

Middle Gaza District: At app. 1:05pm on Friday 16 January 2009, IOF tanks and armored bulldozers rounded the house of Awwad Al-Whidi, which is located in the Al-Mughraqa village. After destroying its fence, soldiers broke into the house under heavy firing. The inhabitants shouted to the soldiers, informing them that all those inside the house were unarmed civilians; however, the shooting continued after the soldiers broke the house's door, killing 80-year-old Nassar Abdul-Hadi Mtawi' and injuring 60-year-old Msallam Mohammed Mtawi'.

At app. 5pm on Friday, Israeli aircraft raided the house of Issa Al-Batran. The missile hit the second floor of the house, killing a mother and her five children. They were identified as:

- Manal Al-Sha'rawi (Al-Batran), 30,
- Ezadin Issa Al-Batran, 3;

- Bilal Issa Al-Batran, 7; and the twins
- Iman Issa Al-Batran, 10; and
- Ihsan Issa Al-Batran, 10.

The house, which is located in Block 4 in Al-Bureij refugee camp, had its second floor destroyed. Several neighboring houses were also damaged.

At app. 5:20pm, also Friday, IOF troops fired shells - believed to be white phosphorus bombs, at houses in Block 7 of Al-Bureij refugee camp. The shelling killed a child; Muhannad Amer Al-Jadili, 8; and injured his two brothers; Khalil, 16, and Abdul-Hadi, 14. Their grandmother, Mdallaleh Al-Jadili, 85, was also injured. Another 15 civilians were also injured in this attack, including 3 children and a woman.

Ten minutes later, Israeli aircrafts raided the house of Iyad At-Tayib, 31, destroying it completely and causing damages to several neighboring houses. At 5pm, Israeli troops, who are stationed at the Shuhada (Nitzarim) junction, opened fire at a civilian car driving from Gaza City towards Middle Gaza district. An Italian journalist was in the car, which stopped and had to return to Gaza City after two-hour contacts to ensure safe passage for it failed. No casualties or injuries were reported; however, the car was damaged.

At app. 5:30pm on Friday, IOF troops fired artillery shells towards the Al-Berkeh neighborhood, south of Deir Al-Balah town. Six people were injured,, including two children, and several houses were damaged.

IOF troops, who are stationed around the Az-Zahra town, fired several artillery shells towards the nearby An-Nuseirat refugee camp at 2am today, Saturday 17 January 2009, killing a child, Mohammed Abdullah Abu l'tiwi, 16, and injuring a woman. Two mosques in the camp were damaged: Mu'ath Ibn Jabal Mosque and Hassan Al-Banna Mosque.

IOF also opened fire at an ambulance as it tried to reach an area near the Az-Zahra town. Shooting started as the ambulance was on the bridge in the area, damaging the ambulance's engine. No casualties of injuries were reported, however.

Khan Younis District: At app. 4:10pm on Friday, 16 January 2009, Israeli aircraft fired a missile at a motorcycle as it drove in Al-Fukhari neighborhood, southeastern Khan Younis. Its rider, Hussam Mohammed Abu Dakka, 26, was killed and 3 passersby were injured.

At app. 5:10pm on Friday, Israeli aircraft fired a missile at a motorcycle in Bani Suhaila town, east to Khan Younis, killing Ra'fat Khalil Abu Al-Ola, 47.

In Al-Fukhari neighborhood, southeastern Khan Younis, where the IOF troops had carried out an invasion, troops opened machinegun and artillery fire. Many civilians were injured and transferred to Nasser Hospital in the town.

Al Mezan Center's field workers reported that IOF troops in the same Al-Fukhari neighborhood broke into houses and took positions on their roofs. Snipers fired at any people who moved in the area. Israeli troops also opened machinegun fire at a civilian car in the area, killing two and injuring one. Al Mezan Center's field worker reported that the car carried a father and his two sons from a family called Shurrab, who were trying to reach their house in the area, believing that it was safe to move after 1pm, the period announced

by the IOF for daily ceasefire. They were shot just after the ceasefire started. The father, who survived the attack, reported to the Center that one of his sons died immediately after he was shot. The other son was injured and continued to bleed until 1am the next day. His contacts with hospitals, the ICRC and the PRCS failed to bring help, which reached them at 11:30am today, Saturday 17 January 2009. Al Mezan's field worker also reported that he made contacts with the ICRC in Khan Younis, which tried to ensure safe passage for ambulances without success, as IOF refused to allow for ambulances to rescue them. The two brothers who were killed in this attack were:

- Ibrahim Mohammed Shurrab, 18; and
- Kassab Mohammed Shurrab, 28.

Their father, Mohammed Shurrab, 60, was injured.

At app. 10:05pm on Friday, Israeli aircrafts raided, for the second time, the Asdaa' media production town, west of Khan Younis. The town sustained severe damage, as a result.

Rafah District:

At app. 12:5am on Saturday, 17 January 2009, Israeli aircrafts launched fierce raids on areas along the southern borderline between Egypt and Rafah.

At app. 12:50am on the same day, an Israeli aircraft fired two missiles at the two-story house of Ahmed Ali Abu Al-Ineen, which is located in Al-Falouja Street in Al-Jneina neighborhood east of Rafah town. The shelling destroyed the ground floor and a supermarket, and injured two children.

IOF has also continued to restrict medical teams and ambulances from accessing the victims, despite frequent interventions by the ICRC. In this context, at approximately 4pm, on 16 January 2009, the IOF shelled with artillery the house of Atiya Talb Abu Al-Hseen, 40, which is located on Salah Ad-Din Street in An-Nasser village. Abu Al-Hseen and Anwar Saleh Abu Telekh, 20, were killed in the attack. According to Al Mezan's field worker, the two men were left to bleed to death despite that the family calls to the ICRC and PRSC asking for help. The IOF did not respond to requests of the ICRC to ensure safe passage for ambulances.

At app. 1:5pm also on Saturday, an Israeli aircraft fired a missile at Hamouda Zayid Thabet, 21, killing him immediately.

Al Mezan Center, and based on its monitoring, strongly condemns the deliberate targeting of civilians inside their homes, and as they tried to flee from IOF bombardment. The Center asserts that the IOF's acts represent scandalous war crimes that must be investigated and punished. It is urgent that the international community intervenes immediately to prevent the perpetration of more crimes; especially as the IOF's incursions and indiscriminate attacks continue at this moment.

Al Mezan Center therefore renews its strong condemnation of the IOF's aggression on the Gaza Strip, and its flagrant disregard of the applicable rules of international law. This behavior has so far cost the lives of hundreds of civilians and the suffering of hundreds of thousands.

Al Mezan renews its outrage by the, partly complicit, failure of the international community to prevent such violations of international law. While civilians are being murdered, the UN Security Council continues to fail to take meaningful, effective action; thus trading off non-derogable human rights and peremptory rules of international law for political considerations. War must not be allowed to be conducted in the way it is happening in Gaza, where civilians are willfully targeted, killed, maimed and strangled to near death.

Hence, Al Mezan Center calls upon the UN Secretary General, as a matter of utmost urgency, to focus on the protection of civilians who are the main victims of the violation of international law by Israel. Political debates can wait; however, civilian life cannot be compensated. The United Nations is called on to ensure the compliance with international law and the protection of civilians, including its own staff. Every hour of aggression on Gaza in the way we have witnessed during the past 16 days means the loss of more civilian life, destruction of property and extending the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people who should be protected, not neglected.

Al Mezan Center also calls on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, of 1949, to live up to their legal and moral responsibilities upholding their own obligations under Common Article 1, by respecting, and ensuring respect of, the Convention.

The Center, while commending the worldwide action against these violations, calls on civil societies around the world to exert more pressure on their governments so that they act in conformity with the relevant human rights and humanitarian obligations as prescribed in relevant international law.

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights <info@mezan.org> Sun, Jan 18, 2009 at 3:12 AM

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Press Release

IOF Attacks 3rd UNRWA Shelter; Kills more Civilian Refugees, Including Children

The Israeli Occupation Forces has stepped up its attacks on the shelters and installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Gaza Strip. Today, the IOF fired artillery and Phosphorus shells onto an UNRWA school that shelters civilians in Beit Lahia, killing children and injuring many civilians. This was the third attack of this kind. Dozens of displaced civilians have been killed in the IOF's attacks on UNRWA's shelter since the start of the on-going Operation Cast Lead on 27 December 2007, which has also claimed the lives of approximately 1,200 people, most of whom civilians.

The IOF has also attacked eight schools across the Gaza Strip directly. At least 67 schools have been damaged as a result of IOF's air and artillery attacks as of today. 36 of these schools are UNRWA schools. Moreover, the IOF has frequently targeted UNRWA's vehicles, personnel and installations, including its HQ in the Middle East which is located in Gaza City causing humanitarian supplies to burn.

According to Al Mezan Center's field workers in North Gaza district, at 6:30am on Saturday 17 January 2009, the IOF fired a shell -believed to be white phosphorus bomb - which landed in the UNRWA Beit Lahia Boys School that shelters displaced civilians. As the refugees tried to evacuate the school upon instructions from the shelter's administration, an artillery shell struck a classroom, where civilians are sheltered. The shell broke through the roof and exploded on the ground, spreading its shrapnel into classrooms. Two children were killed and their mother; Nujoud Sha'ban Al-Ashqar, was injured. Al Mezan knew that the mother's leg and arm were amputated at hospital as her wounds were severe. The children were identified as:

- Bilal Mohammed Al-Ashqar, 5; and
- Mohammed Mohammed Al-Ashqar, 4.

IOF then fired another shell that hit the school and injured 14 refugees; including 6 children. The refugees escaped from the school and went to the Kamal Udwan Hospital in Beit Lahia seeking safe refuge. Al Mezan's field worker reported that UNRWA responded quickly and opened another school for them in the An-Nazla area in Jabalia, which shelters 320 families (1,853 people). Some refugees; however, returned to the same school.

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights strongly condemns this war crime, and for the continued, deliberate targeting of UNRWA's staff and facilities in Gaza. UNRWA has indicated clearly that the IOF had been informed of the locations and coordinates of all of its facilities and shelters, which leaves no room for errors.

Al Mezan Center asserts that these attacks represent only part of the IOF's willful targeting of civilians and civilian objects in the Gaza Strip since the start of its operations on 27 December 2008, which explains the enormous percentage of casualties and injuries among uninvolved civilians. These conducts represent systematic and deliberate grave breaches of international law and must be investigated and punished as war crimes.

Under the continued disregard of international law - and of the United Nations - by the IOF, Al Mezan Center calls on UNRWA and the UN to call for international law to be upheld. Israeli individuals and officials who ordered and/or perpetrated these horrific acts must be pursued and brought to justice in accordance with applicable international law.

Al Mezan Center renews its applauding of the UNRWA for the vital role it has played in aiding Palestinian civilians in Gaza throughout the current crisis. The Center calls the international community to safe no efforts in providing support and protection for UNRWA, its personnel, facilities and those civilians sheltering inside them.

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