

Rights Groups Urge UN to Protect Palestinians on ‘Great March’ Protest Anniversary

19 organisations warn in a letter to UN secretary-general that Israel will use lethal force on protesters this Saturday

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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Almost 20 Palestinian rights groups – both regional and international – urged the United Nations to protect Gazans who participate in the anniversary of the “Great March of Return” protests this coming Saturday.

In [a letter](#) sent to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday, the groups warned that Israel “will once again resort to lethal and other excessive force, including live ammunition, to suppress the protests”.

“We urge the UN to take meaningful action to prevent further unnecessary loss of life and injury by the Israeli occupying forces, which entails individual criminal responsibility and may amount to international crimes,” the letter read.

They went on to issue an 11-point list of recommendations for the UN, including beefing up monitoring of Israel’s use of force on the protests, demanding accountability and making sure Israel adheres to the Geneva Convention.

Al-Haq & 18 Palestinian, regional & int’l CSOs sent a joint letter to [#UN SG @antonioguterres](#) & HC [@mbachelet](#) calling on them to take action to protect Palestinian protesters ahead of one-year commemoration of [#GreatReturnMarch](#); to ensure [#accountability](#). <https://t.co/aaEz3feqmN>
pic.twitter.com/XhyddW11AA

— Al-Haq الحق (@alhaq_org) [March 27, 2019](#)

According to the letter, 197 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israel since the protests began, which includes 42 children. More than 29,000 Palestinians have been wounded in the protests by Israel’s military and 1,200 of those injures include “complex limb injuries requiring multiple surgeries and long-term follow up”.

Since 30 March last year, thousands of Palestinians in the small coastal territory have demonstrated along the fence with Israel, demanding the implementation of Palestinian refugees’ right of return and an end to the crippling 11-year siege of Gaza.

While Israel has claimed that the protests have been orchestrated by Hamas, the de facto ruling party in Gaza, the organisers of the March [have rejected these claims](#). For its part, Hamas has not formally recognised any of the slain Palestinians as belonging to its organisation.

The UN General Assembly has denounced Israel's use of force against the demonstrators as "[excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate](#)", while many rights groups slammed it as [illegal](#), "[horrifying](#)" and "[calculated](#)".

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period, one by a Palestinian sniper and another during a botched Israeli special forces operation within the Gaza Strip.

Israel maintains a crippling blockade of Gaza that critics say amounts to collective punishment of the impoverished enclave's two million residents.

Egypt also upholds the siege, restricting movement in and out of Gaza on its border.

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Featured image: Palestinian take cover as Israeli forces fire at protesters at the Gaza border on 14 December 2018 [Mohammed Asad/Middle East Monitor]

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