



Fact Sheet:

**Rubble and Scrap Collectors: Deliberate Attacks and Lack of Protection**

27 December 2010

This fact sheet focuses on the Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians collecting rubble and scraps of destroyed structures near the border between Gaza and Israel.


In June 2007 Israel tightened its siege on the Gaza Strip and in September 2007 it proclaimed Gaza as a hostile entity and imposed a full blockade on the territory. The blockade is collective punishment of Gaza's population and under its regime Israel has prevented goods items and reduced the volume of other items it allows into the Strip. Along with other essential items, a full ban on the entry of construction materials including iron, cement, and gravel was put in place.

Israel launched a large-scale offensive against Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009, during which Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) destroyed and damaged 11,149 homes, of which 2,652 houses were destroyed completely. These houses accommodated 107,330 people including 35,117 children.<sup>1</sup> As the Israeli blockade continues the need for construction materials to rebuild the destroyed houses and provide for natural population growth has increased as well.

Limited amounts of cement and iron have been smuggled through the underground tunnels but gravel continues to be lacking. While poverty and unemployment are prevalent, collecting rubble and scraps from destroyed structures has flourished as a source of income as well as construction materials. Therefore the number of civilian rubble collectors has been on the rise in Gaza.

On 15 July 2009, the IOF started to open fire and arrest Palestinian civilians collecting rubble along the border fence between Gaza and Israel - an area Israel declared a security buffer zone. Al Mezan's documentation indicates the following facts concerning the impact of these practices.

From 15 July 2009 until 15 December 2010, the IOF has:

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- ✚ Carried out 107 attacks on civilian rubble collectors;
  - ✚ One child, Sa'eed Atta Mohammed Al-Hsumi, 16, was killed and over 100 persons were injured including 22 children, due to these attacks;
  - ✚ The IOF arrested 43 civilian rubble collectors, eight of them children.
  - ✚ In North Gaza district alone 85 civilian rubble collectors were injured from Israeli fire including 18 children;
  - ✚ In Gaza city 3 civilian rubble collectors were injured including one child.
  - ✚ In the districts of Middle Gaza and Khan Younis, two rubble collector were injured - one in each district;
  - ✚ In Rafah district 15 civilian rubble collectors were injured including 3 children;
  - ✚ A truck and a tractor were damaged and several horses were killed by the IOF as they were used by rubble collectors;

<sup>1</sup> For more details please see Cast Lead Aggression in Numbers issued by Al Mezan Center for Human Rights [http://www.mezan.org/en/details.php?id=8941&ddname=Gaza%20destruction&id\\_dept=22&id2=9&p=center](http://www.mezan.org/en/details.php?id=8941&ddname=Gaza%20destruction&id_dept=22&id2=9&p=center)

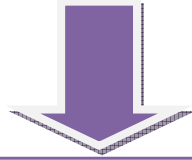


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According to Al Mezan's documentation, the vast majority of these civilians were injured when Israeli snipers opened fire at them, even when they posed no danger to the IOF. Attacks on civilians are absolutely prohibited under international law, particularly when there is no pressing military necessity to do so. Al Mezan calls on the international community to condemn these attacks and to intervene through diplomatic and political avenues to provide protection to this vulnerable group. The rubble and scrap collection activities in Gaza are a direct result of Israel's unlawful policy of blockade, which must be brought to an immediate end.