

AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



THE ISRAELI AGGRESSION AGAINST PALESTINIAN CIVILIANS AND THEIR
PROPERTY IN BEIT LAHIA



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Introduction

Sine the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada / uprising on 28 September 2000, the Israeli occupation forces have systematically applied different collective punishments against the civilian population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). They aimed to intimidate Palestinians and end Palestinian resistance to the occupation of their land and to force them to abandon their political claims to freedom and self-determination. The information Al Mezan has collected indicates that the IDF used extensive and lethal force against civilians when it was not necessary, targeted civil premises, demolished homes and cultivated land and restricted medical teams and ambulances. Worse than that, the Israeli forces used heavy weaponry, including F16 warplanes, helicopter gunships, tanks and various kinds of missiles. Additionally, they closed the OPTs completely by imposing a complete blockade around them and isolating towns, villages and refugee camps from each other.

On 29 March 2002, the Israeli forces escalated their aggression and launched an all-out war, according to the United Nations Secretary General Koffi Anan, on almost all of the Palestinian towns and refugee camps. Since then, Israel has been perpetrating extensive grave breaches of the international humanitarian law.

The isolated Palestinian areas in the Gaza Strip are examples of the Israeli collective punishment of Palestinian civilians. Al Mezan has observed the Israeli abuses of Palestinians' human rights and collected substantial information from the victims, especially in Gaza. The siege and destruction of residences and demolition of agricultural land are all crimes according to human rights laws. Al Mezan believes it is important to publicize such violations. This report depends on the professional, objective documentation of these violations in the town of Biet Lahia, which is located in the north of the Gaza Strip.

This report starts with a general background about Beit Lahia and the basic social and economic facilities and services in the town. It also highlights the violations of human rights in the town.

Preface: Legal Background

In the aftermath of the June 1967 war, Israel forces occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem. This completed their occupation of the whole of the land of Palestine and they imposed military law throughout the occupied territories. The international community has determined the Israeli forces to be a *Belligerent Occupying Power*, and the Palestinian territories to be Occupied Territories. As such, the articles of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians during times of war are *de jure* applicable to the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Israel, the belligerent Occupying Power, is obliged to comply with the articles of the abovementioned convention. Nevertheless, Israel has been systematically violating the rules of international law as well as the provisions of 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention since 1967.

It is worth mentioning that international humanitarian law, of which the Fourth Geneva Convention forms a basic component, aims at providing protection for the victims of war, especially civilians residing in Occupied Territories. As a result, the Occupying Power does not have a free hand to use force, policies, and other procedures in its administration of the Occupied Territories. It also stresses that the Occupying Power should always take into maximum consideration the interests of civilians, including the protection of their property. Furthermore, it should not change the status of the existing law in the Occupied Territories.

The Occupying Power must refrain from attacking non-military targets, including individuals, buildings and property (both private and personal). The Occupying Power is not only absolutely prohibited from targeting them, but also obliged to provide means of complete protection for them. The use of certain weaponry during military operations, especially in the Occupied Territories, is strictly limited and/or absolutely prohibited. The use of force by the Occupying Power should respect two essential and basic principles:

1. **Military Necessity:** International law permits warring armies to set aside some of the obligations imposed by law, but not absolutely, only subject to certain conditions. Experts who explain the texts of the Fourth Geneva Convention agree that military necessity means all the imperative procedures needed to achieve a military objective. The word 'necessary' indicates that the military objective will not be achieved without these procedures. It may also mean, sometimes, to set aside some restrictions unless they are procedures that aim purely at punishment or deterrence, when they are never permitted.
2. **Proportionality and Discrimination:** Proportionality restricts military necessity which requires that military operations and the strategies used should be appropriate to the military targets. According to this principle, any actions that may cause losses of life or property which have nothing to do with the operations or the expected results are prohibited. Warring parties must also, during military operations, differentiate between civil and military targets, and select methods and weaponry to minimizing damage and suffering to the least possible.

Article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention Relevant to the Protection of Civilians during Times of War states:

“Each High Contracting Party shall allow free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores and objects necessary for religious worship intended only for civilians of another High Contracting Party, even if the later is its adversary. It shall likewise permit the free passage of all consignments of foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases.”

Article 33 of the same Convention states:

“No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited. Pillage is prohibited. Reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited.”

Article 53 of the Convention prohibits the destruction of properties. It states:

“Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the State, or to other public authorities is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations.”

Articles 146 and 147 are considered to be amongst the most important articles of the Convention as they define a group of grave breaches of the Convention, determine them to be crimes of war, and stress the obligation to search for and punish those responsible for committing such grave breaches.

Article 147 stipulates:

“Grave breaches to which the preceding Article (Article 146) relates shall be those involving any of the following acts, if committed against persons or property protected by the present Convention: willful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement of a protected person, compelling a protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power, or willfully depriving a protected person of the rights to fair and regular trial prescribed in the present Convention, taking of hostages and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly.”

Article 146 states:

“The High Contracting Parties undertake to enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing, or ordering to be committed, any of the grave breaches of the present Convention defined in the following Article. Each High Contracting Party shall be under the obligation to search for persons alleged to have committed, or to have ordered to be committed, such grave breaches, and shall bring such persons, regardless of their nationality, before its own courts. It may also, if it prefers, and in accordance with the provisions of its own legislation, hand such persons over for trial to another High Contracting Party concerned, provided such High Contracting Party has made out a prima facie case.”

Monitoring the acts of Israeli occupation army from 29/09/2000 to the present date reveals that it has violated the rules of international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention and those rules governing the Occupying Power’s behavior towards civilian residents and their property.

Beit Lahia **General Background**

The name Beit Lahia is of Roman origin: 'Beit Al-Aliha', in English the Home of the Gods, because the town had numerous Roman temples. The name could have come from the Queen Helena's, who used to spend summer in the town. Beit Lahia is mentioned in many historic writings. Old Roman, Parisian and Islamic monuments and fabrics were found in the town. Old mosques, cemeteries and water-wells were also found in the town.¹

Beit Lahia had its first local council in 1964, with nine members. The current council has thirteen members and was set up in 1997. The town is now one of the Gaza Northern District's three municipalities.

Location and Population

Beit Lahia is located in the north of the Gaza Strip, about seven kilometers from Gaza City. The green line² borders the town in the north, the Mediterranean in the west, Jabalia refugee camp in the south and the town of Beit Hanun in the east. The town occupies an area of 15,500 dunam³; 6,000 of them are residential and the rest is agricultural. Before 1948, Beit Lahia was the second largest village in the southern district of Palestine since it included large agricultural areas north of the current border. During the British Mandate, much of the village's land, more than 4,000 dunam, was annexed as government property.⁴

About 55,000 people live in eight major neighborhoods in Beit Lahia, more than half in the Al Mashru' neighborhood. The town's population is expected to increase dramatically due to new housing projects like Shaikh Zayid Town, Al Fardus Project and An Nuzha Project.

Basic Public Services

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has full responsibility for public services, education, health, water supplies, etc. Like other towns in the Gaza Strip, the electricity supply is provided by the Gaza Districts Electricity Company and telecommunication is assigned to the PALTEL and the Ministry of Post and Communications.

Running Water Services

The Municipality of Beit Lahia owns five water-wells in the north of the town, which provide the town with water supplies through the Municipality network. It is said that the quality of water in the town is the best in the Gaza Strip. However, the Municipality serves only 50% of the area since its network is limited to residential areas. In rural areas, people depend on small private wells. The Municipality water network reaches only 3,570 households. Running water is available for a few hours every day in the town. Sources in the Municipality say there is a severe shortage of water since the wells' capacity is limited.

Water supplies became even worse recently because of the continued demolition of homes and agricultural land by the Israeli forces; the Army do not allow municipality technicians to reach demolished homes or land to mend the damaged water systems.

¹ The Palestinian Local Authorities Guide, Page 28.

² The border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, which was determined in the aftermath of the 1948 war.

³ One dunam corresponds to 1,000 square meters in the international system.

⁴ According to the Beit Lahia Municipality sources.

In addition, water supplies became worse due the indirect effects of the occupation forces violence, for instance, there are three wells in the Israeli settlements, which were built on Beit Lahia land. Modern high-capacity pumps operate inside the Israel land continuously. Because of water theft, the Beit Lahia Municipality wells' capacity is limited and the quality of water worsened.

Furthermore, the collective punishment of Palestinian civilians, through siege, destruction of homes and land has raised the rates of poverty and unemployment, and consequently, people's ability to pay water fees has become limited. The Beit Lahia Municipality say that 66.6% of the subscribers in the water system did not pay fees in the last two years so the Municipality is unable to improve the service.

Sewage Services

There is a small sewage system only in the populated parts of Beit Lahia, which the Municipality of Beit Lahia supervises. People living in rural areas around Beit Lahia use sewage wells, which have disastrous environmental effects, particularly on water quality. The sewage system in the town is primitive: pipes carry sewage to pools north of the town, together with sewage from other Municipalities in the North District. These pools, located near residential areas in Beit Lahia and the Bedouin Village, are a source of disease and environmental problems. Efforts to resolve this have stopped since the beginning of the Intifada uprising.

Electricity Supplies

In 1972, Beit Lahia, and all the towns in the Gaza Strip, started to buy electricity from the Israeli National Electricity Company and the Municipality was responsible for the collecting the fees during the Israeli direct control of the Gaza Strip. In 1994, when the Palestinian National Authority was established, as a result of the Oslo Accords between the PLO and the Israeli Government, the roles changed and the Municipalities had more responsibilities. In 1995, the Gaza Districts Electricity Distribution Company was established and has been supervising purchasing and distributing electricity supplies since.

Beit Lahia housing and business developed quickly after the creation of the (PNA) and electricity consumption also increased quickly. However, the Israeli National Electricity Company refuses to provide enough to satisfy the new needs of the town. Electricity cuts have become a daily event in Beit Lahia, especially because the Municipality is not able to compensate for the power shortage for financial reasons.

As with water supplies, the Israeli forces aggravated the electricity crisis: the main transformer near Eriz checkpoint was frequently shelled by the Israeli forces, and the destruction of transformers caused cuts in part, and sometimes all, of the town. The Israeli army prevents Palestinians access to the shelled sites and technicians need permits from the Israelis to carry out repairs and maintenance⁵.

Additionally, the Israeli closure caused a collapse of the population's income and increased the unemployment rate in Beit Lahia so people cannot pay electricity bills. The electricity company says that out of 4,372 customers only 514 are able to pay for electricity and 281 subscribers pay part of their bills.

⁵ Ramzi Hamudeh, the director of the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company, talked about this problem in an affidavit to Al Mezan.

The company's debt is over NIS 8,294,897 but NIS 895,283 is due from government institutions. The accumulation of the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company debt risks the Israeli company withholding further electricity supplies, which has been threatened many times.⁶

Table 1: The Electricity Services in Beit Lahia

Item	Total	Unit
Number of subscribers	4,372	Household
Amount of electricity consumption	1,931,901	Kilowatt
Price per month	883,278	NIS
Total debt	9,190,181	NIS
Total requests	10,071,716	NIS

Table 2: Electricity Charges in Beit Lahia

Item	Total	Unit
Number of subscribers who paid in May 2002	795	Household
Total of payment	403,783	NIS
Full payment	514	Subscriber
Total of payment	246,531	NIS
Partial payment	281	Subscriber
Total of payment	157,251	NIS

Table 3: Electricity Household Consumption in Beit Lahia

Item	Total	Unit
Number of subscribers	4,372	Household
Amount of electricity consumption	1,694,175	Kilowatt
Price per month	793,226	NIS
Total debt	8,294,897	NIS
Total requests	9,086,380	NIS

Table 4⁷: The Electricity Consumption for Public Facilities in Beit Lahia

Item	Total	Unit
Number of subscribers	100	Institution
Amount of electricity consumption	237,726	Kilowatt
Price per month	90,052	NIS
Total debt	895,283	NIS
Total requests	985,335	NIS

⁶ The electricity generator in Gaza was scheduled to work in 2001 at most, but the Israeli occupation restricted it, especially by preventing equipment entrance to the Gaza Strip. Sources in the electricity company told Al Mezan that it would work in July 2002. This station can solve the problem Palestinians face in electricity supplies.

⁷ The Gaza Electricity Distribution Company. Gaza, May 2002.

Education

The Palestinian Ministry of Education runs and supervises fifteen schools in Beit Lahia, occupying 9 school buildings, both basic and secondary. According to the Ministry's statistics, 315 teachers and 15 head-teachers work at these schools. The number of students is 10,200 distributed as follows: 4,900 students in primary schools, 2,600 students in preparatory schools and 2,700 in secondary schools. Classrooms in these schools are overcrowded since the average number of students is 40 per classroom. Private education is limited for kindergartens.

Health Care

The Palestinian Ministry of Health is responsible for conducting health services in Beit Lahia. There are two public clinics in the town, the Beit Lahia Old Primary Care Clinic and Beit Lahia Martyrs Clinic.

Table 5: The Old Primary Care Clinic Staff and the Number of the Beneficiaries⁸

Beit Lahia Old Primary Care Clinic	Doctors	Nursing Staff	Technicians
Official Staff	4	10	0
Temporary Staff	0	1	2
Number of beneficiaries per month	7,044		

Table 6: The Beit Lahia Martyrs Clinic Staff and the Number of the Beneficiaries

Rafah Central Clinic	Doctors	Nursing Staff	Technicians
Official Staff	6	9	2
Temporary Staff	5	2	0
Number of beneficiaries per month	8,600		

The information mentioned in the above two tables show the heavy burden on the clinics' staff. The number of beneficiaries is very high for this limited number of physicians and nurses. Health care in the town is low compared with the internationally accepted standards.

Social Affairs Assistance

Both of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the UNRWA carry out social affairs services in Beit Lahia.

I. The Ministry of Social Affairs

The Ministry provides permanent help for very poor people, mainly families that lost their breadwinners. Mostly, the assistance is either financial or food rations. The following table shows the number of people who fit the Ministry's standards to receive aid.

Table 7: Number of Families and Individuals Who Receive Aid from the Ministry of Social Affairs in Beit Lahia

Category	No. Of Families	No. Of Individuals
Very Poor	745	2,608
One-Time Financial or Ration Aid	4,500	

II The UNRWA Social Affairs Department⁹

⁸ In the two tables dentists are included in the number doctors, while pharmacists are included in the number of technicians.

⁹ The UNRWA assistance is all rations and aim to help refugees keep alive and not to improve the living standards. The average share for individuals is 89 NIS per month.

The UNRWA provides significant aid for refugees in Beit Lahia through its permanent help. The department has been helping more people during the current Intifada because of the high level of unemployment and poverty. All of the families that receive the department's assistance comply with a set of conditions, in particular, they have suffered the death of the breadwinner. Families who have male members over 18 years old do not receive any assistance, even if they are unemployed.

The Israeli crimes in Beit Lahia during the al-Aqsa Intifada

The Use of Excessive and Lethal Force

The Israeli forces use a variety of weaponry to deter Palestinians protests, mainly civil protests. During the Al Aqsa Intifada / uprising, these forces used warplanes, helicopters, guided missiles, tanks and various machineguns. Such arms are not proportional to Palestinians protests or even military action. Inevitably, high numbers of Palestinians, mostly civilians, were killed and wounded.

Facts on the ground indicate that Beit Lahia, like the rest of Palestinian towns, has been subject to Israeli aggression, even though the town did not witness clashes like other towns. In a systematic violation of humanitarian and international law, Israeli forces used excessive and lethal force, deliberately killing and hurting civilians and destroying much of their property. The use of force in Beit Lahia took various forms: frequent shelling of residential areas from Israeli watchtowers around settlements or from marine forces and shelling the town during incursions, especially in the areas near settlements.

In her affidavit to Al Mezan, Fayza Muhammad Fatuh, age 48 from Al-Nada Towers area said that Israeli soldiers killed the nine-year-old Mahmud al-Talaqa while he was playing near his house in the Bedouin village, which is located opposite to the Towers. She said that the soldiers shot the boy deliberately when there was not necessity. Following is Fayza's statement:

"About 12:05, Friday 1 March 2002, I was sitting in my flat when I heard the sound of a tank. I looked out of the window and saw the tank going up a small hill opposite to the building. A group of children gathered and stood looking at the tank and at a soldier who looked out of a hole. Many times the soldier waved to the children in a friendly way. Three children walked up the hill near the tank, which moved back. One of the children followed the tank and when he was about 15 meters from it, the same soldier opened fire directly. I later knew the boy was Mahmud al-Talaqa, who died from wounds."

On Tuesday 8 March 2002, Israeli forces attacked the town of Beit Lahia many times. They used excessive force and when it was not necessary. At approximately 10 P.M., Israeli military boats opened fire on the Beit Lahia coast, at Al-Sudania area, with heavy machineguns. At the same time, tanks entered the town, at the coastline, and shelled the area arbitrarily. Thirty minutes later, Israeli marine forces fired two missiles on the same area. One missile struck a car killing Jamil Samih as-Sabagh, a Palestinian marine police officer, and injuring his companion. At 1 A.M. the same night, they shelled the area with a missile and heavy machineguns. At 1:40 A.M., these forces shelled the area again and entered the beach area. four Palestinians were killed in this attack: Saeed YUsif Shalayil, Hani Radwan Ashur, Samir Judeh and Hasan Hussain Abu Ubaida. The following table shows Palestinians from Beit Lahia, who were killed by the Israeli forces during the Al-Aqsa Intifada / uprising.

Table 8: Palestinians Killed by the Israeli Occupation Forces in Beit Lahia during the al-Aqsa Intifada

No.	Name	Age	Cause of death	Date
1.	Musbah Abdul Qadir Sulaiman Abu Ateeq	30	A bullet in the head.	16/10/2000
2.	Yihia Nasir Hasan Salaiha	20	Shrapnel in different parts of the body.	16/09/2001
3.	Mahir Idrees Ahmad Khudair	23	Shrapnel in different parts of the body.	3/10/2001
4.	Mahmud Muhammad Hasan ash-Shurafa	23	Shrapnel in different parts of the body.	3/10/2001
5.	Ijmi'an Jumaa as-Sawarkeh	27	bullets in different parts of the body.	8/10/2001
6.	Rafeeq Muhammad Mahmud Saqr	20	Shrapnel in the head.	24/10/2001
7.	Jihad Hamdi Ahmad al-Masri	17	Shrapnel in different parts of the body.	2/12/2001
8.	Taj ad-Din Rajab Salim al-Masri	30	bullets in different parts of the body.	6/12/2001

9. Ali Saad Ismail Mhana	20	bullets in different parts of the body.	30/12/2001
10. Mahmud Hasan Ahmad al-Talalqa	8	bullets in different parts of the body.	1/03/2002
11. Jamil Samih Jamil as-Sabagh	34	Shrapnel in different parts of the body.	1/03/2002
12. Ahmad Ismail Mahmud Kafineh	19	A large calibre bullet in the chest	12/03/2002
13. Kamal Abdul Nasir Muhammad Rajab	18	bullets in different parts of the body.	15/03/2002
14. Majid Muhammad Atiya Abu al-Jidian	28	bullets in different parts of the body.	16/03/2002
15. Muhammad Mahmud Abdul Aziz al-Iskafi	17	bullets in different parts of the body.	11/04/2002
16. Yunis Muhammad Salim Abu Gharara	26	bullets in different parts of the body.	15/04/2002
17. Hussain Yusif Muhammad Atiya	46	bullets in different parts of the body.	29/04/2002

Targeting Civil Premises

The Israeli belligerent occupation forces have attacked Palestinian civil premises, but Beit Lahia had a good share of such attacks. In an obvious violation of international humanitarian law, the Israeli army targeted a variety of civil premises in Beit Lahia. International humanitarian law prohibits such attacks and specifically states:

1. Civilian property shall not be the object of attack or of reprisals. Civilian properties are not military objectives as defined in paragraph 2.
2. Attacks shall be limited strictly to military objectives. In so far as property is concerned, military objectives are limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage.
3. In case of doubt whether an object which is normally dedicated for civilian purposes, such as a place of worship, a house or other dwelling or a school, is being used to make an effective contribution to military action, it shall be presumed not to be so used¹⁰.

Considering these texts and the legal background in the report, one can compare the Israeli occupation procedures in Beit Lahia. This report is intended to highlight the Israeli aggression against civil premises in detail.

Targeting Houses and Residential Areas

The Israeli forces have targeted Palestinians' homes in Beit Lahia on an unprecedented scale since the beginning of al-Aqsa Intifada. They shelled, blew up and bulldozed houses, and sometimes turned them into military barracks. The attacked civilians' houses were concentrated in the areas near settlements, bypass roads and borders with Israel. Homes were destroyed through the shelling of residential areas or during Israeli incursions in the town.

Bulldozing of homes by the Israeli forces

Bulldozing of homes is the most common cause of destruction and damage of homes in Beit Lahia, particularly in those areas near settlements and borders. Israeli tanks and bulldozers usually enter the Palestinian Authority controlled areas and bulldoze homes under fire cover. In most of the documented cases, civilians did not have the chance to empty their homes from property or furniture. Since Beit Lahia is located near a settlement area, the town witnessed, and witnesses, frequent Israeli incursions. The occupation forces have systematically demolished numerous homes to create security areas near settlements¹¹.

¹⁰ See Article (52) in Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

¹¹ Look at table 9 in this report for more details on homes destroyed by the Israeli forces.

Arbitrary shelling of residential areas

Many of the Palestinian Authority installations have been shelled or bombarded by the Israeli forces since the beginning of the Intifada / uprising in September 2000. Additionally, a number of Palestinian activists were assassinated by Israeli Air Force. No care was taken of civilians' lives and property in these offensives, so numerous homes were either destroyed or damaged. Such offensives were resumed, in spite that these forces being aware of the danger to civilians' lives, as they have full information about the targeted installation or activists. Israel had a long history of occupation in the OPTs and knows the nature of these territories.¹²

As a result of the frequent bombardment of PA installations, many families moved from their homes near such installations. The following affidavit was taken from Muhammad Hamduneh, who used to live near a Police station in the town:¹³

"At approximately 4 P.M. Thursday 12 October 2000, my family and I were sitting in a balcony at our home, which is located opposite to the Police station in Beit Lahia, when we heard a high sound of an explosion. We thought that it came from the inside, but when I looked through a window, I noticed thick dust in the air. In a few seconds there was a second, and a third explosion. I looked at my mother and saw that her face was bleeding, so I called the ambulance service, which came in five minutes and took her to the UNRWA clinic in Jabalia refugee camp. She had a long cut near her left eye from a missile splinter and was taken care of in the clinic " (Muhammad hamduneh)

Muhammad Ali Abu Sultan, age 31, lives near the Police station in Beit Lahia with his family of seven, gave the Al Mezan the following affidavit:

"My name is Muhammad Ali Abu Sultan. I have five children and we live in a small house with an area of 150 square meters in Beit Lahia near Fateh Movement Headquarters in Gaza-North District and the police station in the town. My brother Juma lives next door with his family. My foot is paralyzed since fifteen years, so I am unable to work.

At around 9 P.M. on 8 April 2001, I was watching TV with my family. Some of the children were sleeping when a very high sound of explosion occurred. It was so close and we felt that the house is up to collapse on us. Part of the asbestos roof fell down and the house was full of dust. Only then I realized that there was shelling on the police station or Fateh Office. I felt severe pain in my body. My wife and I hurried to the children. My 12-year-son, Mahmud who was sleeping, head was bleeding. I asked the children to get under the bed fast.

Two minutes later, a second, louder explosion was heard. I was so scared and did not know what I should do until some of our neighbors entered the house and carried us out. Ambulances took us to Al Awda Hospital in Jabalia, where we received first aid. I knew that my wife had severe bleeding. She was pregnant. We were hospitalized for a few days before we moved to my brother's house. This was not the first time my house was damaged; in October 2000, it was damaged from Israeli shelling of the Police station. However, we had no choice but to stay home. When I left hospital, I went to see my house and found it turned to sand and rock". (Muhammad Abu sultan)

Incursions into Beit Lahia by Israeli Forces

The Israeli occupation forces carried out many incursions in residential areas in Beit Lahia. These forces launched house-to-house searches, destroyed many houses, arrested many Palestinians

¹² Eight people were wounded and 22 homes damaged as the Israeli forces shelled Fateh Movement Office in Beit Lahia on 4 April 2001.

¹³ Israeli Air Forces bombarded the Police station in Beit Lahia that day, according to the documentation of Al Mezan.

and bulldozed agricultural land during the incursions. What follows is a summary of the Israeli forces incursion operations into Beit Lahia since the beginning of the Intifada.

1. At approximately 5 A.M. Wednesday 3 October 2001, the Israeli forces launched a wide ranging incursion into Beit Lahia. Israeli military points in the settlements of Ilai Sinai and Dugit fired on the town with heavy machineguns and canons. Tanks, helicopters and marine forces took part in the shelling. Seven Palestinian security points, and many homes and greenhouses were hit. Tanks entered the town from different directions: 1.5 kilometer from the south and 3.5 kilometers from the east, taking control of an area of 6 square kilometers of the PA's controlled area.

The attack lasted until 8 A.M., by which time military bulldozers had demolished a large area of agricultural land and destroyed many homes. More important, six Palestinians were killed, including four police members and two farmers who were working in their farm. Four people were injured in this attack.

The Israeli forces continued their operations in the town during the five following days, including random shooting, demolition of homes, land and water-wells. According to the Center's fieldwork unit, 1,400 dunams¹⁴ of agricultural land, hundreds of citrus and almond trees and twelve homes were completely demolished. One of the houses, owned by Nadhir Abdul hadi Mhana, was a three-story-house and was blown up with explosive devises. Finally, 22 homes were damaged in this incursion.

2. At approximately 12:30 A.M. Wednesday 13 February 2002, seven Israeli tanks entered the west of Beit Lahia in as-Syafa area. People were surprised by the existence of the tank as they did not hear the sound of engines. Soldiers deployed in the area and broke into Mahmud al-Sabi' Abu Halima's house. Residents of the house, 18 persons, were ordered to go out and stand against the outside wall. According to eyewitnesses, about 40 soldiers searched the house using dogs, while about 50 others stayed outside. After an hour and a half, they withdrew and the house owner went in to find that the doors, windows and the kitchen contents were destroyed. The family also realized that many of their photographs, checks and official documents were lost. The Israeli forces also confiscated 100 bullets owned by Wa'il Mahmud as-Sabi', who works in the PA security. The father said the soldiers asked him where Wa'il was and that he did not know where he was at that moment. The Israeli force arrested Wa'il's two brothers, Saeed, age 22 and Mahmud, age 17.

3. At around 12:50 A.M. the same night, Israeli soldiers infiltrated Al-Manshiya area east of Biet Lahia, which is located near the settlement of Nitzanit. Eyewitnesses said that a group of about 35 soldiers wearing Special Forces uniform and night vision equipment deployed in the area. They came across two Palestinian National Security members, who work at a nearby security site, and arrested them. The two Palestinians were ordered to knock at the door of Al-Habl family, who woke up to find their house surrounded by Israeli soldiers. The house was searched by soldiers and dogs. Much of the house furniture and appliances were damaged. Al-Habl's son, Faisal, and his friend Jihad Kalash came to tell the family that there were Israeli soldiers in the area and were arrested and taken by military vehicles to prison.

In addition, the Israeli forces launched small incursions, almost on a daily basis, especially in the north of Beit Lahia and the nearby Bedouin Village. The following tables show the homes that were completely destroyed and partially damaged in Beit Lahia.

Table 9: Homes Completely Destroyed in Beit Lahia

¹⁴ One dunam corresponds to 1,000 square meter.

No.	Name	Date	Damage
1.	Ahmad Kamil Abu Khusa	25/11/2000	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and compliances
2.	Nasri Shukri Bshara as-Suri and brothers	11/12/2000	Bulldozing of the home, cracking of walls and windows.
3.	Khalid Abdullah Ibrahim al-Hajeen	3/01/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
4.	Abdullah Samir Abdullah al-Hajeen	3/01/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
5.	Ibrahim Abdullah Ibrahim al-Hajeen	3/01/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
6.	Abdullah Ibrahim Abdullah al-Hajeen	3/01/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
7.	Ahmad Hasan Mahmud Taha	3/01/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
8.	Akram Muhammad Yunis Mustafa	3/01/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
9.	Muhammad Yunis Sulaiman Mustafa	3/01/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
10.	Ibrahim Musa Ibrahim al-Mughrabi	5/01/2001	Bulldozing of the home, cracking of walls and windows.
11.	Ibrahim Dawud Salman Hamada	27/01/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
12.	Muhammad Dawud Salman Hamada and sons	1/02/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
13.	Saleh Muhammad Hamudeh al-Atar	1/03/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
14.	Nimir Salameh Sulaiman Abu Sil'ah	8/03/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
15.	Shihadeh Hasan Khalil Nasman	24/03/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
16.	Jum'a Mahmud Ali Abu Sultan	8/04/2001	Destruction of most of the home, furniture and appliances
17.	Khamis Mahmud Ali Abu Sultan	8/04/2001	Destruction of most of the home, furniture and appliances
18.	Ahmad Abdullah Ahmad Shahin	25/04/201	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
19.	Talal Ahmad Abdul Rahman Shahin	25/04/201	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
20.	Nasir Fayiz Abid Tafish	26/04/201	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
21.	Salah Khadir Ahmad Khudair	1/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
22.	Riziq Saeed Hamid al-Akeh	1/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
23.	Ghusun Muhammad Yusif Abu Rabi'	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture.
24.	Muhammad Muhammad Abu Shmas	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
25.	Saadi Khalil Muhammad al-Attar	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
26.	Hamdi darwish Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
27.	Hazim Jaafar Idris Khudar	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
28.	Sulaiman Salama Abu Halima	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
29.	Fatin Fayiq Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
30.	Khalid Salim Ali al-Ghul	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
31.	Uthman Sabir Muhammad Abu Amsha	3/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
32.	Nadhir Abdullah Abdul Hadi Mhana	8/10/2001	Destruction of most of the home, furniture and appliances
33.	Hamdeh Muhammad Abu Khusa	8/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
34.	Najeeb Numan Abdul Latif al-Khuzundar	26/10/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances
35.	Talal Muhammad Mahmud Rihan	1/11/2001	Complete destruction of the home, furniture and appliances

Table 10: Homes Partially Dmaged in Beit Lahia

No.	Name	Date	Damage
1.	Muhammad Nimir Hasan Hasuneh	5/10/2000	Cracking of the house's walls and shattering of windowpanes.
2.	Mahir Muhammad Deeb al-Attar	20/11/2000	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
3.	Khalid Hasan Mustafa Ghabayin	21/11/2000	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
4.	Saeed Muhammad Salim ad-Da'ur	26/11/2000	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
5.	Muhammad Deeb Muhammad Hamudeh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
6.	Ashur Abdul Malik Salim Deeb	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
7.	Muhammad Mahmud Ali al-Balaawi	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
8.	Raid Umar Nimir Hasuneh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
9.	Salih Hasan Yasin Abu Awwad	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
10.	Amin Abdul Sattar Ahmad Hamudeh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
11.	Abdul Majid and Abdullah Hasan Ara'ut	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
12.	Saeed Akram Saeed Hamudeh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
13.	Umar Khalil Ahmad Takuneh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
14.	Muhammad Ahmad Muhammad Hamudeh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
15.	Zuhair Ahmad Muhammad Hamudeh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
16.	Sabir Fahmi Matar Zurub	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.

17. Zaina Saeed Ibrahim Zurub	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
18. Rafiq Ahmad Muhammad Hamudeh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
19. Ahmad Muhammad Ali Hamudeh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
20. Adil Muhammad Mahmud Hamduneh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
21. Abdullah Mahmud Ali al-Bal'awi	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
22. Ali and Muhammad Nimir Hasan hasuneh	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
23. Fuad and Munir Mustafa Lafi Abu Safi	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
24. Adnan Abdul Rahman Ahmad	8/04/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
25. Mahmud Abdul Rahman Salam Abu Ghazal	14/05/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
26. Mustafa Msalam Udeh al-Abraq	4/09/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
27. Abdul Qadir Msalam Udeh al-Abraq	4/09/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
28. Ibrahim Mahmud Sulaiman Ismail	14/09/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
29. Muhammad Salama Sulaiman Abu Rafi'	27/09/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
30. Muhammad Abdul Hai Hasan Maruf	3/10/2001	Shattering of windowpanes.
31. Hasan Arafat Muhammad Abdul Dayim	4/10/2001	Cracking of walls and shattering of windowpanes.
32. Shafiq Issa Jumaa Khail	5/10/2001	Cracking of walls and shattering of windowpanes.
33. Ismail Silmi Salim Abu Qlaih	8/11/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
34. Abdullah Shadid Sulaiman Abu Ateeq	10/11/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
35. Mahmud Muhammad Ramadan Saad ad-Din	12/11/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
36. Saad Muhammad Ramadan Saad ad-Din	20/11/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
37. Majid Muhammad Hussain ash-Shaf'I and brothers	24/11/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
38. Ahmad Muhammad Salim ad-Daur and appliances in bombardment.	26/11/2001	Shattering of windowpanes, destruction of furniture
39. Ibrahim Atta Khalil as-Sultan	1/12/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
40. Fikri Atta Khalil as-Sultan	1/12/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
41. Ziyad Atta Khalil as-Sultan	1/12/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
42. Fawzi Atta as-Sultan	1/12/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
43. Wasfi Kayid Udeh al-Abraq	11/12/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
44. Atiya Ahmad Iqtifan Masamaha	11/12/2001	Shattering of windowpanes in bombardment.
45. Sultan Atallah Hussain al-Masri	13/02/2001	Destruction of doors and windows during incursion.
46. Rafiq Mahmud Shihadeh an-Nahal	10/02/2002	Shattering of windowpanes by bombardment.
47. Hasan Abdul Aziz Muhammad Abu Itta	10/02/2002	Shattering of windowpanes by bombardment.
48. Salah Hasan Khalil Abu Dhahir	10/02/2002	Shattering of windowpanes by bombardment.
49. Hasan Salim Mansur Abu Zaideh	10/02/2002	Shattering of windowpanes by bombardment.
50. Ismail Ali Ismail Salim	10/02/2002	Shattering of windowpanes by bombardment.

Demolition of Palestinians agricultural land

Since the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada on 28/9/2000, the Israeli occupation forces have been targeting Palestinians' agricultural land systematically. They have bulldozed cultivated land, uprooted trees, destroyed crops and greenhouses, and swept cultivated land's surface. They have buried the trees, so it will be difficult for Palestinian farmers to work their land in the future.

The town of Beit Lahia has suffered considerably from this: Israeli occupation forces have bulldozed about 2,861 dunams of cultivated land, according to the documentation of Al Mezan. About 4,443 persons live off this land in Beit Lahia; 1,346 of them are children.

It is worth noting that the provisions of the Geneva Conventions protocols prohibits destroying plants and crops that constitute sources for civilians life; the first Protocol states:¹⁵

1. Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited.
2. It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as food-stuffs, agricultural areas for the production of food-stuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them from their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse

¹⁵ Geneva Conventions First Protocol, Chapter III.

Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.

3. The prohibitions in paragraph 2 shall not apply to such of the objects covered by it as are used by an adverse Party:

(a) as sustenance solely for the members of its armed forces; or

(b) if not as sustenance, then in direct support of military action, provided, however, that in no event shall actions against these objects be taken which may be expected to leave the civilian population with such inadequate food or water as to cause its starvation or force its movement.

4. These objects shall not be made the object of reprisals.

5. In recognition of the vital requirements of any Party to the conflict in the defense of its national territory against invasion, derogation from the prohibitions contained in paragraph 2 may be made by a Party to the conflict within such territory under its own control where required by imperative military necessity.

Preventing Farmers from Reaching Their Lands

Not only have the Israeli forces bulldozed cultivated land in Beit Lahia, but also they prevented farmers from reaching it. All the farmers' attempts to plant this land again were stopped. Besides, there are other lands that were not bulldozed, but damaged because farmers are not allowed to reach them, especially those lands near the settlements of Ilai Sinai and Dugit, northwest of the town. The rural area of As-Syafa in Beit Lahia suffered extensive Israeli operations, targeting farmers and land, killing, bulldozing and confiscation.

According to the documented cases at Al Mezan, at approximately 4:30 P.M. Friday 22 June 2001, the Israeli forces opened fire on As-Syafa with heavy machineguns and tank shells, injuring two farmers: Salah Shaaban Khadir, age 63, and his 36-year-old son, Nabil who both suffered from bullet wounds.

Salah Shaaban Khadir, age 63 told Al Mezan that five persons of his family and himself were working on their farm in the As-Syafa area when the Israeli forces suddenly opened fire on them. He said that his son, Nabil, and he were wounded. Salah said he suffered from wounds in his left shoulder, while Nabil was wounded in the abdomen.

On the same day, at night, these forces launched a house-to-house operation in As-Syafa. They arrested eleven men, all of whom are farmers. Al Mezan knew the detainees were: Ryad Salih al-Ghul, Ayman Khadir al-Ghul, Adham Khadir al-Ghul, Yusri Khadir al-Ghul, Arafa Maaruf, Hussam Maaruf, Abdul Hadi Musa Abu Khusa, Abdul Rahman Musa Abu Khusa, Hamad Musa Abu Khusa, Nasir Faris al-Ghul and Shafiq Ahmad Hamduneh. All of the detainees were released the next day, except Nasir Faris al-Ghul and Shafiq Ahmad Hamduneh.

In his affidavit to Al Mezan, Drayis Ahmad Hashim Khudair, a 65-year-old farmer from As-Syafa says: "I was working on my farm with my son Akram, age 25, on 21 June 2001 when we heard a loud explosion. We were not sure where the sound exactly came from. However, in a minute there was intense gunfire on the spot where we were working. We escaped immediately and never allowed to return to our land as the Israeli forces closed the area the same day. I am sure all of my crops are ruined.

On 11 August 2001, the Israeli forces detained the farmer Nadhir Abdullah Mhana, age 82 and five persons. Mhana was working on his farm with the five workers when they were detained and driven

to his house in the area. Al Mezan knew that Mhana and the workers were detained in his house by twenty Israeli soldiers for eight hours and a half. Mhana family abandoned their house in the area as similar procedures took place frequently and because the Israeli forces bulldozed the land around the house several times.

In some cases, farmers in this area lost their livelihood, even without having their land destroyed. The Israeli forces isolate As-Syafa and prohibit people who do not live in it permanently from entering it. Shahir Fayiq khudair told the Center that he had not been allowed to reach his 20-dunam farm in As-Syafa since the beginning of December 2000. He said that the Israeli soldiers who are stationed in a nearby point opened fire every he tried to go to the farm. In the few times he got near the farm, Khudair added, he noticed that the trees became paler. "I lost my land without bulldozing it", said Khudair.

Table 11: Bulldozed-Land Owners in Rafah

No.	Owner's Name	Date	Land Area, Dunam ¹⁶
1.	Nimir salameh Sulaiman Abu Silaa	8/032001	5
2.	Talal Muhammad Mahmud Rihan	1/11/2000	13.5
3.	Ismail Ahmad Ismail Ali	1/11/2000	19
4.	Ilias Muhammad Mahmud Rihan	1/11/2000	12.5
5.	Muhammad Ahmad Ismail Ali	1/11/2000	15
6.	Amineh Ramadan Ibrahim Abu Ful	10/11/2000	3
7.	Kamal Ramadan Ibrahim Abu Ful	10/11/2000	9
8.	Hani Muhammad Dheib al-Barrawi	26/11/2000	16
9.	Yusif Muhammad Salim an-Nahal	26/11/2000	8
10.	Hani Muhammad Dheib al-Barrawi	26/11/2000	54
11.	Hani Muhammad Dheib al-Barrawi	26/11/2000	30
12.	Nasri Shukri as-Suri and partners	11/12/2000	33.312
13.	Myasar Miqbil Muhammad Hamduneh	2/01/2001	5.5
14.	Salih Muhammad Hamudeh al-Attar	2/01/2001	14.5
15.	Muhammad Dawud Ibrahim Hamadeh	2/01/2001	18
16.	Abdullah Ibrahim al-Hajin	3/01/2001	16
17.	Muhammad Hussain Ali al-Attar	3/01/2001	9
18.	Abdul salam Udeh al-Haw	3/01/2001	6.9
19.	Akram Muhammad Yunis Mustafa	3/01/2001	12
20.	Abdul Rahman Khamis al-Kurdi and partners	3/01/2001	3
21.	Abdul Latif Yusif al-Haw and his brothers (Husni, Awni and Mahmud)	3/01/2001	6
22.	As-Sayid Mansur Ahmad aj-Jadbeh and brothers	3/01/2001	42.728
23.	Rafiq Muhammad Abdul Qadir Abu Kalub	3/01/2001	1
24.	Ahmad Abid Rabu al-Haw and parthners (Mithqal Abu Dhahir and Faris al-Akhras)	3/01/2001	1.35
25.	Salah Khadir Ahmad Khudair	4/01/2001	17
26.	Adnan Adil Mkhaimar Abu Halimeh	4/01/2001	6
27.	Jamil Ismail Eid al-Issi	4/01/2001	52.5
28.	Salah Khadir Ahmad Khudair	4/01/2001	16
29.	Raid Mkhaimar Abu Halimeh	4/01/2001	6
30.	Yusif Muhammad Salim an-Nahal	5/01/2001	2.5
31.	Basam Shukri Yunis an-Nahal	5/01/2001	3
32.	Mahmud Muhammad Abu Halimeh	5/01/2001	22
33.	Musa Ibrahim Musa al-Mughrabi	5/01/2001	4
34.	Hamdi Drayis Ahmad Khudair	5/01/2001	4
35.	Samir Khamis Muhammad Abu Halimeh	6/01/2001	5
36.	Ibrahim Musa Ibrahim al-Mughrabi	6/01/2001	36.167
37.	Saadi Munib Yusif al-Mashharawi	7/01/2001	26
38.	Hail Saib Darwish al-Whidi	22/01/2001	19
39.	Bakr Muhammad Salman Abu Halimeh	27/01/2001	10

¹⁶ The land area is in Dunam, which corresponds to 1,000 square meters.

40.	Hamid Muhammad Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	27/01/2001	13
41.	Ibrahim Dawud Salman Hamadeh	27/01/2001	28
42.	Muhammad Ibrahim Hanadeh and sons	1/02/2001	18
43.	Na'imeh Miqbil Muhammad Hamduneh	1/02/2001	5.5
44.	Yusif al-Abid Mustafa al-Mutawaq	10/02/2001	13
45.	Inheritors of Nahid Mahmud Muhammad ash-Shinbari	11/02/2001	3
46.	Fatima Izri'i Musa Abu Eideh	11/02/2001	5
47.	Muhammad Ali Rashid Abu Eideh	11/02/2001	16
48.	Jamal Ibrahim Rashid Abu Eideh	11/02/2001	3.780
49.	Rashid Dyab Rashid Abu Eideh	11/02/2001	17.5
50.	Adil Rashid Ali Abu Eideh	11/02/2001	14.5
51.	Adil Rashid Ali Abu Eideh	11/02/2001	8
52.	Amneh Jumaa Hussain Darduneh	13/02/2001	5.5
53.	Salih Muhammad Hussain Darduneh and his wife Safiyeh	13/02/2001	9.130
54.	Sabri Mahmud Badr al-Adham	14/02/2001	30
55.	Muhammad Ishtiwai Abu Eideh	14/02/2001	24
56.	Ahmad Mustafa Ahmad Abu Wardeh	16/02/2001	4
57.	Ayish Mustafa Ahmad Abu Wardeh	16/02/2001	4
58.	Yihia Muhammad Salih al-Attar	1/03/2001	2.250
59.	Abdul Rahman Abdul Rahman Khadir	1/03/2001	2
60.	Nimeh Muhammad Salih al-Attar	1/03/2001	1
61.	Suad Muhammad Salih al-Attar	1/03/2001	1
62.	Azizeh Muhammad Salih al-Attar	1/03/2001	1
63.	Fathiyeh Muhammad Salih al-Ashqar	1/03/2001	1
64.	Majid Azmi Majdi Arafat	1/03/2001	1.100
65.	Abdul Rahman Ahmad Abdul Rahman Khadir	1/03/2001	3.5
66.	Ahmad Myhammad Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	10/03/2001	15
67.	Mahmud Muhammad Ahmad Itbail	10/03/2001	22
68.	Hamdi Muhammad Khalil Abu Daff	24/03/2001	3
69.	Taisir Hussain Salim al-Atal	2/04/2001	5
70.	Taisir Abu Zaid Mahmud as-Sak	10/04/2001	3.5
71.	Abdullah Abdullah Mustafa Ulwan	10/04/2001	2
72.	Salah Shaaban Ibrahim Khadir and sons	22/06/2001	26
73.	Muhammad Ramadan az-Zagha Khadir	1/09/2001	7
74.	Muhammad Mahmud Muhammad Khadir	1/09/2001	5
75.	Salim Salameh Sulaiman Abu Silaa	13/09/2001	3.5
76.	Ismail Salameh Sulaiman Abu Silaa	13/09/2001	3.5
77.	Udeh Salameh Salman Walaideh	13/09/2001	3.5
78.	Riziq Saeed Hamid al-Ika	1/10/2001	23
79.	Khalil Muhammad Ghazi al-Attar	1/10/2001	31.5
80.	Khairi Rajab Musa Abu Wardeh	3/10/2001	3
81.	Walid Rajab Musa Abu Wardeh	3/10/2001	2.5
82.	Saeed Khamis Darwish Darduneh	3/10/2001	30
83.	Ghusun Muhammad Yusif Abu Irbayi'	3/10/2001	5
84.	Muhammad Abdul Qadir Kilani	3/10/2001	2.5
85.	Dawlat Matar Masud Ikhliil	3/10/2001	10
86.	Nariman Mahmud Ahmad Ikhliil	3/10/2001	2.5
87.	Rajab Mislih Rajab Abu Wardeh	3/10/2001	1
88.	Hasan Muhammad Abdul Qadir al-Lilani	3/10/2001	2
89.	Suhaib Mkhimar Sulaiman Abu Haimeh	3/10/2001	5
90.	Abdullh Muhammad Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	3/10/2001	3.5
91.	Muhammd Ibrahim Abdul Rahman ad-Danf	3/10/2001	8
92.	Mahmud Ahmad Salih Ikhliil	3/10/2001	10
93.	Muhammad Abdul Hai Hasan Maaruf	3/10/2001	15
94.	Ahmad Abdul rahman Hasan al-Ramli	3/10/2001	5
95.	Saadi Khalil Muhammad al-Attar	3/10/2001	9
96.	Samir Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	3.281
97.	Salameh Sulaiman Hamudeh Abu Halimeh	3/10/2001	9
98.	Sami Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	3.281
99.	Atif Saadi Khalil al-Attar	3/10/2001	10
100.	Muhammad Salah Saadi al-Attar	3/10/2001	10

101.	Muhammad Nasir Ali al-Attar	3/10/2001	3.440
102.	Hamad Muhammad Salameh Abu Shmas	3/10/2001	3
103.	Marwan Sabri Yunis Abu Khusa	3/10/2001	10
104.	Ali Ahmad Hashim Ijnaid	3/10/2001	10.5
105.	Rabi' Ramadan Abu Halimeh	3/10/2001	7.5
106.	Sabri Yunis Hammad Abu Khusa	3/10/2001	6
107.	Basima l'laian Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	27
108.	Shahir Nayif Khadir Khudair	3/10/2001	20
109.	Adil Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	3.281
110.	Usama Khadir ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	15
111.	Aysheh Ali Awad Salim	3/10/2001	3.750
112.	Najah Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	1.640
113.	Amal Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	1.640
114.	Fuad Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	3.281
115.	Musa Hasan Musa Abu Khusa	3/10/2001	11
116.	Tenant: Muhammad Hasan Ali al-Attar	3/10/2001	2.5
117.	Abdul Rahman Ahmad Hasan al-Ramli	3/10/2001	5
118.	Salman Musa Hasan Abu Khusa	3/10/2001	8
119.	Hatim Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	3.281
120.	Idrayis Ahmad Hashim Khudair	3/10/2001	4.5
121.	Zakyeh Mustafa Ali al-attar	3/10/2001	9
122.	Khumini Khadir Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	5
123.	Nabil Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	3.281
124.	Jamal Muhammad Mustafa al-Attar and sons	3/10/2001	4
125.	Wisam Muhammad Hussain al-Attar	3/10/2001	4
126.	Ramadan Rajab Musa Abu Wardeh	3/10/2001	1.5
127.	Awni Muhammad Hussain al-Attar	3/10/2001	4
128.	Hamdi Idrayis Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	3.750
129.	Fatin Fayiq Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	3.750
130.	Khalid Salim Ali al-Ghul	3/10/2001	14.250
131.	Na'il Saadi Khalil al-Attar	3/10/2001	12
132.	Tamam Khadir Khalil Abu Halimeh	3/10/2001	5
133.	Rajab Ramadan Muhammad Abu Halimeh	3/10/2001	1
134.	Anwar Khadir Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	12
135.	Hamza Mkhaimar Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	3/10/2001	14
136.	Hasan Ali Muhammad al-Attar	3/10/2001	3
137.	Salim Kamil Muhammad ash-Shurafa	3/10/2001	11
138.	Hamdi Idrayis Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	19
139.	Muhammad Hussain Ali al-Attar	3/10/2001	12
140.	Rajab Ramadan Muhammad Abu Halimeh	3/10/2001	7
141.	Jamil Muhammad Mahmud Abu Hamideh and brothers	3/10/2001	30
142.	Ghazi Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	3.281
143.	Hazim Jaafar Idrayis Ahmad Khudair	3/10/2001	4
144.	Issa Abid Ahmad Shahin	4/10/2001	5
145.	Asaad Musa Ahmad Shahin	4/10/2001	4.8
146.	Mahmud Udeh Abu Jrai	4/10/2001	13
147.	Ismail Hussain Ahmad Shahin	4/10/2001	7
148.	Dalal Khadir al-Luh Khudair	4/10/2001	3.5
149.	Fatima Ismail Issa Shahin	4/10/2001	6
150.	Ahmad Abdullah Ahmad Shahin	4/10/2001	12
151.	Samahir Sulaiman Salama Abu Halimeh	4/10/2001	15
152.	Abdul Munim Musa Ahmad Shahin	4/10/2001	4
153.	Hasan Ahmad Abdul Halim Shahin	4/10/2001	5
154.	Muhammad Fayiq Khadir Khudair	4/10/2001	5
155.	Musa Ahmad Abdul Halim Shahin	4/10/2001	30
156.	Amin Musa Ahmad Shahin	4/10/2001	4.8
157.	Khadir Hussain Hashim Abu Nada	4/10/2001	40
158.	Abdul Salam Arif Hussain Abu Nada	4/10/2001	5
159.	Hasan Arafat Muhammad Abdul Dayim	4/10/2001	31
160.	Suhail Salama Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	4/10/2001	9
161.	Muhammad Matar Ali Ghabin	4/10/2001	30

162.	Saqr Muhammad Rabah al-Attar	4/10/2001	3.5
163.	Nahid Salama Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	4/10/2001	10
164.	Salama Salim Abu Jrai	4/10/2001	7.5
165.	Ahmad Abdullah Ahmad Shahin	4/10/2001	18.750
166.	Lubna Adil Mkhaimar Khalil	4/10/2001	3
167.	Salih Mahmud Ahmad Khalil	4/10/2001	5
168.	Musa Ahmad Shahin	4/10/2001	4.8
169.	Yasir Fayiq Khadir Khudair	4/10/2001	6.7
170.	Ramadan Uditallah Abu Khusa	4/10/2001	10
171.	Ghifreh Eid Abu Khusa	4/10/2001	3
172.	Mharib Ramadan Abu Halimeh	5/10/2001	1
173.	Nadhir Abdullah Abdul Hadi Mhana	5/10/2001	112.5
174.	Sami Muhmmad Ali al-Attar	5/10/2001	4
175.	Sit Ikhwatha Khalil al-Attar	5/10/2001	4
176.	Alaa Khalil Khadir al-Luh	5/10/2001	4
177.	Mharib Ramadan Abu Halimeh	5/10/2001	7
178.	MUHAMMAD Nimir Hasan al-Maqadmeh	5/10/2001	4
179.	Luaai Ali Muhammad al-Attar	5/10/2001	4
180.	Khadir Abdul Hamid Qashqash	5/10/2001	10
181.	Muhammad and Mahmud Mustafa Qashqash	5/10/2001	12
182.	Ataya Abdul Khaliq al-Kilani	5/10/2001	4
183.	Ashraf Ahmad Abdul Hadi Badr	5/10/2001	3.701
184.	Karima Ahmad Ali Khudair	5/10/2001	3
185.	Eid Ismail Ibrahim al-Halul	5/10/2001	15
186.	Abdullah Hilmi at-Tarazi	5/10/2001	30
187.	Mahmud Muhammad Mahmud Abu Amsha	5/10/2001	10.5
188.	Khalid Muhammad Udeh Abu Jrai	5/10/2001	7
189.	Ashraf Ahmad Abdul Hadi Badr	5/10/2001	2.750
190.	Abdul Qadir Muhammad Kilani	5/10/2001	3
191.	Munir Muhammad Hamduneh	5/10/2001	3
192.	Nizar Sulaiman Salama Abu Halimeh	5/10/2001	5
193.	Ibrahim Ahmad Shahin	5/10/2001	14
194.	Azmi Sulaiman Salama Abu Halimeh	5/10/2001	8
195.	Mansur Khalid Mahmud al-Badi	5/10/2001	8
196.	Muhammad Nimir Hasan Hasuneh	5/10/2001	2.5
197.	Shafiq Issa Jumaa Khail	5/10/2001	8
198.	Rashad Ahmad Abu Halimeh	5/10/2001	4
199.	Shafiq Issa Jumaa Khail	5/10/2001	15
200.	Akram Hamdi Bakir al-Yaziji	5/10/2001	19
201.	Yihia Salman Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	5/10/2001	4
202.	Muhammad Abdullah Nasr	6/10/2001	8.5
203.	Fayiz Salih Qandil aj-Jadba	6/10/2001	8
204.	Ahmad Salih Qandil aj-Jadba	6/10/2001	7
205.	Muhammad Muhammad Mahmud al-Badi	6/10/2001	2
206.	Mutaz Khalid Mahmud al-Badi	6/10/2001	3
207.	Qandil Salih Qandil aj-Jadba	6/10/2001	7.5
208.	Asaad Muhammad Matar al-Ashqar	6/10/2001	14
209.	Zyad Saeed Mahmud al-Attar	6/10/2001	9
210.	Abdul Muhsin Salih Qandil aj-Jadba	6/10/2001	7.5
211.	Zaki Mahmud Ahmad Abu Hamideh	6/10/2001	10
212.	Salam Yaaqub Salim Mahdi	7/10/2001	30
213.	Alaa Hasan Ali al-Attar	7/10/2001	8
214.	Afaf Muhammad Saeed Subih	8/10/2001	2.5
215.	Luai Nahid Muhammad al-Ghul	8/10/2001	7
216.	Khalid Muhammad Salman Abu Halimeh	8/10/2001	20
217.	Akram Yunis Abu Khusa	8/10/2001	5
218.	Salim Muhammad Salim ad-Daur	8/10/2001	18
219.	Ayman Subhi Riziq Subih	8/10/2001	6.5
220.	Suhaila Salama Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	8/10/2001	15
221.	Nahid Muhammad Mustafa al-Ghul	8/10/2001	14.5
222.	Muhammad Rabah Khalil al-Attar	8/10/2001	2.5

223.	Talal Ayish Abdul Latif Maaruf	8/10/2001	6
224.	Usama Muhammad Rabah al-Attar	8/10/2001	3
225.	Anwar Muhammad Ghazi al-Attar	8/10/2001	3
226.	Akram Muhammad Yunis Mystafa	8/10/2001	24
227.	Hamdeh Muhammad Abu Khusa	8/10/2001	5.5
228.	Yunis Uditallah Mitliq Abu Khusa	8/10/2001	10
229.	Hikmat Matar Masud Abu Halimeh	8/10/2001	10
230.	Imad Yunis Uditallah Abu Khusa	8/10/2001	5
231.	Bassam Yunis Uditallah Abu Khusa	8/10/2001	10
232.	Ahmad Muhammad Salim ad-Daur	8/10/2001	14
233.	Muhammad Salman Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	8/10/2001	15
234.	Bakr Muhammad Salman Abu Halimeh	8/10/2001	5
235.	Asaad Muhammad Ghazi al-Attar	8/10/2001	6
236.	Mkhaimar Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	8/10/2001	24
237.	Khadir Khalil Khadir al-Luh	8/10/2001	30
238.	Uthman Mkhaimar Sulaiman Abu Halimeh	26/10/2001	10
239.	Najib Numan Abdul Latif al-Khuzundar	26/10/2001	2
240.	Basil Muhammad Ghazi al-Attar	26/10/2001	17.5
241.	Naim Muhammad Khairi al-Attar	26/10/2001	54
242.	Ibrahim Musa Ibrahim al-Mughrabi	26/10/2001	70
243.	Usama Muhammad Rabah al-Attar	26/10/2001	1.5
244.	Atallah Hilmi Atallah at-Tarazi	26/10/2001	23
245.	Asaad Muhammad Ghazi al-Attar	26/10/2001	10
246.	Muhammad Khalil Abdul Rahman al-Attar	26/10/2001	5
247.	Jarallah Numan Abdul Latif al-Khuzundar	2/11/2001	25
248.	Zuhair Drayis Ahmad Khudair	2/11/2001	9
249.	Muhammad Ghazi Khalil al-Attar	11/11/2001	9
250.	Nabil Saadi Khalil al-Attar	11/11/2001	12
251.	Khamis Khadir Ahmad Khudair	11/11/2001	5
252.	Muhammad Rabah Khalil al-Attar	11/11/2001	7
253.	Salah Shaaban Ibrahim Khadir	20/11/2001	13
254.	Zuhdi Khamis Mahmud Abu Amsha	26/11/2001	12
255.	Muhammad Khadir Ahmad Khudair	2/12/2001	4
256.	Zainab Mahmud Jabir al-Ghul	8/04/2002	7
257.	Faris Jabir Salih al-Ghul	8/04/2002	35
258.	Musa Mahmud Jabir al-Ghul	8/04/2002	10
259.	Jabir Mahmud Jabir al-Ghul	8/04/2002	5
260.	Shihdeh Mustafa Hussain Abu al-Kaas	4/05/2002	2
261.	Shihdeh Mustafa Hussain Abu al-Kaas	4/05/2002	2.6

Ruining Water Wells

The Israeli occupation forces continue ruining Palestinians' water wells, particularly those used for agriculture. This procedure is consistent with the Israeli policy, which aims to weaken the Palestinian agricultural sector and to use Palestinian water resources. These forces have ruined tens of water wells in the Gaza Strip, and of course, in Beit Lahia where they ruined three wells used for irrigation. Palestinian farmers use water wells in groups, so each well is usually used to irrigate an area of 250 dunams on average.

Hasan Abdullah as-Satari said in his affidavit to the Center that an Israeli force composed of tanks and a bulldozer destroyed his water well and the land around it Wednesday 25/7/2001. He said that the room where the well is, which was built in 1963, was also destroyed. As-Satari said that the well used to irrigate about 230 dunams was owned by several persons.

Beit Lahia was most affected by this action, as many of these wells were used for agriculture in the town. According to the documentation of Al Mezan, forty-four wells were destroyed in Beit Lahia. Farmers' loss is estimated of US\$ 440,000 as each well costs US\$ 10,000 in average. The table below shows the owners of destroyed water-wells in Beit Lahia.

Table 12: Water-Wells Ruined in Beit Lahia

No.	Owner's name	Date	Address/Neighborhood
1.	Ismail Ahmad Ismail Ali	1/11/2000	Um al-Mishmish
2.	Ilias Muhammad Mahmud Rihan	1/11/2000	Um al-Mishmish
3.	Kamal Ramadan Ibrahim Abu Ful	10/11/2000	Um al-Mishmish
4.	Nasri Shukri as-Suri and partners	11/12/2000	As-Syafa
5.	Myasar Miqbil Muhammad Hamduneh and her sisters	2/01/2001	Um al-Mishmish
6.	Akram Muhammad Yunis Mustafa	3/01/2001	Um al-Mishmish
7.	As-Sayid Mansur Ahmad aj-Jadbeh and brothers	3/01/2001	Um al-Mishmish
8.	Abdul Latif Yusif al-Haw and his brothers (Husni, Awni and Mahmud)	3/01/2001	As-Syafa
9.	Rafiq Muhammad Abdul Qadir Abu Kalub	3/01/2001	Um al-Mishmish
10.	Jamil Ismail Eid al-Issi	4/01/2001	Al-Lahwanyeh
11.	Musa Ibrahim Musa al-Mughrabi	5/01/2001	As-Syafa
12.	Basam Shukri Yunis an-Nahal	5/01/2001	As-Syafa
13.	Yusif Muhammad Salim an-Nahal	5/01/2001	As-Syafa
14.	Hail Saib Darwish al-Whidi	22/01/2001	Um al-Mishmish
15.	Ibrahim Dawud Salman Hamada	27/01/2001	As-Syafa
16.	Jamal Ibrahim Rashid Abu Eideh	11/02/2001	Um Shujaa
17.	Muhammad Ishtiwai Abu Eideh	14/02/2001	Tufah Qura
18.	Fathiyeh Muhammad Salih al-Ashqar	1/03/2001	
19.	Yihia Muhammad Salih al-Attar and brothers	1/03/2001	Um al-Mishmish
20.	Majid Azmi Majdi Arafat	1/03/2001	Al-Lahwanyeh
21.	Hamdi Muhammad Khalil Abu Daff	24/03/2001	As-Syafa
22.	Ismail Salameh Sulaiman Abu Silaa	13/09/2001	Um Shujaa
23.	Udeh Salameh Salman Walaideh	13/09/2001	Um Shujaa
24.	Riziq Saeed Hamid al-Akeh	1/10/2001	As-Syafa
25.	Samir Abdullah Salman Salim	3/10/2001	Nasir Project
26.	Khalid Salim Ali al-Ghul	3/10/2001	Nasir Project
27.	Aysheh Ali Awad Salim	3/10/2001	Nasir Project
28.	Ali Ahmad Hashim Khudair	3/10/2001	As-Syafa
29.	Muhammad Abdul Hai Hasan Maruf	3/10/2001	Al Hawalim
30.	Rajab Mislih Rajab Abu Wardeh	3/10/2001	Nasir Project
31.	Musa Ahmad Abdul Halim Shahin	4/10/2001	Nasir Project
32.	Ashraf Ahmad Abdul Hadi Badr	5/10/2001	Ash-Shaduf
33.	Nadhira Abdullah Abdul Hadi Mhana	5/10/2001	As-Syafa
34.	Nizar Sulaiman Salama Abu Halimeh	5/10/2001	As-Syafa
35.	Eid Ismail Ibrahim al-Halul	5/10/2001	Al-Mashru'
36.	Zaki Mahmud Ahmad Abu Hamideh	6/10/2001	Ghafar al-Tin
37.	Salam Yaaqub Salim Mahdi	7/10/2001	Nasir Project
38.	Nahid Muhammad Mustafa al-Ghul	8/10/2001	As-Syafa
39.	Najib Numan Abdul Latif al-Khuzundar	26/10/2001	Al Amya al-Sharqyeh
40.	Ibrahim Musa Ibrahim al-Mughrabi	26/10/2001	Nasir Project
41.	Jarallah Numan Abdul Latif al-Khuzundar	2/11/2001	Al Masyeh
42.	Salah Shaaban Ibrahim Khadir	20/11/2001	As-Syafa
43.	Zuhdi Khamis Mahmud Abu Amsha	26/11/2001	As-Syafa
44.	Ahmad Taha ash-Shanti	—	As-Syafa

Closure and Comprehensive Siege around the Palestinian Territories

Closure is the main instrument of Israeli policy in its efforts to stop the Intifada / uprising. However, the closure is not always the same. It was tight often, and eased sometimes, but has been continuous since 9/10/2000. This closure isolated the Gaza Strip from the West Bank, and the two areas from the outside world.

Like all of the other Palestinian towns, Beit Lahia has been under to continuous siege. The Israeli forces isolate areas even inside a town like as-Syafa. Israeli violations of Palestinians' human rights are all embodied in this area. This report reviews the conditions of as-Syafa under the siege.

As-Syafa Area

This area is located at the seacoast in the north of the Gaza Strip. Two Israeli settlements were created on confiscated land in as-Syafa, Dugit and Ilai Sinai. The Israeli forces have been violating the human rights of as-Syafa population even before the break out of the current Intifada / uprising. Al Mezan has documented many of these violations including the demolition of hundreds of dunams of agricultural land, seizure of 250 dunams for settlement use, demolition of ten water-wells and tens of homes. Moreover, many of the Palestinians living in the area were murdered from arbitrary shooting on their homes and farms.

As-Syafa was closed three weeks after the beginning of the Intifada, and, worse, the Israeli forces isolated the area from the outside world through a fence of barbed wires. People who live permanently in as-Syafa can move at limited times through one gate these forces created for this purpose. Their ID cards have numbers on them and people who do not own these ID numbers are not allowed to move. Moreover, all kinds of vehicles are restricted from going through this gate. Moreover, as-Syafa has been under continuous night curfew, during which only emergency cases can move, with a special permission from the Israeli commander in the area.

These procedures caused much loss of property and investment in the area. for instance, farmers who own land but do not live in the area cannot reach their farms. They lost two harvest seasons and the problem will continue if the situation does not change.

The Reasons behind Bulldozing Palestinians' Land

An objective assessment of the Israeli forces performance in Beit Lahia on land demolition and confiscation indicates that these forces have targeted Palestinians' land for several reasons. First, the Israeli settlements are created on land that was, and still is, owned by Palestinians. Second, the settlements need safe roads, so land was demolished to secure their travel between Israel and these settlements. The Israeli government provide tempting advantages for settlers in order to prompt them to live in settlements inside the OPTs.

Since early May 2002, Israeli forces started to separate Palestinian towns from Israel and settlements. They have been creating a wall along the borders. As a result, they seized hundreds of dunams of Palestinians cultivated land.

I. Expansion of Settlements

Mass transfer of Israeli population in the occupied Palestinian Territories constitutes one of the Grave Breaches of international humanitarian law, namely the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, of 12 August 1949. The Israeli occupation forces have established tens of settlements in these territories since 1967. Israel has not stopped settlement even after the Oslo Accord with the PLO in 1993, but it escalated settlement activities. The areas where the Israeli army has demolished Palestinian land indicate Israel's intention to expand the existing settlements in an obvious breach of international humanitarian law. Three settlements were built in the north of Beit Lahai on Palestinian land¹⁷.

¹⁷ For more information about the locations of settlements, look at the map of Beit Lahia in Appendix 4 in this report.

II. Creating Bypass Roads and Security Areas

Besides building and expanding settlements, Israeli forces seize Palestinians' land in order to establish what is called bypass roads, which are assigned for settler's movement in the OPTs. Tens of bypass roads were established on large areas of land, mostly agricultural land. Most of the Palestinian towns and villages are surrounded by such roads, which are also used to separate towns and villages.

Yasir Fayiz Zaidan, a 45-year-old Palestinian landowner from as-Syafa, and one of the Palestinians whose land was seized said to Al Mezan in his affidavit: "I have been living in as-Syafa for 30 years. My family and I own several farms in the area since 1936. My house is located west of the settlement of Dogit, only 12 meters from the settlement. The Israeli forces seized 20 dunams of my land; all was planted with vines, in October 2000 and bulldozed ten other dunams. Israeli soldiers annoy us all the time by throwing stones on the ceiling or producing loud noise to make us leave our home. I believe they want the rest of my land.

The isolation of the Gaza Strip,

Israel has announced that it has started building a wall along the border between the Gaza strip and Israel; for this, the Israeli forces have confiscated large areas of Palestinian land. This wall aims to isolate Palestinian towns and residential areas into cantons and to create new facts on the ground before negotiating on future borders.

Additionally, the Israeli forces notified the owners that they could choose between compensation of 5 years rent or confiscation of their land, all of which is located in area A. However, the owners asked for legal assistance of Al Mezan, who took their case to the Israeli High Court. The landowners are:

- Hasan Hussain Khadir al-Shafi'I,
- Zeinab Muhammad Abdullah Nasr,
- Aysha Yusif Hussain Nasr and
- Naheel Anthony Mikhail al-Lidawi,
- Salima Faris Muhammad Nasr,
- Fraih Abdullah Muhammad Nasr.

The persons mentioned above assured us that they refused the choices and that they do not want to sell or rent their land, in spite of the continued Israeli restrictions on their movement to and from their land. In their affidavit to Al Mezan, they said that they have been subject to frequent abuses by these forces, particularly the prohibition of vehicular movement, shooting and land demolition.

On Wednesday 26 June 2002 the Israeli forces handed military orders of seizure of (500) dunams to four Palestinian landowners. A map that shows the land, which these forces intend to seize in Beit Lahia, was attached to the military orders. The map shows that the Israeli forces intend to seize (500) dunams in the area. Al Mezan knew the landowners are Muhammad Salman Sulaiman Abu Halimeh, Ali Ahmad Hashim Khudair, Nadhir Abdullah Abdul Hadi Mhana and Awsam Saeed Mahmud al-Akluk.

Land seizure complies with 'Law'!

On Wednesday 1 May 2002, the Israeli military commander of the Gaza Strip issued a military order, No. 1744 and 1745, seizing 300 dunams of land in Beit Lahia for five years. The landowners authorized Al Mezan to intervene on their behalf before the Israeli High Court. The Center intervened through its lawyer in Israel, contacted the IDF Legal Advisor and pleaded for the Israeli High Court to cancel the order. The High Court asked the Center to freeze its appeal until the IDF

responded to the Center's demands in two weeks during which the Israeli forces would not take any action to implement the order.

On 22 May, the Israeli High Court ordered the IDF to freeze the confiscation order until it looked in the case. However, the Court approved the Israeli chief commander's order on the pretence that it is essential for the security of settlers in the area. The judicial order violates the humanitarian law, which prohibits both population transfer and confiscation.

Negative effects of the Israeli aggression on Beit Lahia community

The Labor Sector

Statistics indicate that 49.8% of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip are able to work. About 22% of the Palestinian population have been involved in production before 9/10/2000, the day the Israeli closure started.

The Ministry of Labor said that about 1,882 worker lost their jobs in Beit Lahia who had worked in Israel at some time in the past. The number includes 1082 persons who lost their jobs inside Israel in various different sectors.

Besides, about 800 workers have lost their jobs in the local markets, according to the Ministry of Labour. The Palestinian General Labourers Union reported that 6,654 unemployed persons have a received a single financial aid payment through the Union. The same persons were provided health insurance by the union.

The labour sector was severely damaged by the sudden rapid loss of jobs and the absence of any plans that can cope with such situation by the Palestinian National Authority. The financial aid provided corresponds to \$120 and did not make any change in the labourers financial situation. In fact, workers have organised many demonstrations and protests in May 2002 because of the hardship they live in since the beginning of the Israel siege.

2. Social Affairs

The number of poor families in Beit Lahia has increased during the al-Aqsa Intifada. The Ministry of Social Affairs could not manage to keep its aid to poor families or to absorb new numbers. New families have entered the cycle of poverty as the average income has collapsed, due to the Israeli closure and targeting the Palestinian economy.

The fall in income and the high unemployment rate cause hardship to these families, especially since relatives and neighbours suffer similarly and cannot help.

3. Education

The education sector has many difficulties in Beit Lahia. Targeting of schools meant that much of the funds assigned for building new classrooms were spent repairing war-damaged schools.

The average growth of students' number is 7.26% per year, so it is possible that the whole sector could collapse if new schools are not built regularly. However, it is difficult for the Ministry of Education to do anything in the face of the continued Israeli military violence.

Moreover, Palestinian students are suffering from what they have been experiencing. Many teachers said that the teaching process is deteriorating because students loose many school days.

4. Housing conditions

The housing conditions in Beit Lahia are very bad and far below the international standards for adequate housing. This situation is not new: the town has been suffering in this situation since 1967, due to the Israeli negligence. Housing lacked appropriate infrastructure and there were no new housing projects. It is familiar to find two or three families living in one house sharing its kitchen and bath.

In addition, the situation became worse after the Israeli forces' demolition of houses, as shown in this report. Numerous homes were bulldozed, damaged or abandoned due to the Israeli military violence.

Besides targeting houses, people could not save any of their contents including furniture, savings or clothes. They will never live in similar conditions again as they used to, particularly if the closure continues. About 464 people have lost their houses in Beit Lahia, 240 of them are female and 160 are children.

5. Health Care

Health care standards have been low in the Palestinian territories in general. However, the ongoing clashes created more suffering to Palestinians since large numbers need care because of the Israeli aggression.

There is no hospital in Beit Lahia to serve the population. People have to travel to other towns, especially Gaza City to get hospital service. Comparing the number of doctors and nurses in the town with the population indicates that there are 5,500 persons for each doctor, and 2,894 persons for each nurse in the town. In times of clashes, the situation becomes disastrous as many wounded Palestinians come to hospital within a short time.

The health sector needs urgent development to keep the minimum level of service in the town, especially as the Israeli occupation forces are still using excessive and lethal forces in the Gaza Strip adding more burden on this sector.

6. The Collapse of Income

The average income rate in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is relatively low in normal situations. It is also lower than the average rate in neighboring Arab countries. The average rate of income in the Palestinian territories constitutes 72% of the rate in Egypt, 45% of the rate in Syria and 49.6% of the income rate in Jordan. The rate has fallen because of the economic slow down since the beginning of the Israeli siege around these territories.

Statistics indicate that the Palestinian gross domestic income witnessed deterioration by 60% since 28/9/2000. The average yearly individual income in the Gaza Strip is US\$ 1,38818. The average rate of income is lower in the south of the Gaza Strip, where it is about US\$ 832 per year, and about 59% of the same rate before 28/9/2000.

7. Poverty

¹⁸The Human development Report, Palestine, 1998-1999, p27.

After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, Palestinians had high expectations of economic development, especially after what they heard about huge investment activities in the Palestinian territories. However, facts on the ground minimized these expectations. Many of the economic activities witnessed either slow down or deterioration, especially in job creation. The number of Palestinian laborers inside Israel decreased and the local market and the public sector could not absorb the increasing numbers of workers. Besides, there has been a decrease in the average rate of wages, particularly in the public sector. As a result, the number of Palestinian families living under the poverty line became high.

The unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip reached 20.9% in 1998 and 1999 although these years witnessed considerable growth¹⁹. Studies on poverty in Palestine indicated that the rate of poverty was higher than expected, and that 38% of the Gaza Strip population were poor in 1997.

The above-mentioned statistics tell us that in normal situations, a very high percentage of the population in the south of the Gaza Strip was poor, and one wonders about the situation after 28/9/2000. Large numbers of Palestinians have lost their jobs, their houses, their lands and property since that day.

There are many indicators that show the extent of damage and poverty in Beit Lahia such as:

- About 70% of Beit Lahia population are not able to pay municipal fees, including water fees, sewage fees and taxes due to the sharp cut of their income.
- About 81% of the population cannot pay the electricity fees.
- The number of workers who lost their jobs reaches 1,882.
- About 464 persons have lost their residence due to the Israeli aggression.
- About 741 persons had their houses damaged. Many of them left their houses.
- About 3,692 persons, who live off agricultural land, lost their living.
- About 2,608 families receive social affairs aid, which is given to very poor families.

¹⁹The Human Development Report, a previous reference.

Final Comments

The Israeli occupation forces aim at emptying the Palestinian population from the OPTs and replacing it Israelis. Israel has utilized a variety of means to achieve this population engineering, including seizure of land through legal and administrative processes. Al Mezan believes this policy is racist. Meanwhile, these forces practice collective punishment procedures deterring Palestinian civilians. Demolition of homes, of agricultural land, of civil premises, economic pressur have little to do with the security of the occupation forces.

In the face of the continued Israeli crimes, according to humanitarian and international laws, the international community is obliged to fulfill its legal and moral responsibilities towards the Palestinian civilian population of the OPTs. Such crimes necessitate bringing their perpetrators and those who ordered them to justice. Al Mezan questions the continued silence of the international community by the time clear crime are being committed against civilians in occupied territories. Had it continued, this silence constitutes a prompting factor for the Israeli occupation to go even farther with their crimes.

END