



Human Rights Council – Session 34

Item 7

Interactive Dialogue

20 March 2017

Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights

We thank Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk for his report on the situation of human rights and the growing challenges faced by and critical work of human rights defenders (HRDs) in the oPt “who seek justice in an environment in which human rights are increasingly subverted by a prolonged occupation soon reaching the half-century milestone”.¹

Al Mezan pursues the respect, protection and fulfilment of fundamental human rights of Palestinians, including the right to self-determination, and seeks justice and accountability for the commission of international crimes. Our work is relied upon by *inter alia* the UN and the International Criminal Court. The Special Rapporteur correctly notes that the protections and respect accorded to human rights defenders working under mandates like ours “declined precipitously after Israel’s Operation Cast Lead in 2008/9”. In 2015, our engagement with the International Criminal Court was responded to with surveillance and repression, threats to life and safety of staff and family members, intimidation, and smear campaigns.² There have been police investigations into attacks against Al Mezan’s staff in in Europe.

The commitment by civil society to ensure that international legal norms are uphold and to combat violations of international law in the oPt and Israel, including by engaging in local and international litigation, must not make targets of individual human rights defenders and must not be met with government repression. Such attacks clearly aim to undermine HRDs’ peaceful efforts to defend others and to stifle effective pursuit of equal rights and democratic values.

In recalling Israel’s obligation under international law to protect HRDs and promote their work, this Council must:

- ensure the attacks are seriously investigated by relevant bodies as possible reprisals against human rights defenders for their engagement and cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms and other international accountability institutions;

Call on Israel to:

¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, 16 March 2017. Available here:

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/PS/A_HRC_34_70_AUV.pdf p. 3

² See for example <http://mezan.org/en/post/21477> and <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/14/israel/palestine-palestinian-rights-defenders-threatened/>.

- lift the closure/blockade of the Gaza Strip and dismantle its occupation regime, Israel's pursuit of which underscores its reasons for attacking civil society;
- fully honor and implement the rights and obligations contained in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- end the use of the legal, criminal and security tools to obstruct the legitimate work of HRDs;
- fully respect the fundamental freedoms of movement, association, assembly, and expression; and
- repeal all restrictive legislation targeting HRDs;

We will continue to “raise the uncomfortable truths about the disfigured state of human rights under occupation”³ and we request your support in doing so.

Thank you.

³ *Supra* note 1 p. 22