



## مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان

### AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

#### Worst Year under Occupation:

#### 2008 1st Quarter Report on IOF Violations of Human Rights in the Gaza Strip

The outcome of Al Mezan's monitoring and documenting finds that the first quartet of 2008 saw an unprecedented escalation in human rights violations in the Gaza Strip. This escalation is principally caused by a serious increase in the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) systematic breaches of human rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in the Gaza Strip (Gaza). According to the information collected by Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, there was a large increase in the number of victims during the first quarter of 2008 to the extent that it exceeded the total number of people killed during some of the previous *Intifada* years.

Also, the tightening siege has destroyed the economy of Gaza and doubled the number of poor and unemployed, reaching unprecedented levels not before witnessed in the history of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The siege is the worst since the IOF began its occupation of the territories in June 1967.

According to information documented by Al Mezan, the number of Gazans killed by the IOF during the first quarter of 2008 is higher than the same period in 2005, 2006, or 2007. Moreover, this number approaches the 281 people killed by the IOF *in total* during 2007. That same year, thirty-one children were killed by the IOF. In a sharp increase, forty-two children were killed at the hands of the IOF in the first three months of 2008 alone. In addition, IOF's destruction of public and private properties in the Gaza Strip increased during

the first quarter of 2008. The following tables provide information collected by Al Mezan that shows the consequences of the IOF's aggression and human rights violations during this period:

Table 1: Number of people killed by the IOF in Gaza during the first quarter of 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008:

Year	# of people killed	# of those who were children	# of those who were women
2005	46	15	1
2006	36	7	1
2007	8	2	0
2008	247	42	15

Table 2: Number of houses destroyed by the IOF in Gaza during the first quarter of 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008:

Year	# of houses destroyed	# of residents in these houses	# of those who were children
2005	15	134	70
2006	5	36	20
2007	0	0	0
2008	289	1,837	1,303

Table 3: Area of agricultural land (in dunams) bulldozed by the IOF in Gaza during the first quarter of 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008:

Year	# of dunams (1 dunam = 1,000 square meters)	# of people dependent on this land
2005	17	54
2006	15	35
2007	0	0
2008	2,963	759

Table 4: Number of industrial installations destroyed by the IOF in Gaza during the first quarter of 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008:

Year	# of industrial installations	# of workers
2005	1	3
2006	1	12
2007	0	0
2008	10	244

No stores, vehicles, or public facilities were destroyed by IOF during the first quarter of the previous three years. However, the first quarter of this calendar year shows the following:

Table 5: Stores destroyed by the IOF in Gaza during the first quarter of 2008:

Extent of the damage	# of stores that received damage	# of workers (before damage to these stores)
Partial damage	14	56
Complete destruction	6	11
Total	20	67

Table 6: Vehicles damaged by the IOF in Gaza during the first quarter of 2008:

Extent of the damage	Number of vehicles that received damage
Partial damage	9
Complete destruction	8
Total	17

Table 7: Public facilities destroyed by the IOF in Gaza during the first quarter of 2008:

Year	Number of public facilities that received damage
2008	18

The aforementioned data shows the IOF's increase in the number of violations and victims, which Al Mezan believes are expected to increase if the international community continues to be silent with regard to the IOF's conducts. This silence threatens the credibility of the

international community concerning principles and values that link humankind, which makes up the essence of the United Nations, IHL, and international human rights law.

The IOF, which maintains full control over the border crossing between Gaza and Israel and the outside world, continues to launch direct attacks on the Gaza Strip. The IOF also escalated its collective punishment measures in an unprecedented manner, strangulating the Strip with a tight, comprehensive blockade that denies individuals and goods free movement. Such actions threaten the lives and wellbeing of Gaza's civilians, dozens of whom have died as a result of denied access to hospitals abroad or lack of medicine to treat patients in Gaza. The IOF's procedures destroyed the Palestinian economy and severely lowered the standard of living for Gazans. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have lost their jobs because of the closure, joining the already thousands of people unemployed in the Strip. The Palestinian private sector is under the threat of collapse and lack of future growth if international intervention fails to create significant changes in the current situation.

The lack of basic materials and goods forces the population to think only of day-to-day activities, and people cannot plan for the future. The IOF reduced severely the amount of fuel into the Gaza Strip, which encroaches on human rights. Moving from one town to another within the Strip has become difficult since thousands of cars for public transportation are stopped due to lack of fuel. The following table shows the amount of fuel the IOF allowed to enter into the Strip:

Table 8: Quantities of fuel allowed into Gaza by the IOF during the first quarter of 2008:

Month	Gasoline (liter)	Industrial Diesel (liter)	Cooking Gas (ton)	Diesel (liter)	Benzene 95 (liter)
January (total)	0	8,594,750	496,677	5,059,620	650,125
January (daily avg.)	0	277,250	16,021.84	163,181.3	20,971.77
February (total)	192,000	8,184,860	5,324	2,650,960	283,450
February (daily avg.)	6,620.69	282,236.6	183.58	91,412.41	9,774.138
March (total)	0	9,754,780	636,433	3,791,580	343,020
March (daily avg.)	0	314,670.3	20,530.1	122,309	11,065.16
Total (3	192,000	26,534,390	166,551	11,501,160	1,276,595

months)					
Monthly Avg.	64,000	88,447,967	5,517	3,833,720	4,255,317

Gaza requires more than 510,000 liters of diesel per day, and on average, needs 500,000 liters of industrial diesel. The amount of gas required for Gaza's residents is 200,000 liters per day. Over 250 tons of cooking gas is also needed per day in Gaza. This quantity was allowed into Gaza by the IOF until it began reducing the fuel supplies in mid-October 2007.<sup>1</sup>

The unprecedented rise in poverty, in prices, and in unemployment rates were the direct result of the IOF's prolonged blockade of Strip. Closures severely restrict the flow of imports into Gaza, rendering goods scarce and make prices very high. Gaza's population cannot afford sufficient quantities of food because of the extreme prices and drop in average income. The IOF prevented the entry of commercial goods and other materials, allowing in the entry of a restricted list of goods, which are: wheat flour, rice, sugar, salt, oil, frozen foods, cleaning materials (limited supplies only) and dairy products. Medical supplies and medicines were allowed in for government agencies only, and only in limited quantities.

Furthermore, the IOF suspended the entry of the following into the Gaza Strip: medicine and medical supplies (for both the private and NGO sectors); agricultural saplings; herbicides and pesticides; footwear; clothing; fabrics, threads, and buttons; construction materials (cement, tin, iron, plastic pipes, asbestos, wood, nails, screws, wires, paint, etc.); spare parts and supplies for manufacturing goods; electrical appliances; office equipment and office supplies; livestock and fodder; books; computers; telephones and mobiles; spare parts for communication devices; tobacco and cigarettes; beverages; all types of motor vehicles including spare parts (batteries, tires, engine oil); elevators and its spare parts; and water pumps and its spare parts. The IOF also prevented the export and import of raw materials for industry and agriculture, in all forms, which paralyzed the work of the private sector. In doing so, the basic needs of the population were ignored, especially the areas of the Strip that witness normal population growth.

The increase in the number of victims and material losses shows that the IOF failed to abide by its obligations under IHL and international human rights law. The international community's failure to act in accordance with their obligations under international law, particularly the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, made the current

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<sup>1</sup> See Press Release 42/2008, 3 April 2008, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights at [www.mezan.org](http://www.mezan.org) for more details.

situation possible. This is not a matter of analysis and conclusion, rather Israeli government officials declared many times the intention to continue the escalation. Israel also took actions such as declaring Gaza a 'hostile entity', expressed intentions to 'step up pressure on Gaza', and imposing more severe closures. This emphasizes the punitive nature of the Israeli conducts, including the military escalation that aims to exert pressure on the population of the Strip to achieve political results, not security.

Al Mezan condemns the IOF's escalation of the aggression on Gaza and the gross human rights violations resulting from it. The evidence provided in this report shows that the IOF commits systematic war crimes against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. The blockade, along with its disastrous effects, and the high number of victims shows a severe deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the OPT. It also shows that the IOF's systematic conducts constitute collective punishment, making the blockade one of the contemporary world's worst forms of collective penalties against a civilian population.

The Center also asserts that the situation in Gaza produces a severe deterioration in the humanitarian situation and escalation in human rights abuses. In order to deal with this crisis international political intervention is necessary to bring to an end to the political factors that made this situation possible. The emergency assistance received in Gaza was provided by relief agencies to prevent, or perhaps delay, a total collapse, but it has become clear that this type of assistance cannot by itself improve the situation. Rather, a multifaceted intervention that merges political, economic, technical and humanitarian components is urgently required to tackle the current situation and bring to an end the accentuating de-development in the OPT in general, and the Gaza Strip in particular.

At the immediate level, Al Mezan believes it is necessary that the international community must act effectively in order to rescue the weak private sector in Gaza, which is the largest employer, both by providing emergency assistance and by preventing Israel from suffocating it by the blockade. Of major concern is also the health situation, which is affected by the blockade and lack of fuel. The Center also calls upon the international community to act immediately to bring to an end to Israel's flagrant violations of human rights and IHL in Gaza.

Al Mezan therefore renews its calls to the international community to take action to provide international protection for civilians in the OPT and work in order to stop the IOF's violations and crimes against them. The international community is obliged to investigate, pursue and prosecute those who ordered and/or perpetrated such crimes.

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