

Palestinian Civil Society in Israel Demands Urgent Action on Gaza

We, the undersigned organizations, express extreme concern at the rapidly deteriorating situation within the Gaza Strip and urge the international community to take immediate action to halt the deadly aggression being waged against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. We also urge the UN to initiate a fact-finding mission to investigate alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Since Israel launched its military offensive dubbed “Operation Protective Edge” on 8 July 2014, over 175 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, 80% of whom the UN humanitarian office (OCHA) report to be civilians, and over 1,280 injured. The victims have included entire families, women, children and the elderly. Israel has launched over 1,500 air strikes in the past seven days, deliberately targeting homes and other civilian facilities and fired dozens of shells at Palestinian communities located near the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel and along the coast; approximately 900 houses have so far been destroyed. In a further escalation of events, Israel has bombed a number of houses without any prior warning whilst civilians have been inside, dramatically raising the death toll and the number of casualties. Targets bombed by the military where civilians have been present have included a café, an emergency medical building, a facility for the disabled, three ambulances and a clearly marked media car. Schools, mosques, an ambulance centre, NGO offices, fishing boats and a hospital have also been struck.

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly condemn Israel’s unlawful targeting of civilians, civilian areas, and civilian property, which is illegal under international law and amounts to collective punishment.

We call for an immediate end to hostilities against the Palestinian civilian population of Gaza, and for thorough, independent and genuine investigations to be launched into all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. We emphasize that this indiscriminate violence persists amidst the context of the continued closure of Gaza, which restricts freedom of movement and access to basic humanitarian resources. Furthermore, the Netanyahu government has failed to present any viable or equitable solution to the situation.

The Palestinian Arab community in Israel has mobilized in protest at the increase in violence towards Palestinians by both the state and individuals, within the West Bank, Gaza and Israel. As well as the recent assault on Gaza, this has also included the brutal murder of 16 year-old Mohamed Abu Khdeir, nationalistic attacks on Arab individuals by Jewish extremists on ethnic grounds, and demonstrations which have met with no police interference calling for “death to Arabs”. However Palestinian protesters have been met with excessive use of force by security services and mass arrests and detention, including that of minors. Almost 400 Palestinians have so far been arrested in the continuing protests, and scores of people remain in detention.

We strongly oppose the culture of racism and incitement towards Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which has been exacerbated by recent statements by the Israeli political leadership who have sought to inflame ethnic tensions and mobilise support for violence towards Palestinians. Provocative statements made by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other leading politicians have sought to inflame tensions and promote an ‘us versus them’ mentality. Furthermore, social media campaigns which have included contributions from Israeli military personnel, have widely promoted indiscriminate violence towards Palestinians.

We call on the international community to monitor closely the recent escalation of attacks on civilians in the Gaza Strip, and to raise concerns of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity based on the Rome Statute. We also urge the UN to initiate a fact-finding mission to investigate these events. We further encourage you to keep in contact with the undersigned Palestinian civil society organizations in Israel for information, assistance, materials or advice on the above.



Arab Association for Human Rights



Adalah



Mada al-Carmel – Arab Center for Applied Social Research



Women Against Violence



Kayan Feminist Organization



Mossawa Center – The Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel



Association for Arab Youth – Baladna



I'lam Media Center for Arab Palestinians in Israel



The Galilee Society – The Arab National Society for Health Research & Services



Arab Cultural Association



Hirkuna - Forum for Social Solidarity, Voluntarism and Young Leadership



AlZahraa Organization for the Advancement of Women



AlQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society