



Systematic Israeli Occupation Violations: Night Raids Impacting Palestinian Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip's Rural Women

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy – MIFTAH

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Prepared by: Riham Maqadma
Mahmoud Franji

Translated by: Jumana Kayali

MIFTAH's staff:

Lamis Hantouli Democracy and Good Governance Program Director
Tamara Malouf Documentation and Research Officer (Former)

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Foreword

MIFTAH is launching this report today, which addresses the Israeli military and settler violations against Palestinian women at a time when Israeli occupation forces are waging a genocidal war on the Gaza Strip. In tandem, it is continuing its destructive, military raids on all West Bank districts, with particular focus on refugee camps.

During the genocide war on Gaza, data and statistics provide the numbers of martyrs, most of whom are children and women, the number of missing civilians, the targeting of journalists, medical staff, civil defense teams and hospitals. There is a complete closure on the Gaza Strip and a policy of starvation is being employed through cutting off food, electricity, water, and fuel, all of which point to a systematic Israeli policy of collective punishment, war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Palestinian population. These practices amount to flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and conventions, most significantly, the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide.

Our role as a civil society organization to monitor violations against Palestinian women and girls and to document them within international human rights mechanisms, contribute to international lobbying and advocacy efforts for the Palestinian cause and the dissemination of a facts-based Palestinian narrative. MIFTAH will continue to highlight these facts, which help amplify the voices of Palestinian women under Israeli military occupation at the regional and international level.

This report focuses on violations against Palestinian women during Israeli army night raids in the West Bank and rural women in the Gaza Strip. They are based on women testimonies collected in the first half of 2023, by our field teams in West Bank including Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip, prior to Israel's genocidal war on Gaza and the escalating Israeli military operations and settler terrorism in the West Bank. The report includes the various violations committed by Israeli occupation forces, including violence, physical and psychological terror used against women during night raids. It also addresses the negative health and economic repercussions due to the destruction of crops and agricultural land in the Gaza Strip.

MIFTAH presents this report as one effort to influence global public opinion and press UN and international bodies to provide protection for Palestinian women under Israeli military occupation, and to pressure international bodies to hold Israel accountable in international courts.

Dr. Tahreer Al Araj

Executive Director

Introduction

The Israeli occupation authorities continue to arrest Palestinian civilians on a daily basis from all Palestinian governorates, in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and in Gaza strip. Such arrests are constantly increasing within the framework of a systematic policy that aims at repressing the Palestinian people and their subjugation to accept long-term Israeli occupation and colonization. MIFTAH field researchers have gathered around (553) questionnaires from Palestinian women to shed the light on the main violations committed by the occupation forces against Palestinian women during the night invasions and the arrest operations against Palestinians during the three years 2021, 2022 and 2023. It is worth noting that the occupation forces commit multiple similar and systematic violations during all night invasions and arrest operations.

On a separate note, MIFTAH documented around 180 statements of victims of the violations of the Israeli occupation forces committed since the end of 2022 until early 2023 against male and female farmers in the eastern areas of Central Gaza and Khan Younis governorates in Gaza strip, covering around (227) violations. Those included flooding agricultural land with wastewater, destruction of agricultural produce with toxic pesticides, uprooting agricultural crops by opening water dams and barriers, in addition to violations resulting from military incursions in agricultural land and bulldozing crops close to harvest season.

Accordingly, the report has been divided as follows: Chapter One, Standards of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. Section One addresses first the International Humanitarian Law during armed conflicts. This includes a set of explanations of each of protection of women in conflict, destruction of agricultural land and property and use of herbicides. Section Two addresses the international human rights law: 1) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women CEDAW; 2) The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women; and 3) Security council and protection of women in armed conflict, in particular Resolution (1296) of 2000 and Resolution (1325) of 2000. Section Four addresses the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the Separation Wall of 2004.

Chapter Two comprises an analysis of the systemic violations of the occupation forces against women family members of prisoners in the West Bank and rural women in Gaza Strip. Section One addresses the impact of arbitrary arrests procedures on Palestinian women in the West Bank. Those include breaking in late night or early morning; blasting/breaking entrance doors; storming houses without early warning or search warrants; the search processes; ruining and breaking the houses contents; field interrogations of women; beating and/or degrading treatment; confiscation of jewellery and/or money; addressing traumatized children after detentions, and feeling of insecurity inside homes.

Section Two addresses the impact of occupation violations on the rural women in Gaza Strip as follows: 1) flooding agricultural land with wastewater; 2) destruction of crops by pesticides; 33)

destruction of crops by opening dams and barriers; and 4) destruction of agricultural land with military vehicles.

Chapter Three comprises the main conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter One: Standards of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law

The International Humanitarian Law (IHL) consists of a set of codified and customary rules that regulate armed conflicts, military occupation and other international and non-international hostile actions, i.e. it is applicable only in times of armed conflicts. The International Human Rights Law (IHRL) consists of a set of rules enshrined in the binding universal declarations and international conventions that protect inherent human rights and basic public freedoms. Those are applicable in all times of peace and war, and are enshrined in the inherent human dignity since birth, based on the values of equality and equity and the fact that those rights and freedoms are interconnected and indivisible.

This chapter identifies a set of standards guaranteed in IHL and IHRL, and shows the suffering of Palestinians, particularly women, because of the violations of the Israeli occupation forces, especially during arrest operations of Palestinians in the West Bank, and the destruction of agricultural land in Gaza Strip, and the impact and consequences of those violations on Palestinian women.

International Humanitarian Law in times of armed conflicts

The Four 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Protocols are international conventions that constitute the foundation of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Specifically, the Geneva Conventions provide protection for individuals who do not participate in hostile activities, including civilians, health workers, and relief workers, as well as all individuals who have ceased to participate in hostilities such as the wounded, the sick, and prisoners of war, and others who have laid down their arms and no longer take part in hostile activities.

In the same context, IHL not only does not grant the state of occupation any sovereignty over the occupied territories, nor the legitimacy to annex occupied territories, but it also imposes on the occupying power the duty of guaranteeing the humane treatment of the inhabitants subject to occupation and providing them with their basic needs, including food and medical care. Based on IHL, this report identifies a set of interrelated and sequential standards that enable a better understanding of the nature of violations committed by the state of occupation

Women in times of war

The International Humanitarian Law grants women in times of war essentially similar protection as men. All the rules that guarantee protection to civilians provide it to men and women alike without discrimination. However, recognizing the special needs of women and their vulnerability

in times of armed conflicts, and their impact on them, IHL provides several aspects of additional special protections and rights.

IHL constitutes the main source for protecting women and meeting their special needs in times of war and occupation. In particular, Article (27) Par. 2 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and Article (76) Par. 1 of the First Additional Protocol, provide that “Women shall be the object of special respect”. Hence, the state of occupation must take into consideration the treatment of women, granting them the special protection and respect.

According to Rule (134) of Customary IHL, “the specific protection, health and aid needs of women affected by armed conflict must be respected”¹. Those refer to certain circumstances that require respect of the person and honor of women. This includes prohibition of violence against them and assaulting their personal dignity, including degrading and humiliating treatment, and providing health, mental and physical protection.

Destruction of agricultural land and property

Article (53) of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians provides that, “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, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations”². According to ICRC study of Customary IHL, agricultural land allocated for producing foodstuff, crops and livestock, drinking water facilities and networks and irrigation works are considered civil objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, and cannot be targets of military operations. This is related to starvation of civilians as a method of war, which is prohibited according to Article (54) Par. 2 of the first Additional protocol and Article (14) of the Second Additional Protocol of the Geneva Conventions³. According to those two articles, agricultural land and its products, including crops and livestock constitute objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, and accordingly Rule (54) of Customary IHL applies, prohibiting attacking, destroying, removing or rendering them useless⁴.

According to ICRC, prohibiting attacking any part of the natural environment unless it constitutes a military target is based on the general principle of distinction between civilian objects and military objectives. This rule is reflected in the Third Protocol of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which provides that “it is prohibited to make forests or other kinds of plant cover the object of attack by incendiary weapons except when such natural elements are used to

¹ ICRC, IHL Database, Rule 134, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule134>

² IBID

³ ICRC, Jean-Marie Henckaerts and Louise Doswald-Beck, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume One, Rules. See www.icrc.org/ar/doc/assets/files/other/icrc_004_pcustom.pdf

⁴ ICRC, IHL Databases, Rule (54) Attacks against Objects Indispensable to the Survival of the Civilian Population. See <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule54>

cover, conceal or camouflage combatants or other military objectives, or are themselves military objectives”⁵.

Rule (43) of Customary IHL stipulates that, “a- No part of the natural environment may be attacked, unless it is a military objective; b- Destruction of any part of the natural environment is prohibited, unless required by imperative military necessity; c- Launching an attack against a military objective which may be expected to cause incidental damage to the environment which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated is prohibited”⁶.

Since agricultural land constitutes civilian objects, it is prohibited to destroy or seize them during hostile actions. According to Rule (50) of Customary IHL, “The destruction or seizure of the property of an adversary is prohibited, unless required by imperative military necessity”⁷. According to the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity constitutes a war crime in international armed conflicts”⁸.

Use of herbicides

“The use of herbicides as a method of warfare is prohibited if they are aimed at vegetation that is not a military objective; would cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which may be expected to be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, or would cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment”⁹.

Second: International Human Rights Law

The International Human Rights Law (IHRL) applies both in times of armed conflict/occupation and in times of peace. According to the international conventions to which the state of occupation has acceded, it undertakes to respect, protect and adhere to all rights and freedoms identified therein to the occupied people. They are subject to its actual control, especially civilians, and women, children and vulnerable groups in particular.

1- **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**¹⁰

⁵ ICRC, IHL Databases, Rule (43). Application of General Principles on the Conduct of Hostilities to the Natural Environment. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule43>

⁶ IBID.

⁷ ICRC, IHL Databases, Rule (50). Destruction and Seizure of Property of an Adversary. See <https://ihldatabases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule50>

⁸ United Nations, Rome Statute of the International Criminal court, Article (8) Par. 2/a/4, dated 17 July 1998. Entered into force on 1 July 2002

[https://legal.un.org/icc/statute/arabic/rome_statute\(a\).pdf](https://legal.un.org/icc/statute/arabic/rome_statute(a).pdf)

⁹ ICRC, IHL Rules Databases, Rule (76), Prohibition of the use of herbicides as a method of warfare”. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule76>

¹⁰ United Nations, Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 1979.

CEDAW defines discrimination against women as: “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women”¹¹.

According to CEDAW, to which the state of occupation acceded in 1979¹², Article (2) Par. d and e, undertake to refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation, and to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise.

Furthermore, according to Article (14) Par. 1, the state of occupation shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the CEDAW Convention to women in rural areas.

2- The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women¹³

The Declaration defined violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”¹⁴. This definition includes physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs according to Article (2) Par. c, and according to Article (4) Par. b the State should refrain from engaging in violence against women.

Third: The Security Council and protection of women during times of armed conflict and occupation

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has specific functions, maintaining international peace and security, investigating any conflict or situation that may lead to international dispute, submitting recommendations on dispute resolution, identifying threats to peace or acts of aggression and submitting recommendations on means on the measures to be taken¹⁵. In the context of protection of women in times of armed conflicts and occupation, UNSC has issued several resolutions whose implementation would provide protection to women from acts of violence and aggression. The main resolutions are:

¹¹ IBID, Article (1).

¹² See: <https://indicators.ohchr.org>.

¹³ UN, Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 1993. See <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>

¹⁴ IBID, Article (1).

¹⁵ United Nations Security Council, Functions and powers. See <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ar/content/functions-and-powers> United Nations Security Council. Res. (1296) of 2000, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/399/01/PDF/N0039901.pdf?OpenElement>

1- **Resolution (1296) of 2000**¹⁶

UNSC issued Resolution (1296) in light of the hardships inflicted on civilians during armed conflicts, especially resulting from acts of violence against them, particularly women, children and vulnerable groups. The Resolution asserted that all parties must comply with the provisions of the UN Charter and the principles of international law, particularly IHL, IHRL and the law on refugees, in addition to the full implementation of the relevant UNSC resolutions.

In its resolution, UNSC expressed its deep concern over the wide-scale harmful impact of armed conflicts on civilians, and its grave impact on women, children and other vulnerable groups. It also stressed the importance of the full fulfilment of their special needs of protection and aid.

2- **UNSC Resolution (1325) of 2000**¹⁷

UNSC Resolution (1325) asserted the need to implement full IHL and IHRL, which protect the rights of women and girls during and post conflicts. It affirmed the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Resolution 1325 called upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Resolution called upon all parties to armed conflict to take the necessary measures to protect girls and women from gender-based violence in armed conflict. It emphasized the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls, and in this regard stressed the need to exclude these crimes from amnesty provisions and relevant legislations.

Based on this Resolution, the UNSC adopted Resolution (1889) of 2009, to develop a set of indicators that ensure following up the implementation of Resolution (1325)¹⁸. In addition to UN bodies, some member-states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) adopted those indicators, founded on four main pillars:

¹⁶ United Nations Security Council Res (S/RES/1296), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/399/01/PDF/N0039901.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution (S/RES/1325) <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/16/PDF/N0072016.pdf?OpenElement>.

¹⁸ UN Security council, (S/RES/1889) <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/542/53/PDF/N0954253.pdf?OpenElement>(

-Prevention: focusing on prevention of gender-based violence, prevention of conflict and an early warning system. This includes preventing sexual assaults and abuse by peacekeeping forces.

-Protection: This includes improving the security of girls and women improving their physical and mental health, their economic security and lives in general. It also focuses on improving women and girls' rights and their legal protection.

-Participation: This refers to enhancing the participation of women in peace processes, increasing the numbers of women in all decision-making institutions, and increasing partnerships with local women organizations. It also includes increasing women appointments in senior UN positions.

-Recovery: It includes equal and equitable distribution of international aid to women and girls, and gender mainstreaming recovery and aid efforts.

Fourth: Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the Separation Wall of 2004¹⁹

The existing relationship between the inhabitants and the agricultural land was widely addressed by the concerned international human rights organizations and other experts, because of its direct impact on exercising several human rights. Since human rights are interconnected, this relation may affect all human rights, and any violation shall definitely lead to violation of a range of human rights, and will adversely affect women's rights, especially the compound violence against them. For example, this relation affects:

Poverty alleviation; livelihood, decent housing, adequate standard of living, human interventions and development projects, urban and rural planning, agricultural reforms, reconstruction following natural disasters and armed conflict, benefitting from natural resources, food security and food sovereignty, and intellectual property rights.

However, international courts, including the regional human right courts have set judicial precedents related to land and agricultural land holdings and their close connection with human rights and enjoying them, based on the rights of indigenous populations, the principle of equality and non-discrimination and the right to own property. This is based on combining normative links between human rights and land.

In this context, The International court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion about the legal consequences of the Construction of the Separation Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories on the lands of Palestinian citizens, issued on 9 July 2004. This constitutes a judicial precedent to build legal cases on the relation between inhabitants and agricultural land ownership, and the impact of the violation of the state of occupation of agricultural land possession on women rights

¹⁹ United nations, Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Land and Human Rights, a set of legal Precedents "الأرض وحقوق الإنسان، مجموعة من السوابق القانونية", 2020. See the Advisory Opinion of the International court of Justice at <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/advisory-opinions/advisory-opinions-2004-ar.pdf>

and the compound gender-based violence against them. The main issues that ICJ addressed in this case were land confiscation, freedom of movement, choosing the place of residence, adequate standard of living, and right to education, right to food, right to health and right to work.

The Advisory Opinion addressed the issue of the construction by Israel of a wall, which led to the destruction of areas in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and their practical annexation, including land used by individuals and groups for agricultural purposes and for benefiting from their water sources.

ICJ concluded, inter alia, that the international humanitarian law are applicable in the lands on which the state has sovereignty and on which it exercises authority without having sovereignty, as is the existing situation with Israel, the occupying power and the Palestinian Territory. It also considered that the construction of the wall and the accompanying consequences constitute violations of a wide range of Palestinian rights enshrined in IHL and IHRL, including the right to preserve livelihood, right to food, health and work. The Court concluded that the state of occupation is under an obligation to return those lands, agricultural land acquisitions and other groves and agricultural properties on them to their owners, and to make reparation for all damage caused by the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including material damage.

Chapter Two: Analysis of the patterns of systemic violations of the occupation forces against Palestinian women during night invasions in the West Bank and rural women in Gaza Strip

First: The impact of the Occupation's arbitrary measures including night invasions for arrests on the Palestinian women in the West Bank

The Israeli occupation forces carries out frequent night incursions to arrest Palestinian civilians from the different Palestinian governorates in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip. Those arrests are steadily on the rise in a systemic policy that aims at repressing the Palestinian people and subjecting them to accept Israeli occupation and prolonged colonization. According to Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association, the occupation forces carried out in 2021 around 7000 arrests against Palestinians, including 1300 children and 184 women. As of end of that year, 4600 Palestinians including 160 children and 34 women were inside Israeli prisons²⁰. In 2022, occupation forces also arrested around 7000 Palestinians, including 882 children and 172 women. The arbitrary administrative detention decisions, with which Palestinians are detained

²⁰ Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association , Violations of Female and Male Prisoners' Rights Inside Occupation Prisons, 2021 Report, issued on 18 June, 2022. See "تقرير انتهاكات حقوق الأسيرات والأسرى في سجون الاحتلال 2021" <https://www.addameer.org/ar/media/4940>

inside Israeli prisons based on the claim of a confidential file, were most prominent. The Israeli military courts extend their detention without any fair trial²¹.

In 2023, systematic arrests constituted a main policy adopted by the Israeli colonial regime targeting the Palestinian existence. The prisoners institutions documented 2070 arrests in West Bank governorates, including Jerusalem in October alone, including 145 children and 55 women; of those, 1760 persons were arrested after 7 October, threefold rate compared to the arrest campaigns implemented before that date. Occupation authorities refuse to provide the prisoners institutions of ICRC with data related to hundreds of arrests of Palestinian in Gaza strip since the start of the war against Gaza²². This section of the report sheds the light on the main violations of the occupation forces against Palestinian women during the night incursions in the West Bank and conducting arrest campaigns against Palestinians during three years, 2021, 2022 and 2023. It is worth noting that occupation forces commit multiple repetitive and systematic violations in each incursion. However, this report shall highlight the violations endured by Palestinian women during those incursions.

The main patterns of violations during the incursions include:

- 1) **168 cases of violations involving storming homes in the late hours of the night or early dawn**, contrary to Article (46) of the Hague Regulations, which stipulates: "The family honor and rights must be respected, and the lives of persons and private property, as well as religious beliefs and practices," and Article (27) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states: "Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honor, their family rights, their religious convictions, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity".
- 2) **236 violations involving the blasting/breaking of the entrance** and invading homes without warning, which contravenes Article (33) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which "prohibits measures of reprisal against protected persons and their property". It also contravenes Article (46) of the Hague Regulations, which states that, "the family honor and rights, the lives of persons and private property must be respected".

²¹ Prisoners Institutions' Annual Report: Occupation arrested 7000 Palestinians during 2022, 2022 الاحتلال اعقل 7000 فلسطيني/ة خلال العام 2022, statistical report issued on 1/1/2023. See <https://cda.gov.ps/index.php/ar/ar-prisoner-movement-2/2017-06-01-06-53-33/11788-7000-20>

²² Prisoners Institutions, Prisoners Institutions present the main data about the arrest campaigns of the occupation and the conditions of prisoners inside prisons in the wake of aggression and genocide in Gaza, مؤسسات الأسرى تستعرض أبرز المعطيات حول عمليات الاعتقال التي نفذها الاحتلال وواقع الأسرى في السجون في ضوء العدوان الشامل والإبادة في غزة"، Press release on 3/11/2023. See <https://www.addameer.org/ar/media/5197>

- 3) **553 violations involving failure to present an arrest or search warrant**, which contravenes Article (9) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which states: “1-Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person, 2. Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest”.
- 4) **232 violations involving inspection, ruining and destruction of the contents of the house**, contravening Article (46) of The Hague Regulations and Article (33) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibit “measures of reprisal against protected persons and their property.”
- 5) **73 violations involving field investigations with women**, contravening Article (17) of ICCPR, which explicitly states, "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home, or correspondence..." and Article (16) of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which states, "Each State Party shall undertake to prevent in any territory under its jurisdiction other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which do not amount to torture...”.
- 6) **226 violations involving physical assault and/or degrading treatment**, contrary to Articles (1) and (16) of the Convention Against Torture, in addition to Article (32) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which expressly prohibits “the High Contracting Parties from taking any measure of such a character as to cause the physical suffering or extermination of protected persons in their hands”. This prohibition includes any other measures of brutality whether applied by civilian or military agents.
- 7) **87 violations involving the confiscation of gold jewelry and/or money**, contrary to Article (33) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which stipulates that, “Pillage is prohibited and measures of reprisal against protected persons and their property, and reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited”.
- 8) **24 violations involving dealing with the psychological trauma of children after the arrest operation**, contravening Article (16) of the Convention Against Torture and Article (27) of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- 9) **508 violations involving the loss of a sense of security within the home**, contrary to Article (9) of the afore-mentioned ICCPR, and Article (17) of the same Covenant, which protect individuals from arbitrary and unlawful interference in their privacy, family, and home, in addition to Article (46) of The Hague Regulations and Article (27) of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

According to the Rome Statute of 1998, those acts constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes that require ensuring the prosecution of their perpetrators and preventing their impunity. Article (07) of the Statute specifies that crimes against humanity include the crime of torture and other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health. It also includes the persecution of any group for political, racial, national, or gender grounds. According to Article (08) of the same Statute, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, including torture or inhuman treatment, deliberately causing severe suffering or serious injury to body or health, extensive destruction and appropriation of property, pillaging, assault on the dignity of the person, especially humiliating and degrading treatment, and the use of violence against persons and threats to life are prescribed as war crimes that require the prosecution of their perpetrators.

The most prominent cases of women victims of Israeli occupation forces' violence in this context include:

-On 15 February, 2021, the Israeli occupation forces invaded the home of citizen A.Q., 20 years old, who lives with her family consisting of (8) individuals, including (4) women, in Dura, Hebron Governorate, southern West Bank. These forces arrested A.'s brother after smashing the house furniture and treating them in a cruel and degrading manner to instill fear among them.

A.Q. stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 02:30 [after midnight](#), we were awakened by a [loud explosion](#) in the house. We rushed to the entrance and were surprised by a large number of occupation soldiers breaking in. They began searching the contents of the house, then forcibly took us to one of the rooms in a degrading manner and left a soldier to guard us. Meanwhile, they took my brother Lu’ay to another room and began interrogating him. [Some of them forcibly removed the internal doors of the house, broke windows, bathroom fixtures, and tore the couch with a sharp tool](#). In the meantime, I tried to document their assaults with my mobile phone, but one of the soldiers prevented me and forcibly seized the phone from me. Before leaving, they handcuffed my brother, blindfolded him, and took him. I felt [fear and humiliation](#) throughout the time because of their inhuman treatment”.

-On 7 March 2021, Israeli forces invaded around 01:00 a.m., the home of the citizen K.H., 38 years old, who supports a family of (5) individuals, including (3) children, in Balata refugee camp in Nablus, northern West Bank. They detonated the entrance of the house and violently broke in.

K.H. stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 1:00 a.m. [after midnight](#), we woke up to the sound of the [explosion of the entrance of the house](#) and the entry of occupation forces violently with loud voices inside. I asked them to show a [search warrant](#) for the house, but they continued screaming, took

our IDs, and subjected us to [field interrogation](#) for about half an hour. Then they detained us in one room and meticulously [searched each room](#) separately for about an hour. Before leaving, they arrested my brother who lives next door, leaving us in a bad psychological state, high tension, [a sense of insecurity](#), and a feeling of instability at home”.

-On 17 March 2021, around midnight, Israeli forces invaded the home of the citizen S.D., 33 years old, who lives with her family of 7 members, including 5 children, in Dura, Hebron, southern West Bank. The Israeli forces arrested her husband after physically assaulting him, terrorized her children, and destroyed the furniture in the house.

D. stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“Around 2:00 [after midnight](#), I heard the sounds of military jeeps near my house, so I rushed to open the door. [One of the soldiers pushed me](#) and demanded that I raise my hands up. They took me and my children to one of the rooms accompanied by soldiers who guarded us, while they took my husband, Akram, to another room and began beating him and conducting a filed interrogation with him. My children and I could hear the screams of pain from my husband, and we watched other soldiers searching the house and destroying [its contents, including furniture](#), kitchenware, room doors, bathroom toilets, and several windows. Two hours later, they blindfolded my husband and took him with them while beating him. In the meantime, they prevented us from drinking water or using the bathroom for the children. Since that day, we have been overwhelmed with feelings of terror and fear, while some of my children [suffer from trauma and wet their beds](#), which aggravates my suffering”.

-On 5 April 2021, a large group from various apparatus of the occupation forces stormed the home of Fai’qa Ya’qoub Nassar, 53 years old, who lives with her family of 10 members, including four women and a child, in Sawahreh neighborhood in occupied Jerusalem, after midnight, to arrest two of her sons.

Nassar stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 2:00 after midnight, a large group from various apparatus of the occupation forces stormed the house after [breaking the entrance](#). They attacked my sons with brutal beating, [destroyed the house furniture and kitchenware](#), climbed on beds, and took two of my sons with them before leaving. The brutality with which they stormed the house, beat, and arrested my sons caused a heart attack to my husband. We immediately rushed him to the hospital, while my young son suffered from trauma and started to wet his bed, causing me great distress due to his deteriorating mental state and the fear that he felt”.

-On 5 May 2021, at around 2:30 after midnight, Israeli occupation forces stormed the home of the citizen Raghad Nash’at Al-Qanni, 21 years old, who lives with her family of seven, including three women and a child, in Tulkarm refugee camp in northern West Bank. They arrested two of her brothers.

Al-Qanni stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

- “At around 2:30 [after midnight](#), we woke up by the sound of [breaking the house door](#) and the entry of Israeli occupation forces inside. They forced my younger brother and me to stand in a corner of the house and began assaulting my brothers with brutal eating. My mother tried to intervene, but they yelled at her and took her to her room, locking the door with the key. The soldiers confiscated the mobile phones of my brothers and searched them, while others [destroyed the house's furniture](#). Before leaving, they blindfolded two of my brothers and took them with them. Since this incident, we have been living in a state of [fear and terror inside our home](#)”.

- On 17 May 2021, in the early morning hours, members of the Intelligence and Border Guards broke into the home of the Heba Akram Za'atari, 44 years old, who lives with her family of six members, including two children and two women, in Wadi al-Joz neighborhood in Occupied Jerusalem. They did not present a legal warrant, and aimed at arresting her brother.

Za'atari stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 7:00 on the third day of Eid al-Fitr, we were surprised while sleeping by the presence of about 30 Intelligence and Border Guard members above our heads. They shouted at us to provide them with mobile phones, confiscated them, gathered us in one corner, and prevented us from moving under threat. Then they began [searching and destroying the house's contents](#) and the kitchenware. They assaulted my brother. When my mother tried to intervene to protect him, [she was also beaten](#). They took my brother with them and left. The entire family was traumatized and experienced constant insomnia. My mother received treatment from a neurologist for stress and pain in her left hand”.

-On 25 September 2021, the home of Saja Khaled Abu Sbeih, 28 years old, who lives with her family of eight members, including six women and two children, in Jenin refugee camp in northern West Bank, was invaded by Israeli occupation forces in the early morning hours to arrest her brother.

Abu Sbeih stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around [3:30 in the morning](#), we woke up to a loud explosion of the main entrance to the house and its invasion by occupation forces along with police dogs, without presenting a [legal warrant](#). One dog attacked my father, threw him on the floor, and then they detained us in a corner of one of the rooms after another dog sniffed each one of us. They then entered my brother's room under gunpoint and took him with them in his sleepwear. We suffered from severe trauma because of the invasion of the house in this manner and the attack on my father by one of the dogs to the point that we [feel insecure at home](#)”.

-On 14 March 2022, Israeli occupation forces invaded the home of Wafa Issa Abu Ghazi, 51 years old, who lives with her family of nine members, including two women and two children, in Al-

Arroub refugee camp, north of Hebron in southern West Bank. Abu Ghazi suffered trauma after the occupation arrested her son, in fear from the method of the arrest operation itself.

Abu Ghazi stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 2:00 [after midnight](#), we woke up at a [loud explosion at the house entrance](#). Special Forces, together with occupation forces, accompanied by police dogs, entered and took us from the bedrooms to the kitchen and started searching the house. Others took my son Mohammad outside and interrogated him. Occupation forces confiscated mobile phones and a laptop. They handcuffed Mohammad, blindfolded him and took him. Since then, I have [suffering from trauma, stress and fear](#) for my sons’ future”.

-On 13 March 2022, the Israeli Intelligence stormed the house of Nariman Mufid Za’anin, 49 years, who lives with her family of 7 members, including 3 women Wadi Al-Joz neighborhood in Occupied Jerusalem. Women were subjected to degrading treatment before her brother was arrested. Their mother and other sister were taken to exert pressure on the detainee during interrogation.

Za’anin stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 11:00 in the morning, members of the Intelligence invaded the house and forced us to sit. [The soldiers sat on our legs, we the women, and addressed us with obscene and insulting words](#). Others searched all contents of the house. [They confiscated all the mobile phones, computers, printer in addition to an amount of money](#). Before leaving, they arrested my brother after handcuffing him, and took my mother and sister with them to exert pressure on the detainee during interrogation. Since that day, we women have been suffering from anxiety, fear and a [sense of insecurity](#) inside home”.

-On 15 December 2022, the Israeli occupation forces invaded the home of Lubna Abdul Aziz Amouri, 49 years old, who lives with her family of seven members, including three women and two children, in Jenin refugee camp in northern West Bank. The occupation forces conducted a field interrogation of Amouri and her family members before they left.

Amouri stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 6:30 in the morning, Israeli soldiers invaded my house from the roof after [blowing up its entrance](#). They gathered me and my children in the kitchen, then took me aside and held with me a [field interrogation](#). Similarly, my sons underwent field interrogation individually. After about an hour and a half, they left the house”.

-On 17 January 2023, the Israeli occupation forces stormed the house of Hasna Mousa Hmeid, 23 years, who lives with her family of 8 members, including 4 women, in Taqou’, south Bethlehem, southern West bank. The aim was to arrest her father Mousa Hmeid.

Hmeid stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 4:00 [at dawn](#), soldiers of the Israeli occupation forces broke the window at the entrance of the house, and immediately [threw gas bombs inside](#) it. They were masked and they broke in. They gathered us in one room in the house and threatened us not to leave it. They searched and [destroyed the contents](#) of the house, including personal belongings, which were ruined. They brutally beat my father outside the house then took him with them. Consequently, we live in a state of severe fear and terror and [feeling of insecurity](#) inside our home”.

On 22 January 2023, Israeli occupation forces broke into the house of Nawal Abu Sarris, who suffers from a motor disability in her limbs, and lives with her family of eight members, including two women and five children, in Fara’a refugee camp in Tubas, north of West Bank. The occupation forces ruined the house’s furniture during the search then arrested her nephew.

Abu Sarris stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 4:00 [at dawn](#), special forces of the Israeli occupation army stormed or house after [breaking the entrance](#). The invasion was brutal, and included [yelling and obscene words](#) addressed to my brother and me. They went up to the second floor searching for my brother who was sleeping in his room. They beat him brutally and handcuffed him. They searched the house and the bedrooms, and took him with them, without bothering about our questions. We were [scared and terrorized](#), which led my mother to suffer from trauma and was hospitalized to receive treatment”.

-On 23 January 2023, Special Forces of the Israeli occupation army broke into the house of Mirvat Salem Izz, 43 years. Who lives with her family of eight members, including three women and three children, in Nour Shams refugee camp, Tulkarm, north West Bank. The invaders beat Izz and confiscated gold jewelry and money.

Izz stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 6:00 in the morning, we heard strong knocks on the door of the house. I opened the door and was surprised with Special Forces of the occupation army. They pushed me, [assaulted, and beat me](#). They searched the house. The force [tore the couches and broke the windows](#). They searched the bedrooms, and confiscated gold jewelry and cash money (4000 Shekels) which were in the house. Consequently, my children were traumatized and terrorized. They yelled and cried, and I [suffered in addressing their trauma](#) subsequently”.

-On 2 February 2023, Israeli occupation forces stormed the house of Nisreen Baha El-Din Qassem, 41 years, who lives with her family of 8 members including 4 women and one child, in Nour Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm, north West Bank. They blew up the entrance, assaulted the inhabitants and arrested her son.

Qassem stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 4:30 [at dawn](#), the Israeli occupation forces blew up the entrance of our house and we were surprised with them over our heads in our bedrooms. They gathered us in the kitchen and started searching the house and [breaking the windows in the rooms, and destroying the closets](#). They asked about my son, beat him brutally once identified until he was unconscious. When my husband tried to intervene to know the fate of our son, they beat him too. They took our mobile phones, and forced my husband to bring all the [cash money](#) he had and hid ID, and confiscated them and took them with them. They handcuffed and blindfolded my son and took him. We did not know anything about his whereabouts for three months until they released him before the month of Ramadan. I was traumatized; I fell unconscious and woke up at the hospital. I suffered from this condition several times, as I fear for my son. [My young daughters felt insecure at home after that](#). We discovered later that the house furniture and electric appliances, such as the washing machine and fridge, and sinks were destroyed”.

-On 16 March 2023, a large group of the Israeli occupation forces stormed the house of Sahera Ahmad Masarweh, 56 years, who lives with her family of 7 members, including 3 women, in Jenin refugee camp, north West Bank, to arrest her son.

Masarweh stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 11:00 in the morning, during the invasion of the refugee camp by the occupation forces, we were shocked when a large number of occupation forces, accompanied by police dogs, broke into the house after [blowing up the house entrance](#). They headed directly towards my son Msallam who had just finished his shower and sitting at the table for breakfast. A group of soldiers threw him to the floor and assaulted him, beat him brutally, and insulted him with obscene words, not bothering about my screams or responding to my question about the reason for assaulting him. Then, they handcuffed, blindfolded him and took him with them. After they left, I discovered the scale of [damage caused to the entrance and the furniture](#). Since then, I suffer from [trauma](#). I cannot forget the moment my son was brutally beaten or eliminate it from my memory”.

-On 25 April 2023, after midnight, the occupation forces broke into the house of Dalal Yousef Salameh, 55 years, who lives with her family of 9 members including 2 women in Askar refugee camp in Nablus, north of West Bank. They ruined the house after subjecting women to field interrogation.

Salameh stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“At around 2:00 [after midnight](#), the occupation forces [blew up](#) the entrance to the house with a large bomb, which terrified us and created a state of chaos at home. The soldiers broke into the house accompanied by police dogs and spread in it. They gathered the family members in one room at gunpoint. The soldiers were aiming laser rays from their weapons at our bodies. Others searched the [house and spoiled and ruined its contents](#). They confiscated the mobile phones, laptops and ID cards. Then they conducted [field interrogations with each one](#) of us for around twenty minutes. Invading the house was accompanied with severe fear and terror, especially upon blasting the entrance, subsequently we suffered [from trauma and insomnia](#)”.

Second: The impact of the occupation's violations on rural women in Gaza Strip

The agricultural sector constitutes around 11% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)²³. Hence, it contributes to providing job opportunities and alleviates the high rate of unemployment resulting from years of blockade imposed by the Israel, the occupying state.

According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the number of agricultural land holdings in Gaza Strip amounted to 24,754, i.e. 17.6% of the total agricultural land holdings in Palestine. Ninety nine percent of the holdings are family-owned, 74.2% of those holdings are small (less than three Dunums)²⁴. Moreover, the average size of agricultural holding is 3.6 Dunums. The main purpose for production in around 73.4% of the plots is commercial and to improve livelihood. PCBS data indicates that the total value of agricultural production in Gaza Strip was approximately US\$575 million in 2022, of which 54% consists of plant production and 46% animal production. This occurs against the backdrop of many families losing their agricultural livelihoods due to the Israeli occupation's military actions and its long-term blockade of Gaza Strip. However, Palestinian rural women in Gaza Strip experience cumulative and compounded impacts of these violations on the agriculture sector, whether directly or indirectly.

Furthermore, Miftah documented approximately 180 testimonies of victims of Israeli occupation forces' violations against farmers in the eastern areas of Central Gaza and Khan Younis governorates from the end of 2022 to the beginning of 2023. These testimonies included around 227 violations²⁵, ranging from the flooding of agricultural lands with wastewater, accounting for about 82 violations, to the destruction of crops with toxic pesticides (12 violations), and the destruction of crops due to the opening of dams and barriers (126 violations). Moreover, there were seven violations due to incursions of military vehicles into agricultural lands and uprooting crops close to their harvest seasons. It is worth noting that Miftah researchers have documented several cases of compound simultaneous violations against those farmers, and the systematic recurrence of those violations every year and during the same agricultural seasons, with the aim of inflicting the maximum possible damage on them.

Miftah researchers also documented the psychological and health effects of these violations on Palestinian women, and their repercussions on the escalation of domestic violence and problems. According to the Rome Statute, subjecting a group deliberately to living conditions intended to cause its total or partial physical destruction falls within the crime of genocide according to Article 6. Furthermore, widespread destruction of property and seizure without military necessity, the use

²³ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), The Impact of Israeli Occupation Aggression on the Agricultural Sector in Gaza Strip, 2023, press release issued on 28 November 2023. See <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/postar.aspx?tabID=512&lang=ar&ItemID=4644&mid=3915&wversion=Staging>

²⁴ The Dunum is a measuring unit of land in Palestine that is equal to 1000 Square Meters.

²⁵ Miftah did not conduct a comprehensive review of the Israeli violations and their impact on Palestinian male and female farmers in all five Gaza governorates, but documented samples of the main violations and their impact on rural women and their households in Central Gaza and Khan Younis governorates.

of toxins or toxic weapons, and the intentional targeting of civilian populations constitute war crimes according to Article 8 of the Statute.

The most prominent patterns of violations against Palestinian farmers following the destruction/uprooting of agricultural lands include:

Flooding agricultural land with wastewater

Miftah researchers documented around 82 violations carried out by the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian farmers in Central Gaza and Khan Younis governorates. These violations included flooding lands and agricultural crops with wastewater, resulting in significant direct financial losses, accumulated debts, health damages, contributing to escalating psychological pressures, and family problems. The violations of the occupation forces against farmers and their lands were often compound and contravened with Article (46) of the Hague Regulations, which states, "The family honor and rights, the lives of persons, and private property must be respected, as well as religious beliefs and practices", Article (33) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits reprisals against protected persons and their property, and Article (14) of CEDAW, which ensures special protection for rural women.

Examples of such violations include:

-At the end of December 2022, the Israeli occupation forces flooded the agricultural land east of Deir al-Balah city in Central Gaza governorate with wastewater. The land, measuring less than one Dunum, belongs to the citizen Amina Salim Fatayer, 73 years old, who supports a family of five members, including three children. This resulted in flooding the land and the complete destruction of the parsley and dill crops, as well as the death of several sheep and the spoilage of their feed due to the infiltration of wastewater into their pen. The water also caused the flooding of the house measuring 120m², damaging some furniture and electrical appliances. The spread of foul odors and insects caused to Fatayer and some of the children skin diseases, respiratory problems, high blood pressure, depression, and frustration.

Fatayer stated the following to Miftah researcher:

“We were surprised during the night, without prior warning, by a large influx of wastewater released by the occupation forces into my cultivated land with parsley and dill crops. The land was completely submerged, reaching a height of about a meter, transforming it into a swamp of mud and dirt. The wastewater reached the sheep pen and my house, causing the death of the sheep and the destruction of their feed, while the house's floor was submerged, resulting in damaging some furniture and electrical appliances. This led to the loss of income from selling the crops, sheep products, and their feed, in addition to household furniture, accumulating debts, and the inability to cover household expenses. As a result, several children and I developed skin and respiratory diseases, and I suffered from hypertension, depression, and frustration.

At the same time, Hamida Azmi Abu Ghouleh, 46 years old, supporting a family of nine members, including seven children, residing in her agricultural land of one Dunum east of Deir al-Balah in Central Gaza, was surprised that the Israeli occupation forces flooded her entire land and house with wastewater. This resulted in the complete damage of the agricultural crops of cauliflower and cabbage, the death of 3 sheep, with an estimated direct financial loss of around US\$2500, in addition to damaging some household furniture, clothes, and food items. Abu Ghouleh was transported hospitalized for treatment from a heart attack and skin irritation.

Abu Ghouleh stated the following to Miftah researcher:

“We were surprised late at night by the flooding of wastewater into my house and my entire agricultural land, with an area of one Dunum planted with cauliflower and cabbage. The mud and dirt submerged the land, resulting in the complete damage of all the agricultural crops and the death of three sheep, in addition to damaging some household furniture, clothes, and food items. I incurred a direct financial loss of around US\$2500, and I suffered from depression and frustration, feeling all my hard work has gone to waste. This caused me a heart attack, for which I received treatment. Moreover, some of my children developed skin irritation, and I experienced psychological stress consequently”.

In the same context, wastewater destroyed agricultural land located in Wadi al-Salqa area, east of Deir al-Balah city, belonging to Mu'men Jamal Abu Mhareb, 27 years, supporting a family of four members, including two women and a child. Abu Mhareb had planted around 2.5 Dunums of his land with crops such as peas, wheat, okra, and tomatoes, including an area of one Dunum consisting of agricultural greenhouses. The forceful entry of wastewater into his land resulted in uprooting part of it and the complete destruction of the agricultural crops. This caused direct financial losses of around US\$5000, including the damage to the crops and the drifting of the agricultural greenhouses, in addition to the cracking of the walls of his asbestos-roofed house. Abu Mhareb consequently suffered from indebtedness to nurseries and fertilizer stores, psychological stress and family problems, and his wife suffered from frequent gastrointestinal problems and circulatory system diseases resulting from flooding the house with wastewater.

Abu Mhareb stated the following to Miftah researcher:

“My land, totaling 4 Dunums, was damaged because the occupation forces released wastewater towards it, resulting in the destruction of agricultural crops such as peas, wheat, okra, and tomatoes that I had planted on an area of 2.5 Dunums, including one Dunum consisting of agricultural greenhouses. The direct financial losses amounted to about US\$5000, in addition to US\$270 for each of the three workers I hired for this season. The agricultural greenhouses drifted, and the walls of my house, with an area of 80m² cracked. Because the wastewater entered the house, my wife suffered from recurrent gastrointestinal problems and circulatory system diseases. Due to the financial losses and the accumulation

of debts to greenhouse and agricultural fertilizer stores, I suffered from psychological stress, family problems increased, along with feelings of family instability”.

Destruction of agricultural crops with toxic pesticides

Miftah documented during 2023 the destruction of the agricultural crops of 12 male and female farmers by the Israeli occupation forces who sprayed their lands with toxic pesticides. All testimonies collected by Miftah researchers indicated that the occupation forces repeat this violation annually, specifically during the harvest season, causing farmers significant financial losses and accumulating debts. Notably, rural women suffered from respiratory diseases and skin conditions due to the spread of these pesticides. This led to an increase in depression and frustration resulting from the losses and illnesses, along with a rise in domestic violence and family problems, and a decline in the children’s educational attainment. Those actions contravene Article (46) of The Hague Regulations, which emphasizes that, "the family honor and rights, the lives of persons and private property, as well as religious convictions and practice must be respected”, Article (33) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which “prohibits measures of reprisal against protected persons and their property”, and Article (14) of CEDAW, which ensures special protection for rural women. Those actions also contravene Article (53) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying power from the destruction of movable and immovable private property belonging to individuals or groups, as well as Rule (54) of customary IHL, prohibiting attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. The use of toxic pesticides as a method of warfare also violates Rule (76) of customary IHL, which provides that “the use of herbicides as a method of warfare is prohibited if they are aimed at vegetation that is not a military objective; would cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which may be expected to be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated; or would cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment”.

Examples of such destruction and its impact on rural women and their families:

-In February 2023, Israeli occupation forces destroyed agricultural crops by spraying them with toxic pesticides from a special aircraft on a piece of land owned by Amal Suleiman Abu Jami’, 46 years old woman with two children. The land, covering an area of two Dunums, is located in the Zana neighborhood in the town of Bani Suhaila, east of Khan Younis governorate. This resulted in the destruction of all agricultural crops, including cauliflower and peas, with estimated losses of \$16,000 USD. In addition to the financial losses, the woman incurred debts to owners of nurseries and agricultural fertilizer stores. Spraying the toxic pesticide also caused health damage to the landowner and her two daughters, leading to skin rashes and respiratory diseases (severe cough).

Abu Jami’ stated the following to Miftah researcher:

-“An aircraft belonging to the occupation forces sprayed toxic pesticides over my entire land, which measures 2 Dunums and was planted with cauliflower and peas. This happened just two

days before the scheduled harvest, resulting in severe financial losses and debts that I failed to repay. I had expected to harvest around 15 tons of agricultural produce, valued at \$16,000, which would have covered the debts to the owners of nurseries and agricultural fertilizer stores, as well as preparing the land for the new planting season and the household expenses. I had also hired workers for the harvest season at a cost of US\$400 per worker. However, the complete destruction of the crop caused significant financial losses and high indebtedness. I now suffer from a poor mental state, especially depression and extreme nervousness, in addition to a feeling of despair from attempting to cultivate the land again. The spread of toxic pesticides in the area also led to health damage to me and to my daughter, causing skin rashes and respiratory issues, including severe cough and me. It is worth noting that the occupation forces repeat this crime every year in a systematic manner, sometimes twice a year and during the harvest times of agricultural crop”.

-During the same period, Israeli occupation forces destroyed agricultural crops in a land owned by Abdullah Salameh Abu Mandeel, 42 years, married and provides for a family of six, including four children. The land is located in Al-Masdar village, east of Central Gaza governorate, through the aerial spraying of toxic pesticides from an agricultural aircraft. The toxic pesticides resulted in the destruction of the wheat crop planted on an area of five Dunums and peas planted on an area of one Dunum. His wife and children suffered severe health damages due to inhaling these pesticides, in addition to significant financial losses.

Abu Mandeel stated the following to Miftah researcher:

“During the harvest season of peas this year, an agricultural aircraft belonging to the occupation forces sprayed my land, with an area of 7 Dunums, and the adjacent lands with toxic pesticides. This caused damage to approximately 80% of my mature pea crop, planted on an area of two Dunums, and wheat that was in the stage of earing, planted on an area of five Dunums. My wife and children, who inhaled the toxic pesticides suffered from respiratory and skin diseases, as well as eye irritation. My wife, who was helping me in cultivating the land as our sole source of income, became extremely frustrated, especially with the financial losses we incurred. The direct material losses reached around US\$3,000, in addition to US\$750 for three workers we hired for the harvest. This situation further accumulated debts to nurseries and fertilizer stores. The material losses and the decline in the family's economic conditions led to aggravating domestic problems and the deterioration of my children's academic attainment. I am no longer able to provide their daily expenses”.

-In March 2023, the Israeli occupation authorities sprayed toxic pesticides on a farmland of four Dunums, belonging Ali Salameh Abu Mandeel, 34 years, with family of seven members, including three children in Al-Masdar, the eastern part of Central Gaza governorate. This destroyed its wheat and barley crops. Moreover, his wife suffered from malnutrition, irritable bowel syndrome, and abdominal bloating as a direct result of the severe financial losses incurred and the accumulated debts.

Ali Abu Mandeel stated the following to Miftah researcher:

“The Israeli authorities repeatedly spray toxic pesticides on the agricultural lands in Al-Masdar village every year. In March of this year, the toxic pesticides destroyed the entire wheat and barley crops cultivated on an area of four Dunums, which were in the stage of earing. This resulted in losses of around US\$2000 in this agricultural season alone, aside from the significant debts incurred for seed and fertilizer stores, as well as the cost of plowing and preparing the land before cultivation. The six persons working on the land, including my wife and two female workers, lost approximately USD\$150 each for their work this season. Moreover, my family lost the annual wheat stock we use for preparing bread and food. My wife and I feel severe frustration and hopelessness for the future. This led my wife to suffer from malnutrition, irritable bowel syndrome, and abdominal bloating, in addition to the decline of my children’s academic achievement”.

-During the same period, a dedicated aircraft belonging to the Israeli occupation authorities, sprayed toxic pesticides on an 8 Dunum plot of land leased by Taghreed Suleiman Abu Khousah, 55 years, supports a family of 4 members, including two children, located east of Bureij refugee camp in the eastern part of Central Gaza governorate. This destroyed okra and pepper crops cultivated on an area of four Dunums, in addition to direct financial losses estimated at US\$3500, along with accumulating debts.

Abu Khousah stated the following to Miftah researcher:

Every year, the occupation authorities deliberately spray agricultural lands with toxic pesticides, especially during the harvest season. This year, the toxic pesticides destroyed the crops cultivated on an area of four Dunums I had leased to cultivate and provide for my family. This led to direct financial losses of around US\$3500, in addition to the losses of three female workers and one male worker whom I had hired to help with farming and harvesting for an income of around US\$150 each in this season. Moreover, I have accumulated new debts to the owners of seed and fertilizer stores. Since then, I have been under significant psychological stress and the pressure of increasing responsibilities to provide livelihood for my family after the loss of the crops”.

Destruction of agricultural crops by opening water dams and barriers:

The Israeli occupation authorities deliberately open water dams and barriers flooding the lands of Palestinian farmers close to the borders with water. This leads to the destruction of agricultural crops and poultry farms, especially during the harvest season. Miftah has documented around 126 violations resulting from the opening of water dams and barriers. These violations are often accompanied by other abuses against farmers, exacerbating their economic, health, and psychological conditions. This had a compound impact on rural women, and contravenes with Article (46) of The Hague Regulations, which states that, "The family honor and rights, the lives of persons, and private property must be respected, as well as religious convictions and practice". Furthermore, it violates Article (33) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits measures of reprisal against protected persons and their property, and Article (14) of CEDAW, which ensures special protection for rural women. The most notable examples of these violations include:

-The Israeli occupation forces flooded with water, by opening the dams and barriers at plot of land in Wadi Al-Salqa, east Deir Al-Balah owned by Harba Odeh Abu Nuseir, 70 years, supporting a family of 8 members, including 3 women and 3 children. This led to destroying the agricultural produce and a chicken pen. Abu Nuseir suffered grave financial losses, as most of the crops were destroyed and around 800 chickens and 40 pigeons died. Moreover, her house of an area of 120 m² was flooded and her pregnant daughter in law suffered from pregnancy problems and persistent fear from drowning.

Abu Nuseir stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“We were surprised by large quantities of water flowing into my land and home, as the occupation authorities opened the water dams from their side. This led to the destruction of 80% of the vegetable crops ready for harvest, in addition to around 800 chickens and 40 pigeons that we raise for sale. I have suffered from large financial loss since the land is my only source of livelihood, and led to accumulated debts, especially for six workers including four women from my family, whom I had brought to work with me during the season and with the poultry. Since the house was flooded, my pregnant daughter in law suffered from pregnancy problems and persistent fear from drowning. While the children suffered from trauma and terror that overburdened the whole family”.

- Farmer Luay Atef Najjar, 24 years, supports a family of three, including his wife and child, suffered significant financial losses due to the complete damage of his crops, including zucchini and spinach. This occurred as the Israeli occupation authorities suddenly, opened water dams from their side onto agricultural land he had leased in the town of Al-Qarara, east of Khan Younis governorate, without warning. His wife contracted a respiratory illness from inhaling moisture and gases emitted from the water-submerged land, and hypertension due to the constant stress on their source of livelihood.

Najjar stated the following to Miftah researcher:

"The Israeli authorities intentionally open the water dams at the harvest season, and this year, the water flowing from the dams which the occupation authorities opened, submerged an agricultural land of about 5 Dunums that I had leased at the beginning of the agricultural season. I planted zucchini and spinach. This led to the complete destruction of the crops, which were expected to yield approximately 7 tons, equivalent to around US\$14,000. This resulted in a severe financial loss for me, the loss of my main source of income, accumulation of debts to traders, some of whom resorted to legal action to collect their debts, and additional debts to the five workers I had hired to work with me this season. I had committed to paying each worker approximately \$250. This situation caused psychological trauma, depression, and constant anxiety to me and my wife. Furthermore, my wife developed a respiratory illness from inhaling moisture and gases emitted from the flooded land, as well as hypertension”.

-Farmer, Amin Salem Abu Juraiban, 45 years, supporting a family of nine, including five women and three children, was surprised to find his land, covering an area of two Dunums in Wadi Al-Salqa area east of Deir al-Balah in Central Gaza governorate, submerged by water from dams opened by the Israeli occupation authorities. The flooding ruined his crops of onions and eggplants, destroyed the sheep pen and damaged the fodder and straw. This resulted in significant financial losses for him and caused health issues of his wife, who assists him in farming, including respiratory problems and skin rashes due to the spread of insects.

Abu Juraiban stated the following to Miftah researcher:

“The occupation authorities opened the water dams at around midnight, completely flooding my agricultural land with a large quantity of flowing water. This caused significant damage to my crops of onions and eggplants, cultivated on an area of 1.5 Dunums. The sheep pen was destroyed, with its contents of fodder and straw. My wife, who helps me in farming, contracted severe influenza and coughing, in addition to skin rashes due to the spread of insects. Personally, I suffered from severe nervousness, frustration, and despair following the significant financial loss, as the agricultural seasons are my sole source of income”.

Uprooting agricultural land with military vehicles

The report has documented the uprooting of seven agricultural lands by the Israeli occupation forces through incursions with military bulldozers, especially with the advent of the harvest season. This occurred specifically in the border village of Juhr al-Deek, southeast of Central Gaza governorate. This inflicted severe financial losses on the farmers, and the psychological impact manifested in the escalation of domestic violence and problems, and the accumulation of debts. The most notable violations included:

-In March 2023, the Israeli military vehicles, accompanied by bulldozers, infiltrated the land of Ziad Freih Abu Etewi, 54 years, who supports a family of 10 members, including five women. The land, which he had leased for the wheat season is in Juhr al-Deek, southeast of Central Gaza governorate. The military vehicles bulldozed an area of 10 Dunums, destroying the wheat crop. This resulted in significant material damages for Abu Etewi, and to 33 workers, including 25 women, who were working with him in this season. Both Abu Etewi and his wife, who assists him in farming, fell into frustration and despair due to their losses and the accumulation of debts.

Abu Etewi stated the following to Miftah researcher:

“The Israeli occupation forces, accompanied by military bulldozers, invaded the land I had rented last March. At that time, the wheat crop was in the stage of earing. The forces bulldozed the entire land, covering an area of 10 Dunums, and destroyed the crops. I had hired 33 workers, including 25 women relatives, including my wife, to work in farming the land, with each receiving around US\$400. The expected yield was around 6 tons of wheat. I incurred severe financial losses, accumulating debts to the owners of seed and fertilizer stores, in addition to the rights of the

workers who farmed with me. Consequently, I could no more provide the economic needs of my family, and both my wife and I suffered from frustration, depression, and despair after all the effort we put into cultivating the land and the hope of achieving an economic outcome to meet our family's needs”.

-The Israeli occupation forces invaded Wadi al-Salqa, east Deir al-Balah city in Central Gaza governorate. The military bulldozers bulldozed the citizens’ agricultural lands, including one spanning five Dunums, leased by the young farmer Ahmad Sa’id Abu Mughaisib, 19 years, who supports a family of six members, including two women and three children. This led to the complete destruction of the wheat crop, resulting in the loss of his entire income for this season. The women and children in his family were left in a state of trauma, stress, and despair.

Abu Mughaisib stated the following to MIFTAH researcher:

“The Israeli occupation bulldozers, accompanied by military vehicles, invaded Wadi al-Salqa area in early May this year. They bulldozed agricultural land of an area of five Dunums that I had leased at the beginning of the wheat season. This completely destroyed the wheat crop and led to the loss of my only source of income as a farmer. Furthermore, I incurred debts estimated at around US\$2800 to traders, in addition to around US\$500 for three workers I had hired at the beginning of the season. The women and the children in my family experienced a state of trauma, stress, and despair. Personally, I fell into a state of depression due to the repeated bulldozing by the occupation forces during the harvest season every year”.

Chapter Three: conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the narratives that Miftah collected, it has reached the following conclusions regarding the violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian women, whether directly or indirectly. The occupation authorities cannot deny causing harm to Palestinian women, subjecting them to violence, whether through psychological damage resulting from nightly invasions and systematic arrest procedures meant to instill fear in the minds of all family members, not just the targeted citizens, or through causing severe material damage to Palestinian women farmers and their families, particularly during agricultural seasons.

- While IHL does not prohibit night invasions, however using them repeatedly and systematically against civilians during the occupation, especially women and girls, aims to inflict greater psychological harm on women and falls under the concept of violence

directed against women, prohibited in accordance with Article 4 Par. (b) of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women;

- The policy of ruining and destruction, confiscating gold and money accompanying arrest operations, aims to push women and girls into poverty and destitution, i.e. terrorizing them to force them to oppose their family members' participation in self-determination and struggle for liberation from the occupation;
- The livelihood of farmers depends on agricultural seasons to generate income, not on monthly or fixed income. Any harm to the agricultural season results in significant financial losses, pushing them into further poverty, causing grave economic and psychological consequences, and leading rural women into a cycle of domestic violence and problems;
- The Israeli occupation authorities deliberately and repetitively commit violations against Palestinian farmers, especially during harvest seasons. Those fall within systematic violations that may amount to war crimes, and require effective and independent investigations to hold perpetrators accountable and provide victims with reparations.
- The occupation authorities intentionally and systematically pump wastewater into agricultural lands, causing crops to be ruined and turning fertile land into swamps that are unfit for cultivation, or at least requires money and effort for its reclamation, which inflicts significant financial losses on farmers;
- The Israeli authorities ignore the impact of pushing farmers into poverty on their living and psychological conditions, especially pushing Palestinian rural women into the cycle of violence and illness.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, MIFTAH recommends the following:

Recommendations to Civil Society

- Intensify international advocacy efforts because of their significant impact on the world public opinion, focusing on the use of social media since they quickly and widely spread awareness among youth, activists, influencers, and international solidarity movements.
- Organize continuous advocacy campaigns on the issues of Palestinian women under occupation, highlighting and sharing facts about their experiences, the violations they suffer from because of night invasions and arrests, and the suffering of rural women, to expose systematic violations committed against them and their main patterns.
- Organize public diplomacy efforts between institutions by arranging field tours for solidarity groups with the Palestinian people, giving them firsthand knowledge of the suffering of Palestinian women due to systematic violations by Israeli authorities, which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity under international laws and conventions.

- Organize panel discussions that focus on women's issues under occupation, including women farmers, victims of night invasions and families of detainees, (either virtually or as a side event during the UN Human Rights Council meetings and the annual commemoration of Resolution 1325 in New York).
- Submit a similar independent report to UN special procedures, specifically to 1) the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples; 2) the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; 3) the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls, and 4) the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967²⁶.

Recommendations to the Palestinian Authority

- The Palestinian Authority, especially the Ministries of Women and Foreign Affairs, should include the suffering of Palestinian women, particularly those affected by night invasions, families of detainees, and rural Palestinian women, due to systematic violations by Israeli authorities, which have been proven in the reports, and present them to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel established by the Human Rights Council on 27 May 2021²⁷.
- The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with Palestinian women's rights and human rights organizations, should adapt legal files on these systematic crimes committed by the Israeli authorities, documented in this report, against Palestinian women resulting from night invasions and arrests, and against Palestinian rural women.
- The Palestinian government should adopt documentation reports related to the rights of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation and implement protection policies and support and empowerment programs for Palestinian women, especially those affected by night invasions, families of detainees, and female farmers.

Recommendations to the International Community

- Address UN Women, urging the activation of protection mechanisms in the UN based on the facts and documentation related to the reality of Palestinian women. Enhance accountability frameworks based on UN resolutions within the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and others. Invoke Article 11 of UN Resolution 1325, which stipulates, “the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to

²⁶ For further information on the role of the special procedures, see: <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewAllCountryMandates.aspx?Type=TM&lang=ar>

²⁷ For further information on the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, See: <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2FRES%2FS-30%2F1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls, and in this regard stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions”²⁸. This step aims to achieve justice for Palestinian women under occupation.

- Urge international bodies to hold a hearing session at the UN to share facts related to violations against Palestinian women under Israeli occupation.
- Call on the UN Secretary-General, in order to realize paragraph (24) of UNSC Resolution 1296 on the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, especially due to targeted violence against them, particularly against women, children, and vulnerable groups, to include to the UN Security Council notes related to protecting Palestinian women from systematic violations resulting from night invasions and against families of Palestinian detainees and rural women committed by the Israeli occupation authorities. These notes should be based on the conclusions of this report.
- Call on high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the First Additional Protocol of 1977 to fulfill their commitments according to Article 1 Par. 1, obliging them to enforce the protection of civilians, especially women and children, in all circumstances, particularly during armed conflicts and occupation.

²⁸ [www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-RES-1325\(2000\)](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-RES-1325(2000))