

80+ INGOs Demand Accountability for Israel's Unlawful Killing of Demonstrators in the Gaza Strip

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AIDA, a network of more than 80 INGOs operating in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), on Tuesday condemned Israel's unlawful killing of demonstrators at the border of the Gaza Strip on 14 May 2018. So far, 61 Palestinians have been killed, including one medic and eight children, and over 2,700 others have been injured, the majority by live ammunition fired at protesters by Israeli security forces, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. The casualties occurred in the context of protests near the fence with Israel.

"Israel's continued use of lethal and excessive live-ammunition against protestors is not only deplorable, but also in sharp contravention of international law," said William Bell, Head of Middle East Policy and Advocacy, Christian Aid.

Monday's demonstration is a culmination of a sequence of protests organized since 30 March 2018 to mark 70 years since the expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homes in 1948. More than 70 % of Gaza's population are refugees, living under dire circumstances in the besieged Strip.

"The Gaza Strip is on the verge of a humanitarian disaster as a result of 11 years of blockade, which has crippled Gaza's economy and increased aid dependency, with some 84 % dependent on humanitarian assistance, and an unemployment rate which stands at a staggering 45 %. Gaza is an open air prison for 2 million women, men, boys and girls, living under air, sea and land blockade. People are losing hope that the untenable situation they find themselves in will ever be resolved", said Chris Eijkemans, Country Director for Oxfam in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel.

Since 30 March, more than 100 Palestinians have been killed, and another 12,271 injured, including hundreds of children. In addition, medical personnel and facilities have also come under fire, resulting in the injury of 211 medical staff and damage sustained to 25 ambulances, according to WHO. Hospitals are at the brink of collapse, unable to deal with the vast number of injured as a result of a decade-long blockade and insufficient electricity and medical supplies and equipment. Due to the near impossibility of obtaining a medical referral for surgery outside of the Gaza Strip, 21 Palestinians injured during demonstrations have so far had limb amputations since 30 March.

According to international law, lethal fire may only be used in circumstances where threat to life is imminent. Israeli forces are obliged to exercise restraint and refrain from excessive use of force, and respect Palestinians' right to life, health and freedom of assembly. Targeting medical personnel is a breach of IHL and is considered a War Crime under the Rome Statute. Preventing injured persons from accessing treatment is a violation of their right to health, and amounts to collective punishment.

AIDA calls on third states to condemn Israel's unlawful killings and to step up their pressure on Israel to immediately halt its practice of using live ammunition against unarmed demonstrators, which runs contrary to Israel's obligations under international law, and to lift its unlawful blockade of the Gaza Strip. Echoing the words of UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, AIDA urges third states to demand independent and credible investigations into the incidents, and for those responsible to be held to account.

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