



Field Report

Israel's Attacks on Civilians and Civilian Buildings in the Gaza Strip

(Reporting Period: 03-06 May 2019)

Between Saturday and Monday, 03-06 May 2019, the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) launched widespread aerial attacks and artillery bombardment through land and sea across the besieged Gaza Strip resulting in high number of civilian casualties and widespread destruction of civilian buildings as well as security and military sites belonging to the Palestinian militant groups. This round of escalation broke out after two Palestinians, Raed Abu Teir, 19, and Ramzy Abdo, 31, have been shot and killed by IOF live fire (Abdo sustained a serious injury and succumbed to his wounds the following day) during their participation in the weekly Great March of Return demonstrations on Friday 3 May 2019 along the eastern borders of the besieged Gaza Strip.¹ In what appeared to be a retaliation, Palestinian militants shot two IOF soldiers stationed at the Israel-Gaza border east of Al-Bureig refugee camp. According to PCHR's documentation, thirteen Palestinians civilians were killed by Israeli airstrikes, including three women, one of which was a pregnant woman and one child.² In addition, more than 100 people were injured.

During the reporting period, the IOF targeted civilian buildings, including residential buildings and houses, and alleged security targets in addition to sites belonging to the Palestinian resistance groups in various parts of the Gaza Strip. This resulted in a high number of civilian casualties, many of which were from the same family and huge material losses to the owners and residents of the targeted buildings as well as shop-owners. According to PCHR's documentation, 72 buildings comprised of 97 residential units and home to 611 individuals were completely destroyed while 131 buildings comprised of 266 residential units and home to 1127 individuals were partially damaged with Gaza city suffering the largest share of damage. Deputy Housing Minister in Gaza, Naji Sarhan stated that the Gaza Strip suffered financial losses of more than \$9.5 million during the three-day Israeli.³ As a result, hundreds of families were left with no homes and shop-owners incurred heavy material losses ahead of Eid al-Fitr holiday.

⁽¹⁾ For more information on Great March of Return, see <https://pchrgaza.org/en/?p=12225>

⁽²⁾ Two Palestinian civilians, Saba Abu Arar, a 14-month-old baby, and Felesteen Abu Arar, a pregnant woman, were killed most likely as a result a failed Palestinian rocket launched from the Gaza Strip.

⁽³⁾ The Palestine Chronicle, "Gaza Strip Lost \$9.5 million Due to Israeli Strikes in May", 27 May 2019, available at: <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/gaza-strip-lost-9-5-million-due-to-israeli-strikes-in-may/>



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The Israeli escalation disrupted civilian life in the Gaza Strip. The Ministry of Education announced the suspension of schools and universities across the Strip, the Palestinian Monetary Authority issued a decision to close the banks⁴, while the Interior Ministry emptied security and police stations as well as ministries in response to the escalation

Moreover, Israel took several measures aimed at collectively punishing the residents of the Gaza Strip in response to the rockets fired into its territory. On Saturday, 4 May 2019, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), Maj.Gen. Kamil Abu Rokon announced the closure of the only two crossing border crossings between Gaza and Israel, Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, in northern Gaza Strip, which is used for the movement of people belonging to specific Israel defined categories, including medical patients, and Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) commercial crossing, in the southern Gaza Strip, as well as the fishing zone off the coast of the Strip until further notice.⁵ The following day, 5 May 2019, the COGAT, in a further measure of collective punishment, ceased the transfer of fuel imports into the Gaza Strip⁶.

According to media sources, a ceasefire mediated by the United Nations and Egypt- the exact terms of which remain unclear- was reached between Israel and Palestinian resistance groups. It came into effect at 4:30 am on Monday, 6 May 2019.⁷

This report focuses on IOF's targeting of civilians and civilian buildings and objects across the Gaza Strip's five governorates between 3 May 2019 and 6 May 2019. The information provided in this report is based on investigations and field visits conducted by PCHR team.

Northern Gaza Governorate:

- On Saturday 4 May 2019, at approximately 8:55 pm, an Israeli drone fired a missile towards a container in which two civilians, Khaled Abu Qlaih, 24, and Atallah al-Attar, 30, were present, west of Beit Lahia. According to PCHR's investigations, after the missile struck the container, Khaled and Atallah managed to survive, waited for few minutes inside of it, and then ran towards the house belonging to Fadous family, whom Khaled Abu Qlaih works for as a night guard, to

⁽⁴⁾ Sawa News Agency, "Statement issued by Bank of Palestine for citizens in Gaza", 5 May 2019, available at: <https://palsawa.com/post/204034/%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%86%D9%83-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D8%A9>

⁽⁵⁾ <https://twitter.com/OrHeller/status/1124667172037566464>

⁽⁶⁾ <https://twitter.com/cogatonline/status/1125099084912693253>

⁽⁷⁾ BBC News, "Gaza Conflict: Ceasefire after days of violence", 6 May 2019 available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48171804>



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seek shelter for protection. They knocked on the outside door several times unsuccessfully and then ran to the second door of the house, where they were also unsuccessful. After several seconds, the IOF drone fired a missile approximately two meters away from the second door, where they were standing, which killed Khaled and seriously injured Atallah.

- On Saturday, 4 May 2019, at approximately 10:30 pm, IOF warplanes targeted a four-story house belonging to Khaled Abu Zaida west of Jabalya, northern Gaza Strip. According to PCHR's investigations, Khaled received a phone call from the Israeli army asking him and his family to evacuate approximately three minutes before a drone targeted the building with one missile. Five minutes after the initial targeting, the building was again targeted by an F16 missile, which completely destroyed it. There were no civilian casualties reported.
- On Saturday, 4 May 2019, at approximately 11:50 pm, an IOF drone fired a missile at Atta al-Khodari plastic factory in Jabalya, northern Gaza Strip, causing partial damage to the factory. No casualties were reported.
- On Saturday 5 May 2019, at approximately 7:50 pm, IOF warplanes fired two F16 missiles without prior warning at two apartments located on the fifth floor of Building No.12 in Sheikh Zayed Towers, east of Beit Hanoun. The attack resulted in the killing of six civilians, including two women and two children, belonging to two families, al-Ghazali and Abu al-Jidyán, who were present in their apartments at the time of the attack. The victims are: Ahmed al-Ghazali, 30, Iman al-Ghazali, 29, Maria al-Ghazali, 5 months old, Talal Abu al-Jidyán, 48, Raghda Abu al-Jidyán, 46, and Abdelrahman Abu al-Jidyán, 12. Moreover, 9 civilians living in the same building sustained minor and moderate injuries. According to witnesses, no militants were present in the building nor there was any military activity being conducted to justify IOF's targeting of the two apartments.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 5:00 am, an IOF war planes fired 2 missiles at a resort near al-Hedayah Mosque, east of al-Na'aimah Street, east of Beit Hanoun, which caused severe damage to the resort.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 12:50 pm, IOF warplanes fired a missile at an empty land near-al Berkah Mosque in al-Ghaboun neighborhood, north of Beit Lahia. As a result, a child, who was near the targeted area, sustained serious wounds.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 5:00 pm, a rocket shell was fired at a house belonging to Al-Madhoun family west of Beit Lahia killing four persons including 3 civilians: Abdelraheem al-Madhoun, 60, Amani al-Madhoun (pregnant), 36 and Abdullah al-Madhoun, 21, a member of Saraya Al-Quds, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad. As a result of the force of the blast, sharpnels,



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stones and cement blocks were scattered on a house belonging to Badran family, opposite the house of al-Madhoun family, killing Fadi Badran and wounding four others from his family.

- On Monday 6 May 2019, at approximately 2:10 am, the IOF targeted Tabariya Tourist Resort, in the center of Sheikh Zayed, northern Gaza Strip, which caused partial damage to the resort. There were no civilian casualties reported.

Gaza Governorate:

- On Saturday, 4 May 2019, at approximately 7:55 pm, the IOF targeted “Iqtifan Building”, a 7-story residential building, west of Gaza City, where Turkish State news agency Anadolu is located. The targeting resulted in the complete destruction of the building and caused significant damage to nearby buildings. According to PCHR’s investigations, the building owner, Iyad Iqtifan, received a phone call at approximately 7:30 pm from the IOF asking him whether the Anadolu news agency is located inside his building and ordered him to inform the residents to evacuate the building within 30 minutes. According to witnesses, half an hour later, the IOF targeted the building with five drone missiles followed by two F16 missiles. The building was completely destroyed and dozens of nearby buildings were damaged. The building was composed of fourteen rented apartments, some of which were used as offices, and three commercial shops located on the ground floor.
- On Saturday, 4 May 2019, at approximately 9:05 pm, IOF warplanes targeted “al-Khuzundar” commercial building located in al-Rimal neighborhood, center of Gaza City, and completely destroyed the building and caused damage to the surrounding buildings. According to witnesses, four missiles were fired in total, two drone missiles and two F16 missiles. The 7-story building was comprised of 20 apartments, which were used as residential apartments, offices, and commercial stores. It included Abdullah Hourani Center for Studies and Documentation, and Yardimeli Turkish Foundation, an international humanitarian aid association. According to PCHR’s investigations, the building contained two apartments used as political offices for the Islamic Jihad.
- On Sunday 5 May 2019, at approximately 1:55 am, IOF warplanes targeted “al-Ghussain Building”, a 7-story commercial building located in the center of Gaza city, with several missiles. The building was comprised of 14 commercial apartments including the Office of the Board of Trustees of Al-Aqsa University, Arban Contracting Company, Hala Palestinian Educational Center, Al-Madina Educational Center, and Dr. Iskandar Nashwan Accounting Office. The building was completely destroyed and dozens of surrounding houses were partially damaged.



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- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 2:35 am, an IOF drone fired a missile at al-Mustafa prayer hall in Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza city, which caused minor damage to the building and wounded one person.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 3:40 am, IOF warplanes fired four missiles at two industrial workshops, which were destroyed, in al-Zaytoun neighborhood, east of Gaza city. A 24-year old pregnant woman, Shurouq Heji, who was in a house near the attack, sustained wounds in the head and miscarried after a wall fell on her as a result of the bombing.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately, 2:30 pm, Israeli warplanes fired five missiles at a house belonging to Munther Mushtaha, in Shujaeyah neighborhood, east of Gaza city. The house was completely destroyed and a nearby house was severely damaged. No casualties were reported.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 5:00 pm, IOF warplanes fired four missiles at the internal security forces headquarters in Ansar area, west of Gaza city that led to its complete destruction. No casualties were reported.
- On Sunday 5 May 2019, at approximately 5:05 pm IOF fired seven missiles at al-Qamar Building in Tal al-Hawa neighborhood, south-west of Gaza city. The 7-story building consisted of 21 apartments and was home to 16 families. According to PCHR's investigations, Khamis Baker, a resident of the building, said that he received a call from an Israeli army officer who asked him to inform the residents of the building and nearby buildings to evacuate immediately. Ten minutes later, IOF warplanes fired four warning missiles followed by several F16 airstrikes that completely destroyed al-Qamar building and a neighboring house belonging to Nafez al-Wihaidi. No casualties were reported.
- On Sunday 5 May 2019, at approximately 8:20 pm, an Israeli aircraft fired three missiles at an industrial workshop belonging to Hassan Hasanein, in al-Zaytoun neighborhood, east of Gaza city, which led to its complete destruction. No casualties were reported.

Middle Area Governorate

- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 11:30 am, an IOF drone fired a missile at a house belonging to Husam Aqel in al-Nuseirat refugee camp. A few minutes later, IOF warplanes bombarded the house with two f16 missiles which resulted in the total destruction of the house. According to witnesses, prior to the targeting, Husam's neighbor received a call from the Israeli army asking him to evacuate and inform surrounding neighbors to evacuate as well. Husam and his family evacuated the house once they were informed by the neighbours that their house will be targeted, and no civilian casualties were reported.



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- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 7:50 pm, Israeli warplanes fired 3 missiles at a house belonging to Abdullah Tawfil abu Na'iam , north of al-Nuseirat. PCHR team was not able to gather more information due to the unwillingness of those affected to discuss the incident.
- On Monday, 6 May 2019, at approximately 2:20 pm, an Israeli drone fired a missile at house belonging to Salama Abu Aisha an Israeli drone fired a missile at a house belonging to Salameh Abu Aishah in al-Hasainah area, west of al-Nuseirat, while Abu Aisha family were inside the house sleeping. As they fled the house, the Israeli occupation forces contacted the Salama's son and told him to evacuate the house. Minutes later, the IOF warplanes bombarded the house, resulting in its complete destruction. There were no civilian casualties reported.

Khan Yunis Governorate:

- On Saturday, 4 May 2019, at approximately 10:40 am, IOF fired two artillery shells at an agricultural land, east of Abasan al-Jadeedah village, east of Khan Yunis. One of the shells, targeted a house belonging to Abu Ta'aimah family, causing minor wounds for two civilians, including a woman.
- On Saturday, 4 May 2019, at approximately 11:50 pm, an IOF drone fired two missiles at the house of Mostafa al-Astal, in the center of Khan Yunis, followed by two F16 airstrikes, approximately ten minutes later, which resulted in the complete destruction of the building. According to PCHR's investigations, Mustafa al-Astal and his wife were inside the house at the time of the initial targeting by the drone and managed to escape before the second targeting, which took place approximately 3 minutes later. According to witnesses, at approximately 11:45 pm, 5 minutes prior to the targeting, al-Astal's neighbors received a phone call from the Israeli army asking them to evacuate and inform the surrounding neighbors to evacuate as well.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 1:14 am, an IOF drone fired two missiles at the house of Tayseer al-Mubasher in Khan Yunis refugee camp, approximately 30 minutes after the IOF contacted Tayseer's wife and asked her to evacuate the house. Several minutes later, an F16 missile hit the house which resulted in its complete destruction.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 10:30 am, IOF fired a mortar shell at an agricultural land in al-Fokhari area, southeast of Khan Yunis, injuring three civilians. At approximately, 4:30 pm, IOF warplanes bombarded the same area with an F16 airstrike targeting the house of Mohammed Awad, who was among the injured persons in the earlier incident, which led to its complete destruction.



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- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 12:00 pm, an IOF drone fired two missiles at a three-story house, east of Khan Yunis, belonging to Abed Abu Shahla targeting the garage as well as the roof of the house. There were no civilian casualties reported. According to PCHR's investigations, the neighbours were contacted by the Israeli intelligence services and were asked to evacuate the house approximately ten minutes before the targeting.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 3:20 pm, a shell landed on a 2-story house belonging to Mohammed Abdeen in al-Qarara town, north of Khan Yunis. The missile hit the house's stairwell and partially damaged two adjacent apartments. The house was inhabited by four families consisting of 18 individuals, including 7 children who were nearly all present in the house at the time of the attack. There were no civilian casualties reported.
- On Sunday, 5 May 2019, at approximately 5:00 pm, an IOF drone fired a missile at an empty house belonging to Su'ad al-Shami in al-Zana neighborhood in Bani Suhaila, east of Khan Yunis. A few minutes later, several missiles were fired at the house that led to its complete destruction. There were no civilian casualties reported.

Rafah Governorate:

- On Sunday 5 May 2019, at approximately 04:15 am, an IOF drone fired a missile at a house belonging to Bilal Zourob, south-west of Rafah followed by another drone missile 10 minutes later. Approximately 5 minutes later, an Israeli war plane fired two missiles at the house resulting in its complete destruction and causing partial damage to nearby houses. According to PCHR's investigation, Wafaa Zourob, Bilal's relative and neighbour, was contacted by the Israeli army shortly prior to the targeting. She was asked to evacuate the house immediately and to inform other neighbours to evacuate the area. Bilal and his family evacuated the house before the drone targeted the house. As a result no civilian casualties were reported.
- Around the same time, an Israeli drone fired a missile at a house belonging to Sobhi Zourob. Consequently, the 160 square meter house, which is close to the house of Bilal Zo'rob (mentioned above), was partially damaged.
- On Sunday 5 May, at approximately 3:45 am, an IOF drone fired a missile at a boat belonging to the Marine Police, located in the fishermen's port, west of Rafah, resulting in its total destruction.
- On Sunday 5 May 2019, at approximately 5:45 pm, the IOF warplanes fired three F16 missiles without a prior warning targeting the basement, ground floor and first floor of "Zourob 2" residential building, located near Al-Nijma Square, center of Rafah. As a result three civilians,



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who were present inside the building at the time of the attack were killed: Ali Abdul-Jawad, 51, Mousa Mo'amer, 35, and Hani Abu Sha'ar, 37. In addition, four bystanders were injured. The building is composed of five floors, twenty-nine apartments, and three commercial premises. Ali Abdul Jawad was in his educational center, Al Awael Educational Center, located on the ground floor at the time of the attack while Mousa Mo'amer and Hani Sha'ar were in Al-Fakher café, which is located in the basement. The attack also caused heavy material losses as it resulted in the destruction of 9 apartments, the majority of which were used as offices (al-Awael Educational Center, al-Amal Educational Center, Palestinian General Union of People with Disability Association, al-Abeer for Printing and Advertisement, al-Me'maryoon Firm for Engineering Consultancies).



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Conclusion:

During the reporting period, the IOF carried out widespread aerial attacks and artillery bombardment across the Gaza Strip killing 13 civilians, and injuring more than 100 people. The IOF attacks impacted and destroyed residential, and commercial buildings, some of which are home to Palestinian and foreign institutions, a property belonging to the Ministry of Interior, a prayer hall, a tourist resort, industrial workshops in addition to sites belonging to Palestinian resistance groups. In carrying out the operations mentioned above, the IOF has clearly failed, once again, to respect the basic rules regarding the protection of civilians enshrined in international humanitarian law.

International humanitarian law, applicable in the occupied Gaza Strip, requires that the parties to a conflict must, at all times, distinguish between civilians, and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objects, so that operations are directed only at military objectives. Thus deliberate and direct attacks against civilians and civilian buildings are prohibited unless civilians take direct part in hostilities and civilian buildings are used to make an effective military contribution and their total or partial destructions offers a definite military advantage.⁸

A number of cases examined by PCHR indicate that Israel has deliberately targeted civilians. One case is the targeting of Khaled Abu Qlaih and Atallah al-Attar, north of the Gaza Strip while they were inside a container. After surviving the first attempt, they were targeted again while they were seeking shelter to hide from the drone. Moreover, despite the Israeli occupation authorities giving warnings on a number of incidents described in this reported, in the majority of cases by calling the owner or resident of the building or a neighbouring building ordering them to evacuate, the IOF failed on two reported incidents to give warning to the residents before the targeting of a civilian building. The targeting of large residential and office buildings such as Building No.12 in Sheikh Zayed Towers and Zourob 2 building without a warning, which resulted in the killing of nine civilians in total, is another evidence of the deliberate targeting of civilians by the IOF. In all these cases, all the victims, according to information gathered by PCHR, were civilians who were not directly participating in hostilities. Attacks on civilians not taking direct part in hostilities that result in deaths constitute wilful killing, a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention⁹, which may amount to a war crime.¹⁰

⁽⁸⁾ Articles 48 and 52(2) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

⁽⁹⁾ Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Article 8(2)(a)(i) of the Rome Statute.



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The extensive destruction of civilian properties by the IOF including residential and commercial buildings such as Iqtifan, al-Khuzundar, and al-Ghussain buildings is an evidence that the IOF carried out destructions that may not have been strictly required by military necessity. A party to a conflict may not damage or destroy a civilian property if the damage is excessive compared to the military advantage to be gained. Article 147 of the 1949 of the Fourth Geneva Convention qualifies the extensive destruction of property “not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly” as a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and may constitute a war crime under Article 8(2)(b)(2) of the Rome Statute.

Israel has systematically failed to conduct serious investigations, especially in view of the fact that many violations of international law committed during the Israeli offensives on the Gaza Strip are a direct result of the policies adopted by the highest political and military leaders that has publicly pledged in many statements not to prosecute any of their soldiers on alleged crimes against the Palestinians.

Israel must investigate serious violations of international law committed by its forces during its recent escalation on the Gaza Strip and prosecute those responsible. In addition, as Occupying Power, Israel has an obligation to ensure effective remedy for Palestinian civilians, whose property has been unlawfully destroyed or damaged as a result of the airstrikes.