

Medical Personnel under Fire



Report on IOF Attacks against Palestinian Medical Personnel while on Duty at GMR Protests

23 May 2018 to 13 December 2019

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

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Contents

INTRODUCTION..... 2

VIOLATION OF PALESTINIAN MEDICAL PERSONNEL'S RIGHT TO LIFE AND PERSONAL SAFETY 3

- **THREE PARAMEDICS KILLED WHILE ATTEMPTING TO RESCUE WOUNDED CIVILIANS AT GMR.....3**
- **155 PARAMEDICS INJURED WHILE ASSISTING AND EVACUATING THE WOUNDED DURING GMR PROTESTS..... 8**

TARGETING MEDICAL TRANSPORTS.....15

TARGETING MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN LIGHT OF THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW.....16

CONCLUSION.....18

Introduction

This report¹ highlights Israeli attacks against Palestinian medical crews and medical transports dedicated for the evacuation and transportation of those killed and wounded at the Great March of Return and Breaking the Siege (GMR) protests along the Gaza Strip's eastern border areas. This report documents the numbers of killed and wounded paramedics and nurses from 23 May 2018 to 13 December 2019, in addition to Israeli occupation forces' (IOF) attacks against medical transports.

According to PCHR's documentation, during the period 3 medical personnel were killed, despite wearing distinctively marked clothing that made it easy to identify them, raising the total number of killed paramedics at GMR protests to 4² since their start on 30 March 2018. During the reporting period, 155 paramedics were wounded, including 33 women, raising the total to 255 wounded paramedics, including 38 women, at GMR. Additionally, IOF's targeted attacks on medical transports and ambulances resulted in damaging 133 ambulances and obstructing the work of medical personnel.

The report emphasizes IOF's excessive use of lethal force against peaceful protestors and medical personnel, who posed no threats to the lives of Israeli soldiers while carrying out their duty evacuating and transferring killed and wounded civilians from the eastern Gaza Strip border areas. This constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law. The report is in line with the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Gaza protests report issued on 28 February 2019, which confirmed, "there is a probable cause to believe that Israeli snipers shot and injured journalists, paramedics, children and persons with disabilities."

Palestinian medical personnel, including nurses and paramedics, wore uniform and signs indicating the nature of their work in healthcare services. In addition, the ambulances and other medical transports were marked with distinctive insignia that is emboldened in big banners in both Arabic and English that clearly distinguishes them from other means of transportation; the same applies to Ministry of Health (MOH), Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) or Palestinian healthcare NGOs' medical points in the field, which clearly marks these institutions to be active in humanitarian action and health care. This fact further incriminates Israeli soldiers and politicians and asserts their legal and moral responsibility for targeting Palestinian medical personnel, medical transports and medical points in the Gaza Strip.

¹ This report is the second of this series issued by PCHR titled: "Medical Personnel under Fire", and it documents the Israeli attacks against Palestinian medical personnel while evacuating and transferring wounded Palestinians participating in the GMR protests in the Gaza Strip. The first report issued on 24 May 2018 covering the period from 30 March – 22 May 2018. For more information, review the report on the following link:

<https://pchrgaza.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Palestinian-Medical-Personnel-under-Fire.pdf>

² The first PCHR report documented the killing of paramedic Mousa Jaber Abdul Salem Abu Hasanain on 14 May 2018, while he was on duty at the eastern border of the Gaza Strip.

The gross Israeli attacks against medical personnel not only implicates the latter's lives and personal safety, but also the rights of others participating at GMR who need various types of medical care and first aid. Thereby, significantly increasing the Israeli violation of the Palestinian civilians' right to life, safety and bodily integrity.

Violation of Palestinian Medical Personnel's Right to Life and Personal Safety

Israeli soldiers stationed along the Gaza Strip eastern borders intensified their targeted attacks against Palestinian medical personnel offering first aid, evacuating and transferring wounded civilians during GMR. As a result, 3 paramedics were killed and 133 others sustained injuries, including 33 women, during the reporting period. Israel's attacks constitute a flagrant violation of international standards that criminalize targeting medical personnel, who are classified as protected persons under IHL.

PCHR's investigations confirm that Israeli forces deliberately shot Palestinian medical personnel with live and rubber bullets as well as tear gas canisters and targeted medical transports in the confrontation areas near the border fence. Those incidents recurred against the same medical personnel despite wearing their clearly marked and distinguished medical uniform. Furthermore, most of the recorded attacks against medical personnel occurred when there was no threat posed to the life and security of the Israeli soldiers.

Israeli snipers' direct targeting of protestors and medical crews, as well as the types of weapons used, reflect IOF's intent to kill, maim and cause harm to protestors. IOF used different types of live ammunitions, unknown and un-coded tear gas canisters that cause intense seizures, and metal tear gas canisters with pointed heads that caused deaths and mutations among protestors.

Through active engagement in the field, monitoring and documenting human rights violations, PCHR fieldworkers documents a number of facts relevant to IOF ongoing attacks against Palestinians participating in the GMR protests, most prominent of which were that medical personnel were far away from the border areas when they were targeted and Israeli soldiers deliberately targeted them while they were offering first aid and transferring the injured civilians to hospitals for treatment.

- **Three Paramedics killed while attempting to rescue wounded civilians at GMR**

During the reporting period, 3 paramedics were shot and killed, including a woman, by IOF while they were offering first aid and evacuating the wounded civilians of the GMR protests along the Gaza Strip's eastern border. Following are statements gathered by PCHR's fieldworkers about the incidents.

- Volunteer Paramedic, Razan Ashraf al-Najjar, Killed by IOF

On 01 June 2018, Razan Ashraf al-Najjar (21), a volunteer paramedic, from Khan Younis, was shot with a live bullet that entered and exited her chest while helping and evacuating the wounded civilians at GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis. Al-Najjar was admitted to Gaza European Hospital for medical treatment. Half an hour later, doctors pronounced her death.



Rasha Abdul Rahman Qdaih (25), a volunteer paramedic from Khan Younis, said to PCHR's fieldworker:

"At approximately 15:00 on 01 June 2018, I went to the GMR camp in Khuza'ah village, east of Khan Younis and headed to the tent of the volunteer paramedics affiliated with the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS). I saw my colleague Razan Ashraf al-Najjar (21), a volunteer paramedic working within the PMRS team who was present daily since the first day of GMR. I greeted her and we were divided to 2 groups to offer medical treatment for the wounded civilians. Both groups were among the peaceful protestors on distances that range from 20 to 100 meters away from the first barbed-wire fence, which is about 50 meters away from the border fence. In the meantime, Israeli soldiers fired a burst of live bullets and tear gas canisters at the protestors along the border fence area. As a result, 30 civilians were shot and injured. We offered first aid to the wounded civilians on the field. At approximately 18:25, my colleagues, Razan and I approached the border fence to rescue 2 young men, who were shot and injured. We had our hands raised up in our medical uniform that are clearly marked with a red crescent and cross and PMRS logo. However, 2

Israeli soldiers stepped out of their vehicle and opened fire and fired tear gas canisters at us. As a result, my colleague and I suffocated due to tear gas inhalation and we received medical treatment by our colleagues. Few minutes later, I heard a sound of gunfire and saw my colleagues Rami Abu Jazar and Mahmoud Abdul 'Aati falling on the ground near me as well as Razan. Rami said that he was injured in his leg and paramedics came and transferred him. I also saw a number of young men carrying Razan al-Najjar and others carrying Mahmoud Abdul 'Aati. We put Rami and Mahmoud in an ambulance while Razan was taken to another one and we headed to MOH field medical point west of the GMR camps and doctors began treating them. The first medical team began offering medical treatment for Razan to rescue her as she was shot and injured with a live bullet that entered and exited her chest. Fifteen minutes later, al-Najjar was transferred to Gaza European Hospital. When I arrived at the hospital my colleague told me that doctors attempted to save Razan's life and rescue her for more than half an hour, but she died."

- Volunteer Paramedic Abdullah Sabri al-Qatati was killed by IOF

On 10 August 2018, volunteer paramedic, Abdullah Sabri al-Qatati (22) from Rafah, was shot and injured with a live bullet in the back while helping and evacuating wounded civilians participating at the GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis. Al-Qatati was taken to Gaza European Hospital in Khan Younis for medical treatment where he entered the surgery room. At approximately 19:00 on the same evening, doctors pronounced al-Qatati dead.



Sabreen Jaber Abdul Rahim Qeshtah (28), from Rafah, said to PCHR:

"At approximately 16:15 on 10 August 2018, Israeli soldiers opened fire at Palestinian protestors on Rafah eastern borders. As a result, a civilian was wounded. The medical team headed towards him and paramedic Abdulla al-Qatati (22) offered him first aid to stop the bleeding as he was shot and injured in the pelvis. The civilian's injury was serious and he died after being transferred to Gaza European Hospital. Two hours later, myself and Sabreen al-Satari moved towards a protestors who was suffocating and told our colleague Abdullah al-Qatati not to accompany us. When they returned, their colleague Abdullah was shot and injured in the back and was bleeding. A number of protestors carried him and took him to an ambulance that moved him to the field medical point in the GMR camp. Al-Qatati was transferred to Gaza European Hospital in Khan Youni where he entered the surgery room. Al-Qatati stayed in the surgery room until doctors pronounced his death at approximately 19:00 on the same evening."

- Ambulance officer, Mohammed Sobhi al-Judaili, killed

On 03 May 2019, Israeli soldiers opened fire at peaceful protestors participating at the GMR protests, northeast of Jabalia. As a result, paramedic Mohammed Sobhi Salamah al-Judaili (36), from the central Gaza Strip was shot and injured in his nose, causing him severe fracture in his skull. Al-Judaili was taken to the field medical point and transferred to Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City. After a month of al-Judaili's injury, he was transferred to al-Ahli hospital in Hebron, West Bank. At approximately 13:00 on Monday, 10 June 2019, doctors pronounced al-Judaili's death after succumbing to his wounds.



Yusri 'Ayesh al-Masri (55), an ambulance officer from Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's fieldworker:

"At approximately 16:30 on Friday, 03 May 2019, a PRCS team consists of an ambulance officer, 2 drivers and a number of volunteer paramedics went to the GMR camp, northeast of Jabalia to transfer the wounded civilians to hospitals. I was driving the ambulance along with officer Mohammed Sobhi Salamah al-Judaili (36), a father of 4 children from al-Buraij refugee camp, who worked in northern Gaza Strip area for 9 years. We arrived as we were about 200 meters into the west of the border fence. We saw about 500 protestors in the area as young men threw stones at Israeli soldiers, who responded with rubber bullets and tear gas canisters at them. In the meantime, my colleague Mohammed and I transferred 3 wounded civilians to the field hospital established by MOH west of the GMR camp, 500 meters into the west of the clashes area. Two hours later, Mohammed and I transferred 2 young men and a woman that were shot and injured with 2 tear gas canisters. Suddenly Mohammed screamed loudly so I ran towards him. Mohammed was shot and injured in his nose and was bleeding. We took him via the ambulance to the field hospital while Israeli soldiers continued firing live bullets at the ambulance. Doctors at the field hospital decided to transfer Mohammed to ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor at al-Shifa Hospital. After conducting medical examinations to Mohammed, doctors found that he suffers from a fracture in his nose in addition to a severe fracture in his skull. Mohamed was later transferred to al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City where he stayed for 3 weeks during which he suffered from disorientation and dizziness. On Sunday evening, 02 June 2019, Mohammed suffered from a seizure and his heart stopped. Therefore, he was taken to al-Aqsa Hospital where stayed in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). On 04 June 2019, Mohammed was transferred to al-Ahli hospital in Hebron in the West Bank where doctors attempted to resuscitate him but in vain as he entered in a coma, so doctors decided to return him to the Gaza Strip. At approximately 13:00 on Monday 10 June 20-19, doctors pronounced Mohammed's death succumbing to his wounds."

- **155 Paramedics Injured While Assisting and Evacuating the Wounded during GMR Protests**

During the Reporting period, 155 paramedics, including 33 females, were injured by IOF while providing assistance to the wounded and evacuating them during the GMR protests along the eastern Gaza Strip borders.



The following are eyewitnesses' testimonies collected and documented by PCHR fieldworkers:

Testimony (1):

- **Volunteering Paramedic Injured by IOF in Eastern Rafah**

On 31 August 2018, Shorouq Fawzi Abu Msameh, a volunteering paramedic from Rafah, was injured with a bullet to the chest and taken to Abu Yusef al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah for medical treatment.

Paramedic Ashraf Mousa al-Wawi (38), from Rafah, said to a PCHR's fieldworker,

“At approximately 17:45 on 31 August 2018, when I was at the GMR encampment in al-Shokah area in Rafah around 300 meters away from the border fence, I saw a paramedic wearing her white coat falling on the ground. I headed to her and checked her body to find blood on her chest and back. I immediately helped my colleague, ‘Adel Qeshtah, to put her on the stretcher in order to take her to an ambulance. The ambulance drove her to the medical point, where she was fully conscious and said that she is Shorouq Fawzi Abu Msameh, a volunteering paramedic from Rafah. Paramedic Qeshta asked the Director of Abu Yousef al-Najjar Hospital at the medical point to assess her case. After assessing her case, he decided to refer her to Abu Yousef al-Najjar, where she stayed for few days for treatment.”

Testimony (2):

- **Female Paramedic Injured by IOF in Eastern Khan Younis**

On 09 November 2018, IOF opened fire at the GMR protesters in eastern Khan Younis, wounding a volunteering paramedic, Felesteen Khaled Qudeih (22), from Khan Younis, with a bullet that entered and exited her left leg. As a result, she sustained fractures and artery rupture and taken to the Gaza European Hospital for medical treatment. She stayed there for 5 days and underwent a surgery.

Felesteen Khaled ‘Eid Qudeih (22), from Khuza’ah village in eastern Khan Younis, said to a PCHR’s fieldworker,

“I am a volunteer paramedic within al-Huda Charitable Association’s al-Salam Medical Team to assist the protesters wounded in the GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis. On 09 November 2018, our medical team gathered and headed to the area where protesters gathered off the border fence, east of Khuza’ah village. I saw IOF shooting and firing teargas canisters at the protesters. I treated a child who was wounded with shrapnel in his leg around 30 meters away from the barbed-wire fence. I stopped the bleeding and bandaged his wound to be evacuated by my colleagues in an ambulance. I also assisted another young man who sustained a shrapnel wound in his hand. At approximately 16:30, IOF fired teargas canisters at the area and I tried to step backwards. The shooting recurred and the young man was wounded again in his leg. I suddenly felt a stroke in my left feet, and I knew I got injured and started shouting for help. One of the protesters carried me to an ambulance that was on Jakar Street. It drove me to the medical point, where the medical personnel decided to refer me to the Gaza European hospital. At the hospital, doctors said that I have a fracture in the left leg and artery rupture as the bullet entered and exited the leg. I stayed at the hospital for 5 days and underwent a surgery to implant titanium plates and ligate the ruptured arteries. I was discharged from the hospital and I go there for weekly follow-up. The plates are still in my leg so I walk with clutches. Doctors told me that I would stay like this for 4 to 5 months. This has affected my work so I stopped volunteering as a paramedic at the GMR protests and have even become unable to help my mother with the housework.”

Testimony (3):

- **Female Paramedic Hit and Wounded with a Teargas Canister while on Duty at the GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis**

On 18 January 2019, Nayfah Hussein Ahmed Abu Jame'a (22), a female paramedic from Khan Younis, was hit and wounded with a teargas canister in the head and back while on duty assisting the wounded at the GMR protests, east of Khan Younis. She was taken to Naser Hospital in Khan Younis, where his injury was classified as moderate.

Paramedic Nayfah Hussein Ahmed Abu Jame'a (22), from Khan Younis, said to a PCHR's fieldworker,

“At approximately 15:00 on Friday, 18 January 2019, we went to assist the wounded at the GMR encampment in eastern Khan Younis. I was with my colleague, Hanaa' Abu Setah, and there were young men protesting near us. They were around 30 protesters standing 50 meters away from the border fence when IOF opened fire at them and fired teargas canisters. As a result, a young man was wounded and treated by the paramedics. At approximately 16:30, when I was around 50 meters away from the border area, I saw a child wounded and unconscious only steps away from the border fence. I immediately went to assist him and tried to carry him, but 3 of the Israeli soldiers ordered me to step back and leave the area. I turned to call one of my colleagues to carry the wounded child when I felt a strong stroke in the back of my head and another in my back. I felt so much pain and fell on the ground. I heard my colleague Mustafa al-Masri, who was nearby, calling for a stretcher. I felt him carrying me and then fainted. I woke up to find myself in an ambulance. I put my hand on my head to find so much blood, so I told my colleagues that I was wounded in the head. Minutes later, the ambulance arrived at the medical point in Khuza'ah village, where the paramedics assisted me and I was referred to Naser Hospital in Khan Younis. The doctors said that I was hit with a teargas canister to the head, causing an injury that needs 2 stitches. I stayed at the hospital until the afternoon, when I returned home, I checked my back because it hurt and I found that I was hit with a teargas canister in the back that caused minor burns.”

Testimony (4):

- **Paramedic Mohammed Naser Abu Daqqah Shot and Wounded by IOF in Eastern Khan Younis**

On 18 January 2019, paramedic Mohammed Naser Kamel Abu Daqqah (20) was hit and wounded with a teargas canister in the chest fired by IOF at him. He was taken to Naser Hospital and stayed there for treatment for 2 days.

Mohammed Naser Kamel Abu Daqqah (20), from ‘Abasan al-Jadidah village, east of Khan Tounis, said to a PCHR fieldworker,

"At approximately 14:00 on Friday, 18 January 2019, I arrived at the GMR encampment camp in eastern Khuza'a. As soon as my colleagues arrived, we were distributed to assist those wounded due to the Israeli attacks. At around 15:30, I saw hundreds of protesters in area; some of them march to the east around 150 meters from the border fence while the Israeli soldiers were hiding behind the sand berms. The Israeli soldiers heavily fired bullets and teargas canisters at the protesters, wounding a number of them. My colleagues and I started assisting the wounded, including a young man who was hit in the head with a teargas canister, and another who was wounded with a live bullet in the feet: both were taken to the nearby medical point and from there to the hospital. At approximately 16:30, my colleagues and I stepped towards the border fence to evacuate those wounded by the IOF who fired teargas canisters at them; meanwhile, my colleague, Nayfah Abu Jame'a (21), was wounded with a teargas canister in the head and fell on the ground, and the paramedics took her to the medical point. Ten minutes later, 2 young men were wounded near the cement wall, so my colleagues, around 6 paramedics, rushed to assist and evacuate them. When we were 15 meters away, the Israeli soldiers fired a teargas canister at us. As a result, it hit me directly in the chest and I fell on the ground. The teargas canister strongly hit me that I felt so much pain and fainted. At approximately 17:15, I woke up at the Nasser hospital in Khan Khan Younis, where I received treatment for two days. I went back home, and I'm still on treatment."

Testimony (5):

- **A Volunteer Paramedic Hit with Tear Gas Canister While in Duty in Eastern Rafah**

On 01 February 2019, IOF fired live bullets and tear gas canisters at protestors while participating in the GMR protests in eastern Rafah. As a result, a volunteer paramedic, Eman Mostafa Abu Sha'ar (30), was hit with a tear gas canister in her ear wounding her head. She was then taken to Naser Hospital in Khan Younis, where she underwent a surgery due to a laceration in her right ear and head. Doctors told her that she would need several surgeries in the future.

Eman Mostafa Abu Sha'ar (30), from Rafah, said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

"At approximately 15:00 on Friday, 01 February 2019, we headed to the Return Camp in al-Shawka village in eastern Rafah to continue my job in treating the wounded of the GMR. I rescued 10 civilians, who suffocated due to tear gas inhalation while present 300 meters to the west of the border fence. At approximately 16:40, when I was standing with a number of paramedics near the ambulances, I felt a severe pain in my head and fell on the ground. I shouted and then fainted. The paramedics took me via an ambulance to a medical point, where I received first aid. Doctors there diagnosed my health

condition as moderate after I being hit with a tear gas canister in my right ear and head. I was transferred to Naser Hospital in Khan Yunis, where I underwent a cosmetic surgery due a laceration in my right ear. On the same day, the doctors told me that I was directly hit with a tear gas canister in my right ear and head and I will need several surgeries in the future.”

Testimony (6):**• A Volunteer Paramedic Wounded with Live Bullet in Eastern Khan Yunis**

On 19 April 2019, a volunteer paramedic, Dalia Bassam Ahmed Abu Reidah (21), from Khan Younis, was wounded with a live bullet in her left foot and taken to a medical point in the Return Camp. She was then transferred to Gaza European Hospital. Dalia is still suffering from severe pains in her foot and moving slowly.

Dalia Bassam Ahmed Abu Reidah (21), from Khan Yunis, said to PCHR’s fieldworker that:

“I started my work with Watan Medical Team since the outbreak of the GMR protest. I was usually treating the wounded civilians in eastern Khan Yunis. At approximately 15:15, on 19 April 2019, I arrived at the Return Camp in eastern Khauza’a village. After our tear gathered in the camp, we headed to the confrontation area near the border fence. We saw hundreds of protestors gathered in the area. My colleagues and I approached 50-150 meters to the border fence, where IOF heavily fired tear gas canisters and live bullets at the protestors. We started to give first aid to the wounded and transferred them to ambulances. I treated 6 civilians after being hit with tear gas canisters. At approximately 17:40, after I treated a wounded civilian, I felt that something hit my left leg and I saw a white and heavy smoke. I suffocated and fell on the ground. My colleagues and other civilians took me to an ambulance and then to a medical point in western the Return Camp. I underwent medical examinations, which showed that there was swelling and inflammation in my feet. Doctors treated me and I went back to my house, noting that the medical team who treated me told me that I should go to the Gaza European Hospital if I feel any pain. I felt pain and difficulty in moving, so I headed to the hospital on Sunday, 21 April 2019. I underwent medical examinations and doctors treated me, but I still feel pain and move slowly, and I can not even do any chores.”

**Testimony (7):****• A Paramedic Wounded with IOF's Bullets in Eastern Gaza City**

On 23 August 2019, a paramedic Mohamed 'Isma'il Abu Qadous (32), from Gaza City, was shot with a live bullet in his right foot and below his knee. He was taken to a medical point and then transferred to al-Shifa Hospital, where doctors classified his injury as minor. He left hospital at 21:00.

Mohamed 'Isma'il Abu Qadous (32), from Gaza City, said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

“At approximately 13:00, on 23 August 2019, my colleagues and I headed to the Return Camp in eastern Gaza City and arrived there half an hour later. We started to treat those injured near the border fence. The number of protestors decreased as Palestinian police officers denied the protestors' access to Jaker Street. At 16:00, the police officer allowed the protestors to approach and confront the IOF stationed behind sand berms along the border fence. The protestors were present 150 meters away from the fence. IOF opened fire at them wounded many protestors. My colleagues and I took those injured to a medical point for treatment, which lasted for an hour and a half. At approximately 17:00, after the protestors approached the fence, IOF fired live bullets and tear gas canisters at them. My colleagues and I headed there to treat the wounded and took them to a safe area. Meanwhile, I felt pain in my right foot and below the knee. The paramedics quickly came and took me via an ambulance to a medical point. I was then transferred to al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza, where doctors classified my injury as minor. I left hospital at 2:00 and I still receiving treatment.”



Targeting Medical Transports

Since the first day of the peaceful GMR protests, Israeli forces attacked medical transports carrying those wounded in disregard for the rules of the international humanitarian law, which provides protection for medical transports.



According to a report issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 133 ambulances were directly damaged while evacuating and transferring the killed and wounded at GMR to hospitals that are far away from the confrontations. Three of those ambulances were totally damaged while 130 others were partially damaged. The targeted ambulances belong to: (45) for the Palestinian Ministry of Health, (17) for the Palestinian Medical Services, (59) for the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, (4) for the Civil Defense, and (8) for Health Care NGOs.

PCHR's investigations confirm that the Israeli forces deliberately targeted the ambulances designated for evacuating and transferring the killed and wounded, though they were clearly marked with insignia as medical vehicles.

Targeting Medical Personnel in Light of the International Human Rights Law

IOF attacks against Palestinian medical personnel while evacuating and transferring the killed and treating the wounded in the border areas of the Gaza Strip at GMR protests, as well as, medical facilities and field hospitals designated for rescuing GMR casualties, constitute serious crimes and flagrant violations of IHL, particularly the international standards which stipulate rules for the protection of the medical personnel, including paramedics, their transports and medical facilities.

The international humanitarian law, which deals with international and non-international armed conflicts, stipulates that the High Contracting Parties shall undertake to respect the principle of freedom of movement for the medical personnel and work for providing the needed facilitations so that those staffers would carry out their duties, which include the evacuation and transfer of the wounded, sick, pregnant or post-natal women and necessary vaccinations for children.

The Fourth Geneva Convention issued on 12 August 1949 relevant to the protection of civilian persons in times of war and the two Additional Protocols provide special protection for the medical personnel and humanitarian relief crews from Article (14) to (24) of the Convention. The convention also guarantees the principle of the freedom of movement for medical personnel and works for providing the facilitations required so they can carry out their duties, including the evacuation and transfer of the wounded, sick, pregnant or post-natal women and the needed vaccines for children. Article (21) of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates that:

"Convoys of vehicles or hospital trains on land or specially provided vessels on sea, conveying wounded and sick civilians, the infirm and maternity cases, shall be respected and protected ... in the same manner as the hospitals provided for in Article 18."

Article (23) of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention ensures free consignment of medical supplies to needed by the civilians as the Article states:

"Each High Contracting Party shall allow the free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores and objects necessary for religious worship intended only for civilians of another High Contracting Party, even if the latter is its adversary".

Therefore, under the 1949 Geneva Convention, the Israeli occupation State is obliged to ensure the Palestinian civilian population continuous access to all their needs, including medicines, medical equipment, medical transports, medications, vaccines and other different medical disposables in a manner that ensures civilians enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.

The duty of the Israeli State relevant to food and medical supplies for the civilian population has been identified in detail in Article (55) of the Fourth Geneva Convention:

"To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population; it should, in particular, bring in the necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other articles if the resources of the occupied territory are inadequate ..."

Conclusion

IOF continue to escalate their attacks against medical personnel, paramedics, ambulances, field medical points and hospitals while carrying out their duties of evacuating and offering medical treatment for those wounded during the peaceful GMR protests. It seems that those attacks are part of a policy adopted by the Israeli forces, aiming at intimidating and preventing medical staffers from carrying out their humanitarian duties towards GMR peaceful protestors.

The facts on the ground indicate that the Israeli forces' attacks against the Palestinian medical personnel were neither unintentional, accidental nor mere individual acts. The repeated attacks against doctors, nurses and paramedics during GMR confirm the fact that Israeli forces deliberately target and intend to harm medical personnel.

The high number of casualties among medical personnel working in the field, the serious damage that ambulances sustained and the repeated attacks on field hospitals and medical points clearly prove the non-compliance of the occupying power with IHL rules.

PCHR condemns and denounces the Israeli attacks against the Palestinian medical personnel, ambulances, field medical points and hospitals designated for saving GMR casualties while carrying out their duty of evacuating and transferring the killed and treating the wounded in the Gaza Strip border area. Thus, PCHR

- Calls upon the international community, through the United Nations Security Council, to take immediate and decisive actions to stop Israel's serious and grave violations against Palestinian civilians, including the Palestinian medical personnel in the Gaza Strip;
- Calls upon the ICRC to urgently intervene and take the necessary measures to guarantee that medical personnel work freely in the Gaza Strip and to provide them the required protection;
- Calls upon the World Health Organization (WHO) to practice pressure on the international community to end the grave violations practiced against Palestinian medical personnel, transports and ambulances designated for transferring and treating the wounded and sick; as well as, medical centers and field hospitals designated for rescuing GMR casualties;
- Stresses the need to hold Israel accountable and investigated for the crimes against Palestinian civilians at GMR and its attacks on medical personnel;
- Calls upon the ICC Prosecutor to open an official investigation into these crimes and to prosecute and hold accountable all of those involved in issuing decisions in the Israeli forces at the political and security levels and those who applied them.