



Special Report

# Great March of Return: Israeli Attacks on Persons with Disabilities

(30 March 2018 – 30 September 2019)





## **CONTENTS**

Introduction	<u>4</u>
Persons with disabilities in international human rights law and IHL	<u>6</u>
Disabilities in the Gaza Strip	<u>9</u>
IOF Deliberate Attacks on Persons with disabilities at GMR protests in the Gaza Strip	<u>10</u>
Nine PWDs Killed during their participation at GMR protests	<u>12</u>
Disabilities Caused by Israeli Attacks on Civilians Participating at GMR	<u>22</u>
Health Services, Rehabilitation Services, and Psychological Interventions for People with Disabilities Participating at GMR	<u>35</u>
Conclusion and Recommendations	<u>39</u>

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report covers the Israeli attacks against Palestinian civilian protesters at the Great March of Return (GMR), which started on 30 March 2018 in the Gaza Strip, and documents the number of killings and injuries among persons with disabilities (PWD) and the cases of civilians who became disabled after being targeted by Israeli occupation forces (IOF). The report also covers the healthcare and psychotherapy services offered to PWDs. This report is based on the data and information collected and documented by PCHR fieldworkers and lawyers at the Legal Aid Unit and on interviews with specialists from the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH), rehabilitation centers for PWD, international health organizations and mental health institutions.

The report reviews IOF's use of excessive and lethal force against the peaceful protesters, who did not pose any threat to the lives of Israeli soldiers. The Israeli snipers deliberately and directly used internationally prohibited weapons in violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and international human rights law, including violation of the right to peaceful assembly stipulated in Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

During the reporting period, 30 March 2018 - 30 September 2019, PCHR documented 212 killings by Israel including 46 children, 2 women, 9 PWD, 4 clearly identifiable paramedics and 2 journalists. Additionally, 14,057 were wounded, including 3,020 children, 329 women, 244 paramedics and 215 journalists, noting that thousands suffocated due to teargas inhalation. Among those wounded, PCHR documented cases where 196 persons became

disabled, including 28 children: 158 with motor disabilities; 27 with sensory disabilities; 9 with sexual disabilities; 149 amputees; 21 paralyzed; 23 with vision impairment; and 3 hearing impairment. Most of them were denied travel for treatment abroad by the Israeli authorities; as a result, their health deteriorated, causing permanent disabilities. PCHR has received many complaints from wounded Palestinians and their families for being denied travel via Beit Hanoun “Erez” crossing by Israel.

According to PCHR fieldworkers’ investigations, IOF deliberately and directly targeted Palestinian civilians, which explains huge number of casualties, including the participating PWD at GMR. This claim is supported by the UN Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in the occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt) report issued on 28 February 2019, which presents an objective view of the violations committed by the Israeli forces against peaceful protesters, including children, women, medical personnel, journalists and persons with disabilities, as Israeli snipers used high velocity rifles in cases where protesters were neither participating directly in hostilities nor did they pose an imminent threat to the Israeli forces, in violation of the international human rights law rules.

## **PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND IHL**

Rights of PWD are embedded in the general principles of human rights that guarantee equality and non-discrimination, fundamental for guaranteeing that all humans enjoy all their rights and freedoms equally as stipulated in international conventions. As such, PWD have the right to enjoy all the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights provided in international conventions like any other citizen. Furthermore, the states and governments are responsible for guaranteeing that PWD enjoy their rights by adjusting the social and environmental conditions so that they can equally exercise their rights.

Article 1 of the International Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) emphasizes that, *“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood»*. and Article 2 guarantees that *“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.”* Both articles prohibit discrimination of any kind against all human beings to guarantee that each individual enjoys the rights set forth in the Declaration.

In 1975, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons,

which detailed the basic rights of PWD. The Declaration emphasizes that PWD were entitled to the same political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights as others, and they shall be protected against all exploitation and any discriminatory treatment. It further recognizes their rights to medical services, psychotherapy and occupational therapy, including auxiliary medical devices; in addition to their right to education and vocational training for their rehabilitation and social integration.

The Convention on the Rights of PWD and its Optional Protocol was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007; it is the first comprehensive human rights convention on PWD rights. It adopts a broad categorization of PWD and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to PWD and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for PWD to exercise effectively their rights, as well as areas where their rights have been violated. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' 1994 General Comment No. 5 relevant PWD emphasizes PWD have the same rights set forth in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the same rights in UDHR, stressing the importance of realizing these rights and guaranteeing their fulfillment.<sup>1</sup>

IHL provides protection for civilians in general, including PWD. Article (A) (1) of the 1949 fourth Geneva Convention provides that:

*“Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members*

---

<sup>1</sup> UN documents ,E ,1995/22/Human Rights Library ,Minnesota University ,www1.umn.edu/humanrts/Arabic

*of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, color, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.”*

To this end, the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to PWD:

*“Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; (b) taking of hostages; (c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; (d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.”*

Article (16) of the Convention also stipulates that *“The wounded and sick, as well as the infirm, and expectant mothers, shall be the object of particular protection and respect...”*

Article (53) of the Convention also stipulates 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.”*



## **DISABILITIES IN THE GAZA STRIP**

According to the latest statistics,<sup>2</sup> the number of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip is 127,962, i.e. 6.8% of the total Gaza Strip population. The statistics indicate that Gaza City has the highest number of PWD, estimated at 38,878 while the northern Gaza Strip has 31,459 followed by Khan Younis with 25,392 and then central Gaza Strip with 19,175 and Rafah with 13,058 persons in a row.<sup>3</sup>

Other than the social, environmental and family-related causes of disability, its high percentage increase in the Gaza Strip is largely caused by the continuous Israeli attacks against Palestinian civilians. During the 2008-2009 Israeli offensives on the Gaza Strip, the number of persons who suffered permanent disabilities reached 600 while in the 2012 Gaza Strip offensive 16<sup>4</sup> sustained disabilities. Meanwhile, the number of PWD who were wounded during the 2014 Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip is 53 persons, and 180 persons have become with permanent disabilities due to the Israeli attacks in the same period.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, during GMR protests, 196 persons have become with permanent disabilities<sup>6</sup>, noting that the number of persons with disabilities may increase due to their unstable condition and insufficient information on the final status of each wounded person.

---

2 PWD Statistics in the Gaza Strip reveal statistical discrepancies between the Rehabilitation Centers operating in the Gaza Strip and statistics of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), requiring development and adoption of a model disability survey in cooperation with the rehabilitation centers.

3 Preliminary Results of the Population, Housing and Establishments Census in 2017, February 2018, P. 37.

4 PCHR, 2012 Annual Report page 36.

5 On International Day of Persons with Disabilities: their Economic and Social Conditions Continue to Deteriorate, PCHR Press Release, 03 December 2019: <https://pchrgaza.org/en/?p=11722>

6 PCHR documented disabilities resulting from the Israeli attacks against the GMR protests through forms which give detailed data on persons with disabilities and are disaggregated by the type of disability.

## **IOF DELIBERATE ATTACKS ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AT GMR PROTESTS IN THE GAZA STRIP**

Due to the Israeli attacks against the Palestinian civilians participating in the GMR protests, 9 PWD were killed while 196 persons have become with permanent disabilities as they were directly targeted by the Israeli snipers stationed along the eastern Gaza Strip borders. According to PCHR's field investigations, the GMR protests have been peaceful since its outbreak, and not even one incident was reported that departed from the popular and peaceful events. Moreover, PWD posed no threat to the Israeli soldiers and their participation was only limited to theatrical performances and cultural activities. It should be noted that all participants in the protests and 5 encampments along the Gaza Strip border were always present 150-300 meters away from the border fence, proving again there was no danger posed to the Israeli soldiers stationed behind the sand berms.

Field investigations by PCHR<sup>7</sup> and Palestinian human rights organizations are compatible with international reports that document IOF attacks against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip; most recently was the report of UN Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in the oPt, issued on 28/2/2019. The report was prepared by a committee of international investigators which was authorized by the Human Rights Council resolution (S-1/28) on 18 May 2018. The report gives an impartial and transparent review of IOF violations against GMR protesters.

---

<sup>7</sup> PCHR follows up IOF attacks against the Palestinian civilians since the GMR protests started along the eastern borders of the Gaza Strip. PCHR issued dozens of press releases and its fieldworkers collected dozens of testimonies from the scene. for further view of PCHR's documentation of GMR protests, visit PCHR's website: <https://pchgaza.org/en/>

The Commission's report also shows IOF use of lethal force against the protesters in incidents where the latter posed no imminent danger to the Israeli soldiers' lives and were not participating directly in hostilities, in violation of the international human rights law. The report also addresses IOF use of deliberately and directly lethal force against civilians, including children, women, medical personnel, journalists and PWD by targeting them with the snipers' rifles. The Commission of Inquiry said in its report that these acts may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. Following discussion and by a vote of 23 in favor, 8 against and 15 abstentions, HRC adopted a resolution, introduced by Pakistan on behalf of Organization of Islamic Cooperation, on ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

PCHR, at the time, welcomed the findings of the International Commission on the GMR protests and called upon the HRC to adopt and ratify the report when discussed in its 40<sup>th</sup> session. PCHR also called upon the High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit the report to the ICC.<sup>8</sup>

The following are cases where PWD were killed or wounded during their participation at the GMR protests, according to eyewitnesses' accounts and PCHR fieldworkers' observations:

---

<sup>8</sup> PCHR, Press Release: PCHR Welcomes Report by the UN Commission of Inquiry on IOF Violations committed against GMR protesters: <https://pchrgaza.org/en/?p=12041>

## **NINE PWDS KILLED DURING THEIR PARTICIPATION AT GMR PROTESTS**

During the reporting period, 9 PWD, including a child, were killed; 2 with motor disabilities; 2 with mental disorders; 2 with psychological disability; one with hearing impairment; and 2 deaf and mute.

The PWD killed were as follows: one from Rafah; 6 from Khan Younis; and 2 from Central Gaza Strip.

**Table (1):** List of killed of PWD at the GMR protests

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>Disability</b>	<b>Date of incident</b>	<b>Date of death</b>
1	Shadi Hamdan al-Kashef	Rafah	deaf and mute	30/03/2018	05/04/2018
2	Tahreer Mahmoud Wahba	Khan Younis	deaf and mute	01/04/2018	23/04/2018
3	Fadi Hasan Abu Silmy	Khan Younis	motor disabilities	14/05/2018	14/05/2018
4	Shaib 'Abed al-Salam Abu Kashef	Khan Younis	psychological disability	03/08/2018	15/09/2018
5	Hussain Fathi al-Reqeb	Khan Younis	mental disorder	05/10/2018	05/10/2018
6	Ghanem Ibrahim Shurrab	Khan Younis	psychological disability	19/10/2018	05/11/2018
7	Maher 'Atiyah Yaseen	Central Gaza Strip	motor disabilities	21/12/2018	21/12/2018
8	Karam Mohamed Fayyad	Khan Younis	mental disorder	28/12/2018	28/12/2018
9	Ramzi Rohi 'Abdo	Central Gaza Strip	hearing impairment	03/05/2019	03/05/2019

The nature of direct targeting and types of weapons used by Israeli snipers against PWD prove the IOF's intent is to kill, distort and cause damage to protestors. As its staff treated

hundreds of injuries from GMR protests, MOH observed that 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. According to PCHR's investigations, those killed among PWD were directly shot with live bullets: 7 shot in head, 1 shot in the chest and 1 in the abdomen. All of them were present 150-300 meters away from the border fence and this indicates that IOF had the intention to inflict more casualties among PWD, who did not pose any threat or danger to soldiers' lives.

**The following is a briefing on the incidents PWD were targeted:**

1. On 30 March 2018, IOF opened fire at Palestinian civilians participated at GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis. As a result, Tahreer Mahmoud Wahba (18), a deaf and mute from Khan Younis, was injured in his head and taken to the Gaza European Hospital for treatment. He underwent several surgeries and received treatment for 23 days in the ICU until his death was declared on 23 April 2018.

Concerning Wahba's injury and , a friend of Tahreer, Mos'ab 'Abed al-Kareem al-Qasas, from Khan Younis, said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

*“On 30 March 2019, IOF stationed behind sand berms fired live ammunitions and tear gas canisters at the Return Camp in eastern Khan Younis, wounding dozens protestors. The wounded were then taken via ambulances to Gaza's hospital for treatment. At approximately 15:00, I saw my friend Tahreer Wahba (18), who is a deaf and mute, carrying a tire, waving to the soldiers and motioning the victory sign. Tahreer was only five meters ahead of me when I heard*

*a gunshot sound coming from where the IOF were positioned. Then I saw him fall to the ground... I ran towards him and carried him. I saw blood flowing from the back of his head. I put my hand on his injury and saw parts of his brain in my hand. A group of youth arrived and carried him with me towards the ambulances at Jakar Street, about 300 meters away from the fence. After putting him in the ambulance, I lost consciousness from the shock of the moment. After about an hour, I woke up and was surprised to see that I was lying in a hospital bed at the Gaza European Hospital in Khan Younis. I was in a state of severe shock, shouting, "I want to see Tahreer. Where is Tahreer?" After that, I quickly headed to the operation room, where I fall on its door and lost consciousness again. In the evening, my health condition became stable. Tahreer's family then came to the hospital and told me that Tahreer had been admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) and underwent surgery. Tahreer remained under treatment in the ICU for 23 days until he was pronounced dead on 23 April 2018."*

2. On 30 March 2018, IOF opened fire at Palestinian protestors participated at GMR protests in eastern Rafah. As a result, **Shadi Hamdan 'Ali al-Kashif** (34), a deaf and mute from Rafah, was shot with a live bullet in his head. He was then taken to the Gaza European Hospital and admitted to the ICU, where he remained under treatment for 6 days until his death was announced on 05 April 2018.
3. On 14 May 2018, IOF opened fire at Palestinian protestors participated at GMR protests in

eastern Khan Younis. As a result, Fadi Hasan Abu Silmi (30), an amputee from Khan Younis, was injured in his chest and then taken to the Gaza European Hospital for treatment. His death was later announced.

Regarding Abu Silmi's injury, Nedal Omar Abu Tair (30), from Khan Younis, said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

*“At approximately 08:30 on 14 May 2018, my friend Fadi Hasan Abu Simli (30), whose legs were amputated in an Israeli bombardment in 2008, and I headed to the Return camp in eastern Khan Younis. When we arrived at the camp, thousands of civilians flocked to the area and set fire to tires. IOF sporadically fired live bullets at them. At approximately 12:30, Fadi, myself and our friend “Hussein” headed to Jakar Street. When we arrived there, I asked them to stop because there was a heavy Israeli shooting. Hussein and I moved 10 meters towards a group of civilians gathering in the area while Fadi remained in his place. Meanwhile, I heard the sound of a live bullet and found that the bullet hit the motorcycle on which Fadi was sitting. I turned to him quickly and found him lying on the ground and bleeding from his chest. Dozens protestors came and carried Fadi to an ambulance that took him to Gaza European Hospital for treatment. Half an hour later, he succumbed to his wounds after being shot with a live bullet in the chest.”*

4. On 03 August 2018, IOF opened fire at Palestinian protestors participated at GMR protests

in eastern Khan Younis. As a result, Suhaib 'Abed al-Salam Abu Kashif (16), who suffered a psychological disability and lived in Khan Younis, was wounded in his head and then taken to the Gaza European Hospital, where he was admitted to ICU and stayed there until his death was announced on 15 September 2018.

Regarding Abu Kashif's injury, Yaser 'Abed al-Hameed Abu Sablah (28), from Khan Younis, said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

*“At approximately 18:30 on 03 August 2018, a number of Palestinian young men were protesting at the Return camp in eastern Khan Younis and throwing stones at IOF, who responded with live bullets and tear gas canisters. As a result, a civilian present 8 meters away from us was injured. We quickly headed towards him and found that blood gushes from his neck. Many paramedics arrived at the area and said that his health condition was serious. The paramedics took Abu Kashif to the hospital, where he was admitted to ICU stayed there until his death was announced on 15 September 2018.”*

5. On 05 October 2018, IOF opened fire at Palestinian protestors participated at GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis. As a result, Hussain Fathi al-Reqib (28), who live in Khan Younis and suffered cerebral atrophy, was injured in his abdomen. He was then taken to Nasser Medical Complex and stayed there until his death was announced on the same day.

(A. T.), 27, a volunteer paramedic at the Ministry of Health from Khan Younis, said to PCHR's fieldworker that:



“At approximately 14:00 on Friday, 05 October 2018, a medical staff and I arrived at the Return camp in eastern Khan Younis. We distributed duties and prepared to provide first aid for those injured in the GMR protests. After al-’Asr prayer, the medical staff and I moved around 50-300 meters to the border fence with Israel, where hundreds of Palestinian young men gathered. The staff and I were wearing our uniform. When we approached the border fence up to a distance of 100 meters, I saw tear gas canisters falling between protestors, who suffocated due to tear gas inhalation. We provided them first aid and stayed in the area for an hour, meanwhile, I suffocated due to tear gas inhalation, so I stepped 150 meters back from the fence. I stood there for few minutes and saw at least 20 civilians standing 50 meters away from the protestors. One of them was sitting on the ground, 70 meters away from the border fence, and collecting empty bottles and tear gas canisters. At approximately 17:40, I heard a gunshot sound and then saw a young man fall to the ground. Moments later, I saw the person who was collecting the empty bottles standing and putting his hand on his abdomen from the right side. Then, I saw him fall to the ground. I rushed towards him and tried to help him and stop the bleeding. A number of paramedics arrived and took him to the ambulance while I continued to put my hands on his injury until the bleeding was stopped. During which, I saw many civilians carrying a paramedic wearing his uniform on another litter and heading towards the

*ambulance. The wounded young man and I got into the ambulance. I stood on his feet and continued to put my hands on his injury. He was conscious and talked to me. The ambulance arrived at the PRCS medical point and doctors began to treat him. I then return to the field to complete my work. At approximately 18:50, I returned to my house. After about an hour, I went to the European Gaza Hospital to check the health condition of the paramedic Abu 'Assi. I knew that he had been admitted to the ICU due to his serious health condition. While I was at the hospital, I knew that the young man who I helped him, Hussein Fathi al-Reqab, succumbed to his wounds at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis.”*

6. On 19 October 2018, IOF opened fire at Palestinian protestors participated at GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis. As a result, Ghanem Ibrahim Ghanem Shurab (40), who suffered a psychological disability and lived in Khan Younis, was wounded and taken to the hospital for treatment. His death was later announced on 05 November 2018.
7. On 21 December 2018, Maher 'Atiyah Mohamed Yaseen (40), who suffered a motor disabilities since childhood and lived in the central Gaza Strip, was shot with a live bullet in his head while participating in the GMR protests in the central Gaza Strip. He was then taken to al-Aqsa Hospital, where his death was declared on the same day evening.

Regarding Yaseen's injury, Husam Mohamed Hasan Helwa (41), from al-Nussirat Camp, said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

*“At approximately 16:30, on 21 December 2018, Palestinian civilians and I got into the bus to go home after participating in the GMR protests. Meanwhile, I saw my cousin Maher ‘Atiyah Yaseen, a PWD from al-Nussirat Camp, and asked him to get into the bus with us. Before his arrival, I heard a gunshot sound and then Maher fall to the ground. He was bleeding from his head. The protestors gathered around him until an ambulance arrived at the area. The paramedics took him to al-Aqsa Hospital in Dier al-Balah and I got into the bus. I went to Yaseen’s house to know what happened to him. At approximately 19:00, I knew that Yaseen died.”*

8. On 28 December 2018, IOF opened fire at Palestinian protestors participated at GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis. As a result, Karam Mohamed No‘man Fayyad (26), who suffered a mental disorder and lived in Khan Younis, was shot with a live bullet in the head. He was then taken to the Gaza European Hospital for treatment and stayed there until his death was announced on the same day evening.

Regarding Fayyad injury, Mohamed Naser Kamel Abu Daqqah (20), from Khan Younis, said to PCHR’s fieldworker that:

*“At approximately 13:30, on 28 December 2018, my colleagues and I arrived at the Return March in eastern Khuza’a area to rescue those injured. During which, IOF sporadically fired several live bullets towards protestors, in addition to a barrage of tear gas canisters. As a result, one of the protestors was shot with a live bullet in his*

*left foot and then taken to a medical field point by paramedics. At approximately 16:00, I heard gunshots sound coming from the border area, meanwhile, I saw a Palestinian young man fall to the ground while present 150-200 meters away from the border fence. I immediately headed to him to rescue him. When I approached him, the Israeli shooting recurred. I saw another young man fall to the ground. My colleague Samer headed to rescue the first wounded and I headed to rescue the second wounded. When I approached him, I found him lying on his back and severely bleeding from his head. I treated him and found that he was shot with a live bullet in his head from the right side. I put my hands on his injury while young men carried him on their shoulders. We took him to an ambulance and I accompanied him. He was taken to a medical tent belonging to the Ministry of Health near the Return camp. Doctors treated him and I returned to the field. I knew from the protestors that the young man, who was wounded in his head, was Karam Fayyad, noting that he was suffering from a mental disorder. At approximately 17:00, I returned home. An hour later, I knew that Fayyad died after asking my colleague working at Gaza European Hospital.”*

9. On 03 May 2019, IOF opened fire at Palestinian protestors participated at GMR protests in eastern the Central Gaza Strip. As a result, Ramzi Rohis 'Abdo (29), who suffered hearing impairment and lived in the Central Gaza Strip, was wounded in his head and taken to al-Aqsa Hospital and then to al-Shifa Hospital. He stayed there until doctors announced

his death on the same evening.

Ibrahim Nayif 'Ali Weshah (27), from the Central Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

*“At approximately 17:00, on 03 May 2019, my friend Ramzi Rohis 'Abdo and I headed to the Return camp in eastern the Central Gaza Strip. We were present 250 meters away from the border fence and there was at least 300 protestors in the area. After that, we approached 50-70 meters to the fence. Meanwhile, IOF opened fire at the protestors and Ramzi fall to the ground. He was bleeding from his head. The paramedics wrapped his head before taking him via a PRCs ambulance to al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah. I immediately headed to the hospital and found that Ramzi was transferred to al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. I followed him to al-Shaifa Hospital, where he was admitted to the operation room. He stayed there until doctors announced his death at 00:00.”*



## **DISABILITIES CAUSED BY ISRAELI ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS PARTICIPATING AT GMR**

The number of persons with disabilities increased due to Israeli attacks against Palestinian civilians participating in the GMR in eastern Gaza Strip border area. The IOF's excessive use of force and shooting at the demonstrators, caused 196 to become with disabilities, including 28 children, after they deemed extremely critical, and had their upper or lower extremities or hand fingers amputated, in addition to motor, Sensory and sexual disability. Cases of disabilities were distributed according to the nature of the injury; 158 with motor disabilities; 27 with sensory disabilities; 9 with sexual disabilities and 2 others divided into 149 amputees; 21 paralyzed; 23 with vision impairment; and 3 hearing impairment.

In the following tables and diagrams, the disabilities are distributed according to age, gender, and types, which are: motor, sensory, sexual, amputation, sight, hearing and so on.

**Table (2):** Types of Disabilities resulting from IOF's attacks against GMR protestors

Governorate	No.	Children	Female	Male	Motor Disability	Sensory Disability	Sexual Disability	Others	Amputation	Paralysis	Sight	hearing
Rafah	27	2	1	26	21	6	0	0	20	3	4	0
Khan Younis	76	8	1	75	60	7	7	2	47	13	6	2

Central Gaza	35	8	1	34	25	8	2	0	23	2	7	1
Gaza City	35	7	0	35	32	3	0	0	30	2	3	0
Northern Gaza	23	3	2	21	20	3	0	0	29	1	3	0
Total	196	28	5	191	158	27	9	2	149	21	23	3

- 2 deformation cases “losing parts of upper jaw bones” and problems in defecation.
- Some paralysis cases also suffer from impotence.

Diagram (1):

Disabilities resulting from IOF’s attacks against GMR protestors according to gender

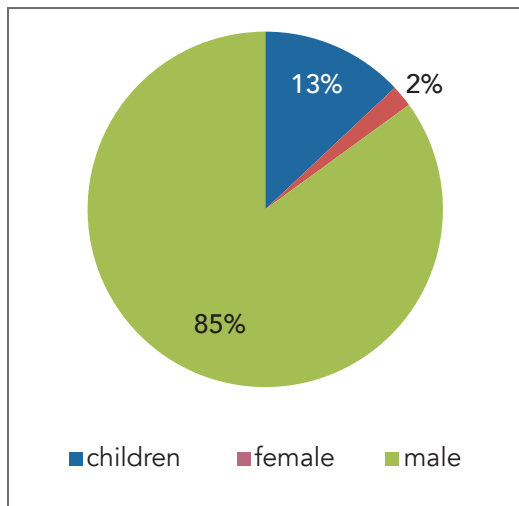
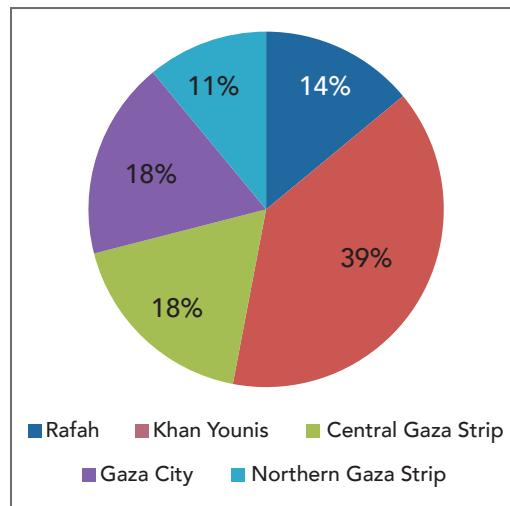
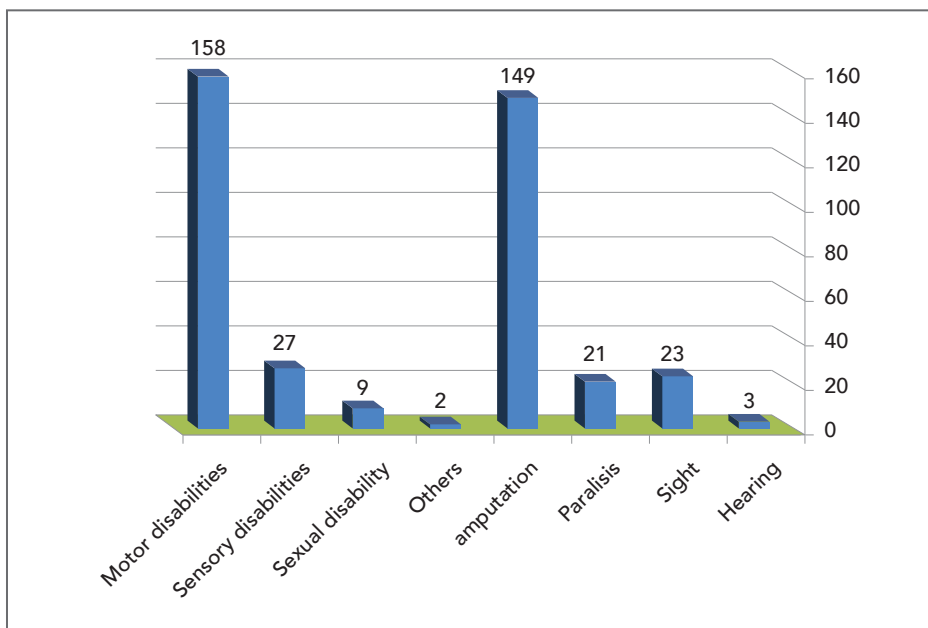


Diagram (2):

Disabilities resulting from IOF’s attacks against GMR protestors according to place of residence



**Diagram (3):** Emphasizing types of disabilities resulting from IOF's attacks against the GMR protestors



Through their following up the IOF's attacks against GMR's protestors in the reporting period, PCHR's fieldworkers observed and documented that protestors used to move away from the border areas when they were targeted; and that Israeli soldiers used excessive force against the protestors using live and explosive bullets, rubber bullets and tear gas canisters. As a result, the number of injuries increased as some of them were shot more than once. Furthermore, the soldiers deliberately targeted journalists while covering the protests and medical personnel offering aid to the wounded civilians and transporting them to hospitals for medical treatment.



Israeli authorities systematically deprives those injured at GMR from receiving medical treatment abroad despite the fact that treatment is unavailable at the Gaza Strip hospitals. As a result, they were exposed to serious health complications. PCHR received several complaints from the wounded civilians and their relatives after they were banned from traveling through Beit Hanoun “Erez” crossing. PCHR reached out to the competent authorities at Beit Hanoun “Erez” crossing to grant the required permits for about 30 wounded civilians, including 6 children and a woman for treatment abroad. However, Israeli authorities approved only 9 permit requests for persons wounded at GMR protests and refused 21 others claiming that they participated in riots organized by Palestinian factions along the Gaza Strip border area. The health condition of those victims is very serious and they need urgent surgical interventions such as bone implants, prosthetic limbs, in addition to surgeries in the jaws, thighs, knees and abdomen.



**PCHR's fieldworkers documented the disabilities resulted from Israeli attacks against GMR protestors:**

**Testimony No. (1):**

**A Young Man Shot in both Legs, leading to a bilateral amputation**

- » On 30 March 2018, Israeli occupation forces opened fire at the GMR protestors in eastern Rafah protests. As a result, Ibrahim Mesbah 'Abed Abdul 'Aal (31), was hit with an explosive bullet in the legs causing amputation in the right leg and fractures in the left leg's bones.

Ibrahim, who is a father to 3 children, said to PCHR's fieldworker:

*“ At approximately 14:30 on Friday, 30 March 2018, I was present about 100 meters away from the border fence in eastern al-Shoka villages, east of Rafah, when I was shot with 2 live bullets in my legs and fell on the ground. I was transferred to Gaza European Hospital in Khan Younis where I underwent medical examinations. I entered the surgery room for 4 hours. Doctors had to amputate my right leg due to laceration in bones and blood vessels. Moreover, the other bullet fractured my left leg's bones and doctors fixed platinum rods in it. ”*

**Testimony No. (2):**

**A cyclist in the Palestinian national team was shot with a bullet and had his leg amputated**

- » On 30 March 2018, Israeli soldiers opened fire at peaceful protestors in the GMR in eastern Rafah. As a result, 'Ala'a Lutfi 'Ali al-Dali (21) a Palestinian cyclist was shot with a live bullet in the right leg, leading to its amputation.

Al-Dali said to PCHR's fieldworker that:

*“At approximately 14:00 on 30 March 2018, I was shot with a live bullet in the right leg when I participated in the GMR activities in eastern Rafah. I felt pain in my leg that was bleeding and then fell on the ground. I was taken to a medical point in the area and then transferred to Gaza European Hospital due to my serious injury. I underwent 8 surgeries in 2 weeks as doctors planted an artery and connect veins and install the bone fracture. I stayed in the ICU for 3 days, but the connected artery exploded and caused severe inflammations. Therefore, on 08 April 2019, doctors decided to amputate my right leg from top of the kneecap. My leg's amputation ended my sport as cyclist in the Palestinian Team and my hopes to win the medals in national and international championships were crushed. Al-Dali was preparing to represent Palestine in the Asian Olympic Games held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2018.”*

### Testimony No. (3):

#### **A Young Man had his leg amputated after IOF banned him from traveling to Jerusalem for treatment**

- » On 30 March 2018, Israeli soldiers opened fire at GMR protestors in eastern Rafah are. As a result, Mahmoud Riyad Mohammed al-Hawajri (18), from al-Nuseirat refugee camp, was shot with a live bullet in the legs. Mahmoud's right leg was amputated after Israeli authorities refused to grant him a travel permit through Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing to Jerusalem for treatment.

Mahoud said to PCHR's fieldworker:

*“At approximately 18:30 on Friday, 30 March 2018, when I participated in al-Burajj*

*refugee camp protests in the central Gaza Strip, Israeli soldiers opened fire at me. I felt pain in my legs and then fell on the ground. I was transferred to al-Aqsa Hospital and admitted to the Emergency Department and then moved to the Orthopedic Surgery Department where I fainted and woke up after 7 days at the ICU Department in al-Shifa Hospital. Doctors informed me that I underwent a surgery in my right leg. Due to my serious injury, my family obtained a medical referral for me in al-Maqased Hospital, Jerusalem. However, on 25 April 2018, the Israeli authorities rejected my travel permit through Beit Hanoun “Erez” crossing. My health condition deteriorated and doctors cleaned the surgical wound several times. They told me that the live bullet entered through my left knee, and exited into my right leg and they had to amputate my right leg fearing that I would suffer from gangrene. At approximately 10:00 on Thursday, 03 May 2018, my right leg was amputated. I stayed in the hospital for 2 days after the surgery and then returned home.”*

Testimony No. (4):

**Civilian had his left leg amputated after sustaining a live bullet while attempting to rescue a wounded woman**

On 30 March 2018, Suheib ‘Elian Hasan Qdaih (33), from Khan Younis, was shot with an explosive live bullet in his right leg while participating in the peaceful GMR protests in eastern Khuza’ah village, east of Khan Younis. Qdaih’s left leg was hit with the bullets.

Suheib said to PCHR’s fieldworker:

*“At approximately 10:00 on Friday, 30 March 2018, I was transferring the wounded civilians in the GMR protests in eastern Khan Younis area. At approximately 14:00, I*

was present about 150 meters away from the border fence, a woman, who was carrying the Palestinian flag and approaching the border fence, was wounded and fell on the ground. When I approached her, I was shot with a live bullet and fell next to the woman. I was taken to Nasser hospital where I stayed there for half an hour and then was transferred to Gaza European Hospital. Doctors found that I was shot with an explosive live bullet to the right leg and shrapnel hit my left leg. On Saturday afternoon, on 07 April 2018, due to the severe bleeding and damage of veins in addition to the inflammation in my leg, doctors decided to amputate my left leg from top of the kneecap.”

#### Testimony No. (5):

#### **Young man shot and wounded with explosive live bullet leading to amputation of his right leg**

» On 05 April 2018, Mohammed Jihad Abdulaziz Musabeh (19), from Abasan east of Khan Younis, sustained an explosive live bullet in his right leg at GMR Khan Younis protest. The bullet caused laceration in all veins and arteries, and bone fragmentation. Physicians decided to amputate his right leg from underneath the knee. The following is his testimony:

“ At approximately 16:30 on Thursday, 05 April 2018, I joined the GMR protest in eastern Khuza’a. It was calm there no shooting and no commotion. As I arrived I saw an elderly woman carrying the Palestinian flag and walking towards the border fence, I approached her with another young man and took the flag and proceeded towards the fence at a slow pace. I saw three Israeli military SUVs and a number of soldiers behind sand berms some 30 meters into the fence. I continued to walk towards the fence and as I reached it, I felt something hit my right leg and I fell to the ground immediately

*as heavy shooting started. I was in extreme pain and cried for an ambulance. Nurse Mohammed Naji Abu-Ismaïl was the first to come to my aid and he tied the wound but could not move me due to the heavy shooting. Minutes later, the late paramedic Razan al-Najar arrived to help. 15 minutes later, shooting stopped and a group of young men managed to carry me into an ambulance that took me to the European hospital where I was diagnosed with laceration in all my veins and arteries and bone fragmentation. I was admitted to surgery and my right leg was amputated from underneath the knee.”*

#### Testimony No. (6):

##### **Child injured and his left leg amputated:**

- » On 17 April 2018, Abdulrahman Yamen Nofal (12), from al-Nusairat refugee camp, in the Central Gaza Strip, was shot with a live bullet to his left leg, at GMR protest, eastern Central Gaza Strip governorate. As a result, his leg-bone was smashed, veins and arteries were ruptured, and then he was taken to the Istishari Arab Hospital in Ramallah for treatment; his left leg was amputated the next day.

Ibrahim Mahmoud Ayash (19), from al-Nusairat refugee camp, in the Central Gaza Strip said to PCHR’s fieldworker:

“ At approximately 17:00, on 17 April 2018, while I was protesting at GMR, eastern Central Gaza Strip, I heard that a sound of a live bullet hit a child. I ran towards the wounded child who was screaming from the severity of pain, to find out that it was my neighbor Abdul Rahman Yamen Nofal (12) was hit with a live bullet to his left leg and was bleeding. I carried him and walked about 5 meters then one of the young men took him to the ambulance which was about 300 meters away from the border

fence. I sat on the floor to take a brief rest for seconds because my legs were trembling, then I joined him in the ambulance and headed to Shuhada' Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah. Then Abdulrahman was taken to the emergency department for first aids and medical examinations where the doctors told me that he is in a critical condition. After 15 minutes, Abdulrahmas was taken to al-Shifa' Hospital in the Gaza strip. On the next day, I headed there to see Abdulrahman when his parents told me that his condition was critical because his leg-bone was smashed, veins and arteries were ruptured, and he should be travel abroad to receive treatment. At approximately 23:00 of the same day, his father told me that Abdulrahman was taken to the Istishari Arab Hospital in Ramallah. On Thursday, 19 April 2018, I heard that his leg was amputated.”

#### Testimony No. (7):

##### **Woman's leg amputated due to iof shooting:**

- » On 14 May 2018, Nazeeha Alian Hasan Qudaih (39), from Khan Younis, was shot with a live bullet to her right leg, at GMR protest, eastern Central Gaza Strip governorate. As a result, her leg-bone was smashed, veins and arteries were ruptured. As a result, the doctors decided to amputate her leg. So she said to PCHR's fieldworker:

“ At approximately 17:00, on 14 May 2018, I headed to al-Awda refugee camp in Khuza'a, east of Khan Younis, where most of the protesters left the spot. I walked towards the border fence to see a woman with two children standing in front of an Israeli soldier. The Israeli soldier was pointing his gun at me and warned me not to approach, and then I felt a strong thing hit my right leg and that was so painful. A group of civilians came and put me in the ambulance to the medical point in the camp,

then to the European Hospital where I completely lost my conscious. On the next day, I woke up in the Department of Surgery to see that my right leg was amputated after the doctors took a permit from my parents. I stayed at the hospital until 20 May 2018, then I went back home using the “walker” for movement. This incident seriously affected my life; I used to play a main role in the house work but now I’m just trying to cope with my new reality. Furthermore, my brother Sohaib (31), who was married and living with us, suffered from the same conditions that I passed through, he injured on 30 March 2018 and after 8 days his right leg was amputated.”

**Testimony No. (8):**

**Child shot with a live bullet to the right thigh that penetrated his testicles and caused the need to remove 90% of them**

- » On 15 October 2018, Haitham Baha’ al-Deen Sharif al-Akkad (15), from Khan Younis, was shot with a live bullet to the right thigh while protesting in the GMR north of the Gaza Strip, which caused a testicles’ penetrated and 90% of them was eradicated.

Haitham told PCHR field worker:

“ At approximately 15:00, on Monday, 15 October 2018, I headed to join the GMR’s event at the sea side in Beit Lahya, north of Gaza Strip. When I arrived I saw hundreds of people setting tires on fire, 20 people and I walked towards the border fence and saw the Israeli soldiers standing on sand berms shooting live bullets and tear gas canisters and pointing their weapons at us. At approximately 17:00, I was standing about 3 meters away from the border fence, I felt an electric pulse in my right thigh and pelvis then I fell on the ground squirming in pain. Seconds later, a group of paramedics came



*and cut my trousers and gave me first aid, then they carried me to the ambulance to the field hospital, then to al-Shifa' Hospital where I saw dozens of injured people so I waited for two hours without any treatment or medical intervention. At approximately 21:00, I was transferred to Naser Medical Center in Khan Younis for a surgery that took three and a half hours. After waking up from anesthesia, I realized that I was shot with a live bullet which penetrated my right thigh which caused the removal of 90% of my testicles, in addition to some shrapnel in my left thigh. Two days later, I checked out of the hospital. Additionally, doctors from international organizations are still following-up my case, but I still feel the pain and difficulties in movement.”*

#### Testimony No. (9):

##### **Child Shot with a Live Bullet that Caused a Quadriplegic:**

- » On 01 June 2018, Nour al-Deen Ihab Abu Baker (14), from Gaza, was hit with a live bullet to his neck and back while protesting in GMR north of Gaza Strip that caused a quadriplegic.

Nour said to PCHR's fieldworker:

*“At approximately 13:30, on Friday, 01 June 2018, my nephew and I headed to al-Awda refugee camp, where I found an unlimited number of protesters, and we were about 400 meters away from the border fence. At approximately 16:30, the protesters started setting tires on fire near the border fence and threw stones at the Israeli soldiers. At approximately 17:30, while I was trying to hide behind a sand berm, I felt an electric pulse in my body. Suddenly, a group of people gathered and carried me to the ambulance then I was referred to al-Shifa' Hospital for treatment where I lost my conscious. Three days later, I woke up from the coma and realized that I was hit with a live bullet to*

*my shoulder and neck, resulted in a fracture in the third and fourth vertebrae which led to a quadriplegic. After spending 40 days in the intensive care, I was taken to al-Wafa' Hospital and stayed there for four months, then my father completed all the procedures to transfer me to Nasser Institute Hospital in Egypt. When I arrived to Egypt, the Palestinian Embassy in Egypt told me that the costs of the medical treatment was impossibly high and they cannot cover it, so I returned to Gaza Strip and still suffering from my disease and subjected to the physiotherapy sessions.”*



---

## **HEALTH SERVICES, REHABILITATION SERVICES, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL**

### **INTERVENTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES PARTICIPATING AT GMR**

The nature of health services, rehabilitation services, and psychological interventions that the injured and PWD participants at GMR received varies. These services the ambulance services through the medical centers in the eastern border areas, and transfer to the Gaza Strip hospitals to receive treatment, surgical interventions, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and nursing that they receive in the specialized medical centers. Due to the increasing number of casualties and injured, several stakeholders activated in order to provide them with the health, rehabilitation, and psychological services; including governmental authorities, international health organizations based in Gaza Strip, and domestic health and psychological organizations.

Nida' Abdu, physiotherapist and project coordinator of Nour Slovenia project at the Association of Disabled Persons<sup>9</sup>, said that they provided physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and nursing to (55) people injured at GMR including PWD sustained to amputations, and others sustained to multiple fractures that reconstructed by surgical intervention. Abdu added, through this project they contracted on fitting of prostheses for children who sustained to amputations at GMR, and this project provided assistive devices for the injured, included wheel chairs and crutches instead of providing drugs and medicines. Abdu showed that the project included physiotherapy services for injured who sustained nerve damage in order to rehabilitate the injured limb. The physiotherapy service continued for four months, and the wounded cases was followed up

---

<sup>9</sup> PCHR researcher interview with Ms. Abdu on 13 March 2019

by the project staff that also provided the home rehabilitation service for them.

Abdullah al-Hajjar, director of Assalama Charitable Society<sup>10</sup>, emphasized the existing level of formal and informal financing, devoted to providing drugs, treatments, and assistive devices for those injured at GMR including PWD, is not enough for the violations against Palestinians. Hajjar added that this never banned welfare and rehabilitation institutions from playing their role in treating the casualties, providing drugs and medicines, providing physiotherapy, and providing the needed assistive devices for them instead of following up the special cases by providing the home rehabilitation service for them. He also added, Assalama Charitable Society has (5) branches in Gaza which provided systematic services for those injured at GMR in the Gaza Strip. It also provided the assistive devices for those who injured at GMR from its beginning, such as: (5000 pairs of crutch, wheel chairs, electric chairs, walkers, respirators, 2000 prescriptions monthly, physiotherapy, and contribute to prosthetics fittings to those injured at GMR according to the funded projects which Assalama Charitable Society is implementing in the Gaza Strip). Hajjar stated that we are focusing on the rehabilitation in their environment to be accessible and professional training.

Mustafa Abed, director of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) community rehabilitation program, believes that all entities providing rehabilitation services in the Gaza Strip put together cannot meet even 15% of rehabilitation needs of PWD.

Dr. Wael Abu Rizk, executive director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation,

---

10 PCHR researcher interview with Mr. Abdullah al-Hajjar on 13 March 2019.

talked about the level of care and rehabilitation services that the PWD received, especially providing the assistive devices. Abu Rizk emphasized that the major burden is being borne by the specialized civil rehabilitation institutions that provide the assistive devices in light of the decline government services' level. Abu Rizk noted that PWD desperately need those assistive devices because they don't have any equipment to support them while moving.

Hasan Zeyada, psychologist and manager of the Gaza Community Center<sup>11</sup> at Gaza Community Mental Health Program (GCMHP), said: *"One of the hardest experiences that I ever faced that dozens of protesters at GMR who have been wounded, subjected to amputations which leaves both physical and mental scars. Amputation is a very painful experience, so those who faced a limb amputation always expressing their feelings and emotions as they are talking about someone else. Furthermore, they suffer from difficulties of acceptance and adaptation of the new reality which led to problems in communicating with their relatives and friends, then to psychiatric disturbances which can develop to post-traumatic stress disorder or psychological depression. These psychological effects can also negatively affect the people around them, as well as concerns about the future of this person and his role in his family. Meanwhile, the PWD need a special attention especially that they become more dependent on their family members in these difficult economic conditions"*. Dr. Zeyada added that the adaptability depends on many factors such as: personal characteristic, skills, abilities, value sense at the personal and community level, and social environment which is the family. If PWD was living in a supportive environment, this will contribute to increasing his coping abilities. Additionally, the community appreciation for PWD is so important in reducing the negative

---

11PCHR interview with Mr .Zeyada on 20 March.2019

impacts of the amputation experience.

Dr. Marwan Diab, researcher and head of the Research and Studies Unit of GCMHP<sup>12</sup>, said that most of those who were wounded at GMR are suffering from stress, depressed mood, loss of interest in previous routine activities, nervousness, fear, and anxiety. Dr. Diab added that among the wounded males, 63.3% suffered from PTSD, while 42.1% of women and 28.7% of men suffered from depressive disorder.

Qusai Abu Owda, Head of the Projects and Fundraising Department,<sup>13</sup> emphasized that GCMHP began to intervene between May and November 2018 on three axes: providing psychological aid services for those who were wounded at GMR and their families; therapeutic intervention through mobile clinics hosted in grassroots organizations and awareness and education activities. First aid efforts were carried out through house visits by our field teams in the five governorates in the Gaza Strip to discover the psychological disorders of those who were wounded at GMR and their families. During this period, 1797 house visits were carried out for 1797 wounded and 5849 visit to their families. Furthermore, 876 cases that needed a psychological intervene were referred to six field clinics, While 222 complicated cases were referred to the three branches of GCMHP in Gaza Strip, Central Gaza Strip, and Khan Younis. Abu-Owda added that about 14% of those who were wounded benefited from the psychological first aid services needed special services whether at the field clinics or the Community centers. And the other 34% of those who were wounded needed to refer to the specialized clinics, and 57% of the amputation cases who were visited need to be referred to the specialized clinics.

---

12 PCHR researcher interview with Dr. Diab on 20 March 2019.

13 PCHR researcher interview with Mr. Abu-Owda on 20 March 2019.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report showed the use of excessive and lethal forces by IOF stationed in the eastern border fence of the Gaza Strip against the peaceful participants at GMR, who did not impose any threat to the life of the Israeli soldiers. Dozens of IOF snipers heavily opened fire and teargas canisters at the peaceful protestors directly in violation of international human rights law, including the right to peaceful assembly according to Article (20) of UDHR, and Article (21) of ICCPR.

This report shows that IOF deliberately attacked Palestinian civilians directly without taking into account the principles of proportionality and distinction. This explains the large number of civilian casualties, including PWD participants at GMR on the eastern border fence of the Gaza Strip.

According to this, PCHR stresses the need to pressurize Israel to stop their violations against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, and guarantee freedom of peaceful assembly, and to shield PWD from any risks during their participation at legally guaranteed national events. PCHR calls upon:

- » The international community, and the High Contracting Parties to the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, and all the members of the UN bodies and the International organizations to pressurize IOF to stop their violations against the rules of international humanitarian law and IHRL, and stop the violations against the Palestinian civilians.
- » To guarantee compensation and redress to PWD and immediately stop all IOF violations; i.e. killings and injuries targeting them. Additionally, stop all violations against their care,

rehabilitation, and education institutions

- » To investigate seriously IOF crimes against Palestinian civilians, including the use of prohibited weapons according to IHL, and prosecute perpetrators of those crimes and bring them to international courts.
- » The competent government institutions and the Palestinian civil society institutions to provide the necessary health care and psychological assistance to PWD; as well as, the financial and technical assistance to PWD care and rehabilitation institutions to ensure their welfare especially those who were wounded at GMR.
- » To intervene immediately to force Israel to lift the closure it imposes on the Gaza Strip that restricts the movement of individuals and the goods; and rescue the Gaza population from economic strangulation caused by the Israeli policy of collective punishment and reprisals against civilians.

