

The Israeli Naval Blockade and Attacks on Fishermen in the Gaza Strip

Report



01 May 2019 – 30 June 2020

Introduction

This report addresses the Israeli-imposed blockade on the Gaza Strip and highlights the suffering of Palestinian fishermen while fishing in the Gaza Sea, in addition to the daily Israeli attacks against them. Through this, Israeli naval forces aim at restricting and preventing fishermen from practicing their work and even targeting their livelihood. Consequently, the fishing sector in the Gaza Strip has been unable to contribute effectively to the Palestinian economy, as its contribution in the Gross domestic product (GDP) remained very limited, comparing with previous years in which the fishing sector was a fast-growing sector.

This report monitors the reality of the fishermen's work after the Israeli occupation authorities allowed expanding the permitted fishing area partially(6-15 nautical miles) since the beginning of April 2019, stressing that despite expanding the fishing area, there is no positive impact on the fishermen's work, especially regarding the amount of fish production. This caused by the ongoing IOF's attacks against fishermen sailing within the permitted fishing area and restricting the expansion of the fishing area only to the area beyond the Gaza Valley (from Central to southern Gaza Strip), as this area is characterized by the scarcity of fish in it. Moreover, during the reporting period, Israeli authorities reduced the permitted fishing area to 3 nautical miles and completely closed the sea for more than 20 times. Israeli authorities also continued to restrict the entry of equipment and necessary supplies required for fishermen in the Gaza Strip.

The report documents IOF's attacks against fishermen in the Gaza Strip from 01 May 2019 to 30 June 2020: 133 shooting incidents were reported against fishermen while practicing their work, rendering 18 fishermen wounded and 8 fishing boats and dozens of fishing equipment damaged. Also, (15) fishermen were arrested, (8) fishing boats were detained and dozens of fishing nets were confiscated after Israeli naval forces chased the fishing boats. This confirms that expanding the allowed area for fishing by Israeli authorities from 6 to 15 nautical miles did not translate in cease on persecuting fishermen, chasing and shooting them at sea, and endangering their lives.

The report confirms that the Israeli occupation authorities still impose restrictions on the entry of equipment and necessary supplies for fishermen, including engines, gear (transmissions), fiberglass, steel cables and necessary spare parts for boats maintenance, under the pretext that they are "dual-use" materials, according to the Israeli classification, meaning that they are "intended for civilian use and are also suitable for military use."

The entry ban on spare parts required for building and maintaining boats led to closing dozens of workshops; as a limited number of which have continued to maintain fishing boats, while manufacturing new boats had completely suspended due to the lack of material.

The report indicates that restricting the permitted fishing area prevented fishermen from sailing and fishing freely, as half of the fishermen (2,000) practice their work intermittently, once a week or a month, because the income from their work does not cover their operational costs. This undermined the livelihoods of 4,160 fishermen and 700 workers in professions associated with the fishing sector i.e. the main providers for their families (a total of 27,700 persons).

Consequently, those fishermen and workers are effectively unable to provide their families' basic needs, such as food, medicine, clothing, and education.

The report considers the Israeli practices against Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip grave violation of all international conventions and agreements that affirm the right to work, especially the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Israeli attacks against fishermen are also considered as a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on Social Progress and Development that both guarantee the right of all the society members to productive and useful work.

Moreover, the Israeli attacks against Palestinian fishermen violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, which deals with the protection of civilians in time of war and affirms the need to protect workers and their rights.

First: The Fishing Sector in the Gaza Strip

The fishing sector in the Gaza Strip is still unable to effectively contribute in the Palestinian national economy, as its contribution to the Domestic Product remained limited due to several reasons: the Israeli-imposed blockade, reducing the permitted fishing area, Israeli daily attacks against fishermen while fishing, and lacking fishing equipment resulted from Israeli restrictions on the entry of these equipment required to practice their work.

1. Fishermen and Workers in Professions Associated with the Fishing Sector

According to the General Union of Fishing Workers in the Gaza Strip, the number of fishermen in the Gaza Strip's fishing sector reached (4.160) in addition to (700) traders and workers in professions associated with the fishing sector such as boat manufacture and maintenance, fishing net manufacture, Ice manufacture to preserve fish, and gutting and selling fish. They are distributed across the Gaza Strip governorates , as shown in the following table:

Table (1): the number of fishermen per Gaza Strip governorate in 2020

Area	Fishermen	Traders and workers in professions associated with the fishing se
Northern Gaza Strip	311	50
Gaza City	1547	300
Central Gaza Strip	801	100
Khan Yunis	915	150
Rafah	586	100
Total	4.160	700

2. Fishing Tools and Means

Fishermen in the Gaza Strip use various types of boats, including launches and canoes. Launches are large boats; whose length are from 20 to 24 meters and operate with inboard engines from 150 to 500 horsepower (HP). Canoes are small boats; whose length are from 6.5 to 7.5 meters and operate with outboard motors from 9 to55 HP.

According to the General Union of Fishing Workers in the Gaza Strip, the number of boats in the Gaza Strip reached (1.200), and distributed throughout the Gaza Strip governorates as follows: 85 boats in the northern Gaza Strip, 485 boats in Gaza City, 126 boats in the central Gaza Strip, 348 boats in Khan Yunis and 156 boats in Rafah.

Table (2): the number of boats and their types in the Gaza Strip in 2020

Area	Launches	Canoes	Total
Northern Gaza Strip	2٤0	85	85

Gaza City	85	400	485
Central Gaza Strip	1	125	126
Khan Yunis	8	340	348
Rafah	6	150	156
Total	100	1100	1200

3. Fish Production

According to the General Union of Fishing Workers in the Gaza Strip, the volume of fish production in 2019 was about 3,794 tons. This indicates that the dramatic increase in the number of fishermen and boats used in fishing did not lead to any slight increase in the fish production. However, fish production during the last 5 years significantly decreased compared to the years preceding the Israeli-imposed blockade on the Gaza Strip, as the volume of fish production in 2007 was about 5,000 tons. This goes back to the continued Israeli attacks against fishermen, including shooting, arresting and chasing them, and reducing the permitted area for sailing and fishing. The following is the volume of fish production in the Gaza Strip during the last five years (2015-2019).

Table (3): fish production in the Gaza Strip in recent years vs. 2007

Year	Volume of fish production/Tons
2007	5.000
2015	2.300
2016	2.550
2017	3.300
2018	3.038
2019	3.794

4. Fish exports

During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities allowed to export a very limited quantities of fish production to the West Bank market under strict restrictions. However, the low amount of fish production prevents the export in large quantities that achieve an acceptable profit return. According to information obtained by PCHR's fieldworker from the Fish Wealth Sector at the Ministry of Agriculture, the amount of fish exported to the West Bank in 2019 was about 459 tons, which is considered a high amount compared to previous years, while in 2018 it reached about 251 tons, in 2017 the quantity was 47.4 tons, and in 2016 was about 11.5 tons.

Table (4): the exports of fish from the Gaza Strip in recent years

Year	Volume of fish production/Tons
2019	459
2018	251

2017	47.4
2016	11.5

Eng. ‘Alaa al-Farra, from the Fish Wealth Sector at the Ministry of Agriculture, said to PCHR's fieldworker that that fish production in the Gaza Strip does not meet the needs of the local population, and because of that, about 4,500 tons of fish were imported during 2019 to meet the needs of the local population. Al-Farra stressed that exporting fish to the West Bank remains useless in light of the Israeli restrictions on the fishermen's work, preventing them from practicing their work freely, and enabling them to catch an economically-viable amount of fish that allow the Gaza Strip residents to meet their needs of fish and then export the surplus.

Second: Continued Naval Blockade and Obstruction of Fishermen's Work

Israeli authorities continued to impose naval blockade along the Gaza Strip shores, as they allowed sailing and fishing only within 3-15 nautical miles. Also, during the reporting period, Israeli authorities have reduced the permitted fishing area to 3 nautical miles, or completely closed the sea for more than 20 times. As a result, fishermen were denied access to the areas, where fish breeds¹.

According to PCHR's follow-up, despite Israeli authorities' permission to partially extend the permitted fishing on 01 April 2019, their policy towards fishermen has not changed. Israeli naval forces continued their attacks against fishermen sailing within the permitted fishing area. Dozens of shooting and chasing incidents against fishing boats were reported, causing injuries among fishermen, despite their sailing within the allowed fishing area.

Although more than one year has passed, a number of fishermen confirmed to PCHR's fieldworker that expanding the fishing area did not inflict a positive impact on their work, especially regarding the amount of fish production. This is due to a number of reasons, the most important of which are: the ongoing Israeli attacks against fishermen sailing within the permitted fishing area, imposing restrictions on the entry of tools and equipment required for fishermen, expanding fishing area where fish do not breed, and denying fishermen's access to areas where fish breeds, considering that sailing within 20 nautical miles is the feasible area for fishermen, where fish breeds.

Fisherman Hisham Baker, Head of al-Tawfiq Cooperative Society for Fishermen in the Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's fieldworker that the Israeli authorities' decision to expand the fishing area in the area beyond the Gaza Valley (from central to southern Gaza Strip) costs fishermen double fuel and labor, despite the fewer fish caught in the area due to the area's environment. Baker added that expanding fishing area to 20 nautical miles along the Gaza Shore (from north to south) is the suitable area for fishermen's work and economically viable way, as fish breeds in this area. Baker also emphasized that Israeli authorities deliberated to divide the sea water in order to continue fishermen's suffering and deprive them of facilities that would contribute to increasing fish production.

Third: Imposing Restrictions on the Entry of Fishing Tools and Equipment Required for Fishermen's Work

¹ In an unprecedented decision for the first time since 2000, Israeli forces announced on 01 April 2019, the expansion of the fishing area within the Gaza Sea between 6 -15 nautical miles. This came in implementation of the understandings between the Palestinian factions and the Israeli side under Egyptian auspices at the end of March 2019. The expansion of the fishing area was as follows: From Waha area, northern Gaza Strip – Gaza City sea port: 6 nautical miles; Gaza Sea port – Gaza Valley: 12 nautical miles; Gaza Valley – Northern Khan Yunis: 15 nautical miles; and Southern Khan Yunis – Rafah southern border: 12 nautical miles.

Since the announcement of this decision, the policy of the naval blockade and restricting the movement of fishermen has not changed. During the reporting period, the Israeli occupation authorities have reduced the fishing area to 3 nautical miles, or completely closed the sea for more than 20 times. Additionally, Israeli naval forces continued to target fishermen while sailing in the permitted fishing area.

Israeli authorities continue to impose restrictions on the entry of fishing equipment and tools required for fishermen. As a result, fishermen became unable to sail within 15 nautical miles especially when Israeli authorities allow them to do so, due to the lack of equipment that allow them to sail up to 15 nautical miles. It should be noted that this equipment is not available in the Gaza Strip due to Israeli restrictions on its entry. The equipment that the Israeli authorities ban its entry to the Gaza Strip, are: boat engines, gear (transmission), gauze and dozens of vital materials for boats maintenance, including fiberglass, steel cables and spare parts, under the pretext that they are "dual-use" materials, according to the Israeli classification, meaning that they are "intended for civilian use and are also suitable for military use."

Moreover, the entry ban of spare parts required for building and maintaining boats led to closing dozens of workshops; only a limited number of which have continued to maintain fishing boats, while manufacturing new boats had completely suspended due to the lack of material.

A number of workers in the boat manufacture and maintenance workshops told the PCHR's fieldworker that the current demand for repair and maintenance of boats is only due to the lack of sufficient materials to manufacture new boats, and because of the inability of fishermen to bear the costs of manufacturing new boats, as the price of spare parts has multiplied several times. As a result, the fishermen became unable to buy new boats in the light of depriving them of fishing freely, chasing them, damaging their boats, and confiscating them.

Due to the lack of boats' spare parts, there are now about 250 "canoes" and 5 "launches" in the Gaza Strip, are damaged. Zakaria Baker, Coordinator of Fishermen Committees in the UAWC, said that fishing boats in the Gaza Strip need about 300 engines, and there is no single engine in the Gaza market due to the Israeli authorities' ban entry of spare parts since 2006. Baker stressed that the Israeli authorities ban the entry of all materials required to boats manufacture, such as wood - fiberglass – gauze. As a result, boat-making profession in Gaza has suspended.

Baker also indicated that at the end of 2019, the Israeli authorities released 66 boats; some of these boats were severely damaged or lacked engines when returned. Baker emphasized that expanding the fishing area from 6 to 15 nautical miles did not inflict positive impact on the fishermen, because they could not sail up to 15 nautical miles due to the lack of fishing equipment and tool, which are not available in the Gaza Strip. Baker pointed out that only 3 boats can sail within 15 miles, while the other boats cannot do so.

Fisherman Hisham Baker, Head of al-Tawfiq Cooperative Society for Fishermen in the Gaza Strip, said the due to the ongoing entry ban of equipment and necessary supplies for fishermen such as fishing tools and spare parts required to maintain fishing boats, hundreds of fishermen became unemployed and unable to fish and sail. Baker added that the entry ban of such equipment and tools deprived fishermen of the benefit of a project implemented by an international institution that aims at repairing the damaged boats by replacing the fiberglass material intended for making boats with another material.

Fisherman ,Mohammed Hasan 'Abed al-Aqra', said to PCHR's fieldworker that he suffers from the high prices of materials and equipment he needs to maintain his boat, especially the engine that has become old and frequently disrupted. Also, he cannot buy a new engine because of its high price in Gaza after Israeli authorities banned the entry of boats' engines from several years. The price of boat engine in Gaza become became about \$9,000, while his price in Egypt is less than \$4,000. Al-Aqra' indicated that maintaining the engine of his boat every period cost him NIS 1,400 (\$ 400) , and this was repeated 4 times. As a result, he was forced to borrow a money estimated at NIS 6000 (\$1,700) to maintain the engine. Al-Aqra' confirmed that he currently owns only 6 fishing nets, and he cannot buy others because of their high price in the Gaza Strip.

Fisherman, 'Adel Yousef Hasan al-Hosh, said to PCHR's fieldworker that the price of tools and equipment required for fishermen has significantly increased, as the price of fishing nets designated for catching some fish was estimated at NIS 600, after it was NIS 300. Also, the price of fiberglass has increased from NIS 20 to NIS 100 shekels as well as the price of boat engine price from \$4,000 to \$9,000. The high price of fishing tools and equipment was due to the Israeli authorities' entry ban of boats' engines into the Gaza Strip.

Fourth. The Israeli attacks against the Palestinian fishermen while on duty

During the reporting period, the Israeli naval forces have continued their attacks against Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip. The most prominent of which; the continued entries of the Israeli naval forces into the Gaza sea, heavily opening fire against the Palestinian fishing boats in attempt to cause fear and panic among Palestinian fishermen, forcing them to flee from the allowed fishing area, and preventing them from practicing their work freely and safely. After confiscating the Palestinian fishermen's boats, the Israeli occupying forces insults, humiliates, violates and put their lives in danger deliberately, as number of the Palestinian fishermen were injured or arrested, and their boats and fishing equipment were confiscated. Most of these violations were carried out without any justifications, prior notices or warnings.

The Israeli naval forces kept restricting, prosecuting, violating and attacking the Palestinian fishermen, and forcing them to sail towards Ashdod seaport to be detained there, so they were deployed adjacent to the north of the Gaza Strip, Gaza Strip, Central Gaza Strip, Khan Younis and Rafah offshores.

According to PCHR's follow-ups, most of the attack against Palestinian fishermen were carried out in the allowed fishing areas within 3-15 nautical miles, even if the Palestinian fishermen were not posing any threaten or danger at the Israeli naval forces' lives. They deliberately caused fear and panic among Palestinian fishermen through shooting in the allowed fishing areas, which force them to flee. That reflected negatively on the fishermen's lives and their families due to the deterioration of their economic and social conditions.

Despite expanding the allowed fishing area within 6 – 15 nautical miles, since the beginning of April 2019; the Israeli naval forces kept prosecuting and opening fire against Palestinian fishermen and put their lives in danger.

During the reporting period, PCHR documented (133) attacks against Palestinian fishermen while sailing and fishing, resulted in (18) fishermen were wounded, (8) fishing boats and equipment were damaged, (15) fishermen were arrested, and (8) fishing boats and nets were confiscated.

1. 18 fishermen wounded while fishing

During the reporting period, the Israeli naval forces prosecuted Palestinian fishermen, and opened fire directly against them while fishing at the Gaza sea, even if they were existing in the allowed fishing area. As a result, 18 Palestinian fishermen were wounded in deferent parts of their bodies. Following is a record of the Israeli shootings that resulted in wounding Palestinian fishermen:

- At approximately 07:15, on 01 May 2019, Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to al-Waha resort, northwest of Beit Lahya, north of the Gaza Strip. They prosecuted and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 3 nautical miles. As a result, Mohammed Basheer Sha'ban Abu Riyala (24), were shot with a rubber bullet to his back. Mohammed was taken to al-Shifa' medical center in the Gaza Strip, and his injury was described as minor.
- At approximately 21:00, on 25 June 2019, the Israeli naval forces prosecuted a Palestinian fishing boat belonging to the sons of Akram Jameel al-Nada, manned by his son, Hazem (16), and Mohammed Hisham al-Nahhal (25), sailing within 3 nautical miles off the Rafah shore, south of the Gaza Strip. They opened water pumps against the Palestinian fishing boat, resulted in wounds to Mohammed Hashim al-Nahhal's face, chest, and lower limbs. AL-Nahhal said that he got on the top of the boat then he lost his consciousness, and another fisherman was sailing close to him drove his boat to the seashore and then he was taken to Abu Yousef al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah, before he was referred to the European Hospital in Khan Younis for treatment, where his injury was described as medium.
- At approximately 15:30, on 3 February 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed at west of Khan Younis offshore, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 10 nautical miles in north Khan Younis and south Deir al-Balah. They surrounded a Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 7 nautical miles heading to Deir al-Balah, manned by (3) fishermen including a child; Ramadan Ali Salah (44), his nephew Ali Wael Salah (14), and their cousin Majed Mahmoud Miqdad (48), from al-Shati' refugee camp, in the Gaza Strip. They ordered the Palestinian fishermen to take their clothes off, jump into the water, and swim towards the gunboat in order to arrest

them and confiscate their boat. Ramadan said to PCHR's fieldworker that they were attacked with rubber bullets that injured his left leg, and Majed's back was attacked.

- At approximately 09:30, on 04 February 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed at Khan Younis offshore, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire and water pumps at Palestinian fishing boats sailing in the allowed fishing area within 6 - 10 nautical miles. As a result, Yaser Zaki Mohammed al-Lahham (35), was wounded as his left-hand's finger was fractured. Al-Lahham was taken to al-Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis.
- At approximately 07:50, on 09 April 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed northwest of Beit Lahya offshore, north of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 3 nautical miles. The fishermen, Abbei Adel Mohammed Jarboua' (21), and Ahmed Abdul Fattah Ahmed al-Shrafi (23), from al-Shati' refugee camp, were attacked with rubber bullets in different parts of their bodies and taken to the Indonesian Hospital. Their injuries were described as minor.
- At approximately 09:30, on 21 April 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed northwest of Beit Lahya offshore, north of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 3 nautical miles, belonging to Fahed Zeyad Hasan Bakr (43), from al-Shati' refugee camp, west of the Gaza Strip. As a result, Fahd's son, Zeyad (25), was attacked with a rubber bullet to his head, and he was taken to al-Shifa' medical center in the Gaza Strip, where his injury was described as minor.
- At approximately 08:30, on 08 May 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed northwest of Beit Lahya offshore, north of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted, heavily opened fire and water pumps at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 2 nautical miles. As a result, 3 fishermen were wounded and taken to al-Shifa' medical center in the Gaza Strip. Majed Fadel Hasan Bakr (59), was hit with a rubber bullet to his head; Mohammed Emran Sabri Bakr (26), was targeted with a rubber bullet to his hand; and Mohammed Suhail Bakr (25), was hit with water pumps caused bruises to his neck.

Mohammed Emran Sabri Bakr said to PCHR's fieldworker that: *"at approximately 05:00, I went fishing with my 3 brothers using our fishing boat. At approximately 09:00, the Israeli naval forces prosecuted and opened fire at us. Meanwhile, an Israeli gunboat approached, and the soldiers ordered us to take our clothes off and pumped wastewater at us, note that we were sailing in the allowed fishing area. As a result, I was hit with a rubber bullet and other bruises, the boat engine was damaged, and I waited for about 3 hours until other Palestinian fishermen were able to reach us for help"*.

- At approximately 07:45, on 12 May 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to Beit Lahya offshore, north of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire at a Palestinian

fishing boat sailing within 3 nautical miles. As a result, Nidal Ashraf Mahmoud al-Hissi (24), from Jabalis al-Nazla, was targeted with a rubber bullet to his left shoulder, and then he was taken to the Indonesian Hospital, where his injury was described as minor.

- At approximately 05:30, on 15 May 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to Beit Lahya offshore, north of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire at a Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 3 nautical miles. As a result, two fishermen from al-Shati' refugee camp, west of the Gaza Strip, were wounded; Ahmed Mousa Ramadan Abu 'Amira (24), hit with a rubber bullet to his head, and Nidal Mousa Ramadan Abu 'Amira (38), hit with several rubber bullets.

Nidal Mousa Ramadan Abu 'Amira said to PCHR's fieldworker that: "*at approximately 04:30, I went for fishing along with my brother Ahmed, and my son Mohammed, as we sailed within 3 nautical miles in al-Waha resort adjacent to Beit Lahya offshore. At approximately 05:30, the Israeli gunboats approached, and opened fire against us. As a result, my brother was hit with a rubber bullet to his head and lost his consciousness, and the boat engine was damaged. Furthermore, they ripped our 600-meters fishing nets. 15 minutes later, two Palestinian fishing boats reached to us; one to help my brother, and the other one to pull our damaged boat. Meanwhile, the Israeli gunboats targeted us again, so I was hit with several rubber bullets to my leg and left hand, and we were taken to al-Shifa' Hospital where my brother's injury was described as medium*".

2. 15 Palestinian fishermen were arrested while fishing

The Israeli naval forces carried out dozens of prosecutions against the Palestinian fishermen while on duty and arrested 15 fishermen. Following is a number of the Israeli prosecutions that resulted in arresting the Palestinian fishermen:

- At approximately 07:15, on 01 May 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to al-Waha resort, northwest of Beit Lahya, north of the Gaza Strip, chased and heavily opened fire against Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 3 nautical miles. They surrounded a fishing boat belonging to Saleh Mohammed Abu Riyala (48), from al-Shati' refugee camp, west of the Gaza Strip, along with his son Hazem (28), and Khaled Rajab Abu Riyala (24). The Israeli naval forces ordered them to take their clothes off and jump into the water and swim towards the gunboat in order to arrest them.
- At approximately 21:00, on 25 June 2020, the Israeli naval forces prosecuted and opened fire against a Palestinian fishing boat belonging to the sons of Akram Jameel al-Nada, manned by his son, Hazem (16), and Mohammed Hisham al-Nahhal (25), sailing within 3 nautical miles off the Rafah shore, south of the Gaza Strip. They opened water pumps against the Palestinian fishing boat, resulted in falling Mohammed Hashim al-Nahhal into the water and arresting him. At approximately 07:00, on Wednesday, 26 June 2019, the

Israeli authorities released Hazem via Beit Hanoun crossing “Erez”, north of the Gaza Strip.

- At approximately 20:00, on 25 June 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to the west of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, chased and opened fire against a Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 6 nautical miles. As a result, the boat was damaged, and two fishermen were arrested; Mohammed Nidal Ibrahim Ayyash (23) and his brother Mos’ab (20), from Deir al-Balah. At approximately 06:00, the Israeli authorities released them via Beit Hanoun crossing “Erez”, north of the Gaza Strip.
- At approximately 06:30, on 13 July 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to the Rafah offshore, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire against a Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 6 nautical miles. They surrounded the boat and arrested Mohammed Isma’el al-Bardawil (40), and his nephew Ahmed Wael al-Bardawil (16), from Izbet al-Bardawil in al-Mawasi, west of Rafah, after ordering them to take their clothes off and jump into the water. The Israeli naval forces arrested them and confiscated their boat, then released them at approximately 18:00, via Beit Hanoun crossing “Erez”, north of the Gaza Strip.
- At approximately 22:00, on 21 July 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to the Rafah offshore, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire against a Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 4 nautical miles. They surrounded the boat and arrested the fishermen on it; Issam nabil al-Aqra’ (29), and his brother Reyad (23), from Deir al-Balah. The Israeli naval forces ordered them to take their clothes off and jump into the water and swim towards the gunboat, in order to arrest them and confiscate their boat. At approximately 07:00, on 22 July 2019, the Israeli authorities released them via Beit Hanoun crossing “Erez”, north of the Gaza Strip.
- At approximately 11:00, on 06 August 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to the Rafah offshore, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire against a Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 6 nautical miles. They surrounded the boat and arrested the fisherman Awad Tareq Abdul Razik Bakr (22), from al-Rimal neighborhood. Bakr was taken to an unknown destination.
- At approximately 15:30, on 03 February 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to the west of Khan Younis offshore, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire against a Palestinian fishing boats sailing in the allowed fishing area within 10 nautical miles. They surrounded a fishing boat sailing within 7 nautical miles heading to Deir al-Balah, and arrested (3) fishermen on it including a child; Ramadan Ali Mohammed Salah (44), his nephew Ali Wael Salah (14), and their cousin Majed Mahmud Miqdad (48), from al-Shati’ refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli gunboats ordered them to take

their clothes off and jump into the water and swim towards the gunboat in order to arrest them and confiscate their boat and took them to Ashdod seaport for investigation and released them at approximately 23:30. The Israeli authorities kept the fishing boat confiscated.

- At approximately 09:30, on 13 May 2020, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to northwest of Beit Lahya offshore, north of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire against the Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 3 nautical miles. They caused fear and panic among the Palestinian fishermen and forced them to flee. At approximately 11:00, the families of the fishermen, Mohammed Abdul Razik Sa'eed Bakr (49), and Mahmoud Aziz Radwan Bakr (32), received phone calls from the Israeli Intelligence Services to inform them that the abovementioned fishermen are under arrest and they were taken to Ashkelon investigation center.

Mohammed Abdul Razik Bakr's son, Thabet (25), said to PCHR's fieldworker that: *"At approximately 16:00, on 12 May 2020, Thursday evening, my father, Mohammed, went for fishing along with the fisherman Mahmoud Bakr, using a 40-horse fishing boat engine. Lately, we were surprised to receive a phone call from the Israeli Intelligence Services to inform us that they were arrested, and we still do not know how or when were they arrested"*.

3. 8 fishing boats and equipment were confiscated

In the reporting period, the Israeli naval forces have continued restricting, chasing, violating and attacking the Palestinian fishermen, and forcing them to sail towards Ashdod seaport to be detained there. They have continued confiscating fishing boats and equipment, even in the allowed fishing limits, where 8 fishing boats and dozens of fishing nets and equipment were confiscated. Following is a documentation of these incidents:

- At approximately 07:15, on 01 May 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed adjacent to the Waha resort, northwest of Beit Lahya, north of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 3 nautical miles. They surrounded a fishing boat belonging to Saleh Mohammed Ibrahim Abu Riyala (48), from al-Shati' refugee camp, west of the Gaza Strip, along with his son Hazem (28), and Khaled Rajab Abu Riyala (24). The Israeli naval forces ordered them to take their clothes off and jump into the water and swim towards the gunboat in order to arrest them and confiscated their boat. The fishermen were taken to an unknown destination.
- At approximately 23:00, on 24 June 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed in the sea, west of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted, opened fire and water pumps at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 3 nautical miles. Emad al-Dein Mansour (29),

from Tal al-Sultan neighborhood, west of Rafah, said that the Israeli forces confiscated 10 pieces of fishing nets, equals 555 meters long, and cost around (5,500 NIS).

- At approximately 06:30, on 13 July 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed in the sea, west of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 6 nautical miles. They surrounded an engine-damaged fishing boat, while Mohammed Ismael al-Bardawil (40), and his nephew Ahmed (16), were fishing on it. The Israeli naval forces ordered them to take their clothes off and jump into the water in order to arrest them and confiscate their boat.
- At approximately 22:00, on 21 July 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed in the sea, west of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, prosecuted and opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 4 nautical miles. They surrounded a fishing boat belonging to Issam Nabil Nayef al-Aqra' (29), and his brother Reyad (23), from Deir al-Balah. The Israeli naval forces ordered them to take their clothes off, jump into the water and swim towards the gunboat in order to arrest them and confiscate their boat.
- At approximately 11:00, on 06 August 2019, the Israeli naval forces stationed in the Gaza seaport, west of the Gaza Strip, heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 6 nautical miles. They surrounded a fishing boat manned by Awad Tareq Abdul Razik Bakr (22), from al-Rimal neighborhood. As a result, the boat that belongs to his brother Amjad was damaged and confiscated, the abovementioned fisherman was arrested and taken to an unknown destination.
- At approximately 13:00 on 03 February 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed west of Rafah in southern Gaza Strip, chased and opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within the allowed fishing area (5 nautical miles). They also pumped water at the fishing boats and banned fishermen from withdrawing their fishing nets and confiscated them. Fisherman Tareq Zeyad Ahmed Hasan Kaskin (32), from al-Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City, said that Israeli soldiers confiscated 4 fishing nets with a total length of 480 meters in which he used while he was on a boat board of a fishing boat along with his brother Amir (32) and Mohammed Mahdi Abu Ryalah (17). IOF also confiscated 17 fishing nets owned by fisherman Mohammed Ismail Mohammed Abu Dghaim, from Deir al-Balah, who was on a small boat board with other 2 fishermen.
- At approximately 15:30 on 03 February 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed west of Khan Younis in southern Gaza Strip, opened fire at the Palestinian fishing boats sailing within the allowed fishing area (10 nautical miles) and chased fishing boats north of Khan Younis shore and south of Deir al-Balah. The gunboats surrounded a fishing boat sailing within 7 nautical miles where 3 fishermen were on board and identified as Ramadan 'Ali

Salah (44), his nephew ‘Ali Wael Salah (14) and Majed Mahmoud Meqdad (48), all of them from the Shati’ Refugee camp in Gaza City. The Israeli soldiers ordered them to jump into the water; they were arrested, and the boat was seized and taken to Ashdod Seaport. During the chase, the gunboats drowned 22 fishing nets belonging to Mos’ab Isma’il Abu Dgheim. At approximately 23:30 on the same day, IOF released the 3 fishermen via the Beit Hanoun “Erez” crossing in the northern Gaza Strip, but kept the fishing boat under custody. Ramadan ‘Ali Mahmoud Salah, one of the released fishermen, said to a PCHR fieldworker that the Israeli gunboats fired rubber bullets at them, and he was shot in his left foot and Majed Meqdad in the back. The Israeli soldiers ordered them to jump into the water; they were arrested, taken to Ashdod Seaport and interrogated until 23:30 when they were released. The boat is still in confiscation.

- At approximately 06:00 on 29 March 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed northwest of Beit Lahia in northern Gaza Strip, chased and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within the allowed fishing area (3 nautical miles). As a result, fisherman Khalil Mohsen Khalil Abu Ryalah (25), from al-Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City, was shot with a rubber bullet in his face. Israeli gunboats also confiscated 15 fishing nets owned by fisherman Mahmoud Khalil Abu Ryalah(33).

4. Damaging 8 Fishing Boats and Number of Fishing Equipment

During the reporting period, Israeli naval forces constantly and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats, causing damage to 8 fishing boats, in addition to dozens of fishing nets and other equipment. PCHR documented these incidents as following:

- At approximately 21:00 on 25 June 2020, Israeli gunboats chased a fishing boat belonging to the heirs of fisherman Akram Jamil al-Nada. The boat, which was manned by Akram’s son Hazem (16) and Mohammed Hesham Ahmed al-Nahal (25), were sailing off Rafah shore within 3 nautical miles. The Israeli soldiers pumped water towards the fishing boat. As a result, the fishermen fell into the water and Hazem was arrested and taken to the Israeli gunboat.
- At approximately 22:00 on 25 June 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed west of Rafah in southern Gaza Strip, opened fire at a fishing boat sailing within the allowed fishing area (6 nautical miles). The boat was manned by 2 fishermen namely: Mohammed Nedal Ibrahim Ayash (23) and his brother Mos’ab (20), from Deir al-Blah. The shooting caused severe damage to the boat. A number of fishermen managed to drag the boat to the shore after it was broken.
- At approximately 04:00 on 05 August 2019, Israeli gunboats stationed off Sheikh ‘Ejlin shore in southern Gaza Strip, opened fire and pumped water at 2 Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 7 nautical miles. As a result, Abdullah Mefleh Khalil Abu Rayalah (13) fell

in water in addition to 2 engines from the boat belonging to Falah Mohammed Abu Ryalah; and 12 fishing nets from the boat that belongs to Mohsen Khalil Abu Ryalah.

- At approximately 11:00 on 06 August 2019, Israeli gunboats stationed west of Gaza City, heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 6 nautical miles. They surrounded a fishing boat manned by ‘Awad Tareq Abdul Razeq Baker (22), from al-Remal neighborhood, and owned by his brother Majd. As a result, the boat was broken and confiscated, and Baker was arrested.
- At approximately 09:15 on 19 December 2019, Israeli gunboats stationed in northwest of Beit Lahia, in northern Gaza Strip, pumped water at a fishing boat that was moored at a distance of 2 nautical miles. The boat is owned by Zuhair Abdul Rahman Zuhair al-Amoudi (21), from al-Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City. As a result, the boats sustained damage, including 6 searchlights, a generator, and a number of fishing nets in the area.
- At approximately 15:30 on 03 February 2019, Israeli gunboats stationed off Deir al-Balah shore opened fire at the Palestinian fishing boats sailing within the allowed fishing area (10 nautical miles). Israeli gunboats chased the fishing boats north of Khan Younis shore and south of Deir al-Balah. During the chase, the gunboats drowned 22 fishing nets belonging to Mos'ab Isma'il Abu Dgheim.
- At approximately 04:10 on 22 March 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed northwest of Beit Lahia shore, west of al-Sudaniyah shore, and west of Jabalia in northern Gaza Strip, chased and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within the allowed fishing area (2 – 3 nautical miles). They also fired a number of artillery shells, causing damage to a number of fishing nets.
- At approximately 08:50 on 25 March 2020, IOF gunboats stationed northwest of Beit Lahia in northern Gaza Strip, chased and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 2 nautical miles. As a result, a fishing boat owned by fisherman Samer Husam Mohammed Baker (30) from al-Shati refugee camp, sustained damage. The boat's engine was broken, and its structure was targeted with several live bullets during the abovementioned attack.
- At approximately 07:00 on 02 April 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed west of Gaza shore, chased at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within the allowed fishing area (4 nautical miles). The gunboats also heavily opened fire at a Palestinian fishing boat sailing within 4 nautical miles, west of Gaza City, owned by fisherman Ahmed Shaban al-Hesi (69) and manned by 3 fishermen. The direct shooting caused severe damage to the boat that was broken.

- At approximately 13:30 on 18 April 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed at sea off al-Balakhayah area, northwest of Gaza City, chased and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within the allowed fishing area (4 nautical miles). As a result, a fishing boat owned by Ahmed Ahmed Hasan Zedan (29), from al-Shati refugee camp, sustained live bullets. As a result, the boat was broken. Fishermen also panicked and sailed back to the shore fearing for their lives. No casualties were reported.
- At approximately 09:30 on 21 April 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed northwest of Beit Lahia in northern Gaza Strip, chased and opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within the allowed fishing area (3 nautical miles). As a result, a fishing boat's engine was broken owned by fisherman Fahed Ziyad Hasan Baker (43), from al-Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City. IOF surrounded and opened fire at the boat for 10 minutes and withdrew after that. Palestinian fishermen managed to drag the boat to Gaza Sea port.
- At approximately 08:30 on 08 May 2020, Israeli naval forces stationed northwest of Beit Lahia in northern Gaza Strip, chased and surrounded Palestinian fishing boats while the latter sailed at 2 nautical miles. Israeli naval forces heavily fired live and rubber bullets and pumped wastewater at the fishing boats. As a result, 2 fishing boats were damaged; the first one, property of Hasan Baker, sustained several bullets that damaged it and its engine, while the second boat, property of Sabri Mahmoud Sa'ied Baker, sustained several bullets that damaged it and its engine as well. The fishermen were able to pull the damaged boats.
- At approximately 07:50 on 10 May 2020, Israeli gunboats stationed northwest of Beit Lahia in northern Gaza Strip, chased and heavily opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats sailing within 3 nautical miles. As a result, a number of boats' fishing nets were damaged.
- At approximately 05:30 on 15 May 2020, Israeli naval forces stationed northwest of Beit Lahia in northern Gaza Strip, chased Palestinian fishing boats while the latter sailed at 3 nautical miles and heavily fired live and rubber bullets at them. As a result, 2 fishermen, from al-Shati' refugee camp in western Gaza City, were wounded and identified as: Ahmed Mousa Ramadan Abu 'Amirah (24) and Nidal Mousa Ramadan Abu 'Amirah (38). Furthermore, the fishing boat's engine sustained partial damage and 11 fishing nets were lost and damaged.

Fifth: Deterioration of Fishermen's Economic and Social Conditions in the Gaza Strip

The Israeli imposed closure on the Gaza Strip, restricting the fishing area to limited distances, and depriving fishermen from fishing freely due to the Israeli continued attacks against them caused deterioration of economic and social conditions for about 4,160 fishermen and about 700 workers in professions that are associated with fishing in the Gaza Strip, such as boat-

maintenance, wholesale and retail sale of fish, and cleaning fish. It is estimated that fishermen and workers in professions that are associated with fishing currently support 27,702 other persons (based on an average household size of 5.7 people in Gaza City). Furthermore, the rare occurrence of fish in fishing zone where Israeli authorities allow fishing caused fishermen not to fish daily. According to estimations of the Fishermen's Syndicate, half of fishermen (only 2,000) registered fish on a daily basis while the remaining 1,700 work sporadically, around once a month, because the income they generate does not cover their operating costs.

Fisherman Mohammed Hasan Abed al-Aqra'a (57), who is married and father for 10 children from Deir al-Balah, said to PCHR's fieldworker:

"I have been a fisherman for 40 years. we fish small amounts of fish due to the Israeli imposed naval blockade on the Gaza Sea and Israeli gunboats pursue us during our fishing. IOF limit the fishing area for few miles in areas where there is no fish. I work from 7 – 10 days per month and I earn little money from my fishing. I am registered as an aid recipient at the Ministry of Social Affairs as I received NIS 1,400 every 4 months, which is barely cover my family's basic needs. We borrow food supply from the grocery store. We also buy second-hand clothes. As a result of that, my children suffered very bad psychological condition and they spend most of the time alone. My son Jamal finished a diploma in Nursing, because we could not pay him the certificate fees which are about JD1,500. My daughter Samar (32), finished a diploma in Secretary at Gaza Community College for Tourism and Applied Studies, because we couldn't pay her certificate fees which are JD 850. My daughter Abeer (19), is a first-year student in the Faculty of Law at Palestine University. We paid her the first semester fees but could not pay the second semester fees. My son Isamil (10) suffers from a muscle weakness. Ismail suffers from lipoma that appears throughout his body and needs medical examinations that I cannot afford. I have 4 sons who want to get married and start their families, but they can't because they don't work. in addition, we live in a 60-meter house and we suffer from poor living conditions."

Fisherman Adel Yusuf Hasan al-Housh (39), who is married and father of 4 children from Deir al-Balah- camp, said to PCHR's fieldworker:

"I have been a fisherman for 25 years. My brothers and I own a fishing boat with 40 HP motor. We fish small amounts of fish due to the Israeli imposed naval blockade on the Gaza Sea and limited areas of fishing. Israeli gunboats also pursue our boats during our fishing. Due to the high costs of the workday in fishing and limiting the areas of fishing, I only work for 7 – 10 days per month and earn NIS 400 – 500 monthly, which doesn't cover our basic needs. I could not buy the school uniform or clothes for occasions for my children, so they had to wear the old ones. We only buy the second-hand clothes. If our relatives have a happy or sad occasion, most of us don't go for not having the transportation costs. I also don't have a health insurance and receive medical treatment by the UNRWA clinics. I owe more than 5000 to people for maintaining my boat's engine and purchasing fishing nets."

Fisherman Wa'el Rasmi Mustafa al-Qar'an (40), who is married and father of 4 children from Deir al-Balah in central Gaza Strip, said to PCHR's fieldworker:

"I have been a fisherman for 25 years. I work at a fishing boat owned by my father and I get paid for my working days. Like other fishermen, we suffer from small amounts of fishing due the Israeli imposed blockade and limited area of fishing. Israeli gunboats also chase our boats while fishing. I earn NIS 500 per month at the best of times, which doesn't cover our basic needs. As for clothes, I buy second-hand clothes for my children as I have not bought any clothes for 7 years. due to the inconvenient income I receive from fishing, I am demined of having an adequate housing. My wife and 4 children and I live in a 40-meter place, which is part of the family's house that is built on an area of 300 meters where my father and brothers and their families live in it."

Fisherman Hasan Khader Baker (38), who is married and father of 4 sons from Deir al-Balah, said to PCHR's fieldworker:

"I own a boat where my brothers and I work and earn from NIS 70 to 100 daily, which doesn't cover the basic needs for my family comprised of my mother and brothers and their families (22 individuals). Israeli gunboats always pursue our boat, pump wastewater at us and fire live and rubber bullets at us. In 2011, I was arrested and my boat, which contained fishing equipment, was confiscated. IOF later released me and kept my fishing boat under custody. After that, I worked on other fishermen's boats until 2012, as I obtained a boat by international donors. I became very careful I go fishing and don't sail far than 3 to 4 nautical miles of the shore. When I see fishing boats, I sail back to the shore, leave the sea, and return home without any income fearing that I would be arrested, or my boat may get confiscated. My boat is the only source of income for my family comprised of my children, my mother and brothers."

Fishermen's statements affirm that limiting the fishing area, denying fishermen from fishing freely and IOF's continued attacks against them while fishing has affected their living conditions as they failed to provide the basic needs for their families and became unable to provide food, medicine, and clothes for their children.

Conclusion

The continued Israeli naval attacks against Palestinian fishermen and the fishing sector violate the rules of international humanitarian law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention. Additionally, the systematic restrictions on fishermen's freedom of movement constitute a form of collective punishment, prohibited under the international humanitarian law (IHL) as it compromises their means of livelihood.

The Israeli practices against Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip violate international conventions and treaties that stress the right to work. Article 6.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) stipulates that *"The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right."* It is also affirmed under Article 1.2 of the same convention, *"All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence."*

Article 23.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stresses that: *"Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment;"* Additionally, the Israeli systematic policies against Palestinian fishermen contradict with the rules of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, especially Article 52 which stipulates that *"All measures aiming at creating unemployment or at restricting the opportunities offered to workers in an occupied territory, in order to induce them to work for the Occupying Power, are prohibited."*

IOF's practices against Palestinian fishermen also violate the provisions of Article (6) of the universal Declaration of Human Rights: *"Social development requires the assurance to every one of the right to work and the free choice of employment. Social progress and development require the participation of all members of society in productive and socially useful labor."* Furthermore, the continued attacks on the fishing sector are considered a breach of Article 10 of UDHR, *"the assurance at all levels of the right to work and the right of everyone to form trade unions and workers' associations and to bargain collectively; promotion of full productive employment and elimination of unemployment and under-employment; establishment of equitable and favorable conditions of work for all, including the improvement of health and safety conditions; assurance of just remuneration for labor without any discrimination as well as a sufficiently high minimum wage to ensure a decent standard of living; the protection of the consumer."*

In light of the above, PCHR calls upon the:

- International Community, especially the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to

intervene immediately and pressurize Israeli authorities to cease all violations against Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip, and allow them to sail and fish freely within their regional waters;

- International Community to intervene quickly to release all property confiscated by Israeli naval forces including fishing boats and equipment; and to compensate them for material losses caused by these attacks;
- International Community to put pressure on the Israeli military forces to immediately open border crossings, and allow import of equipment and spare parts necessary for the rehabilitation and maintenance of damaged fishing boats and facilities; and
- International and humanitarian organizations to provide material and technical aid for the fishing sector.