



CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

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The human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories continues to deteriorate.

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Thank you Mr. Vice President.

Recently, we saw an escalation of violence in Gaza. The Extra-Judiciary killing of Zuhair Al-Qaisi and Mahmoud Al-Hannani of the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) sparked another flare-up in Gaza which left 23 Palestinians dead and wounded 73 Palestinians and 4 Israelis. The disproportional bombardment of Gaza by the Israelis on civilian areas could yet again constitute a war crime.

The illegal expansions of Israeli settlements continue unchecked. In fact, settlement construction has accelerated, with plans for 3,700 new units approved in East Jerusalem alone. Also this year a record number of Palestinians have been displaced by demolitions of their homes, water sources, and agricultural structures. This not only constitutes a serious obstacle to peace, but has made a two-state solution almost impossible and yet the HRC remains ineffective.

Attacks against Palestinian human rights defenders continue. Amir Makhoul, director of Ittijah, was convicted on charges of espionage and establishing contacts with enemies of the state of Israel. On January 13, 2012, in Gaza, Mahmoud Abu Rahma, international relations director of Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, was stabbed repeatedly by a group of unidentified armed men following his criticism of the Hamas government, a sign of the obvious impunity that militant groups enjoy in Gaza. Yazan Sawafta of the Independent Commission of Human Rights was beaten severely by the Palestinian Authority security officers, while covering a protest. Such atrocities have become systematic in the OPT. And yet the HRC remains impotent.

The failure for the UN to take concrete follow-up action on both the Goldstone findings and Flotilla report is a major factor in the continuation of these human rights violations. The lack of political will to insure the investigation and prosecution of decades of war crimes and crimes against humanity and conditions that are equal to apartheid is deplorable.

Like most situations within the Middle-east and North Africa- impunity on both an international and local level remains one of the prime forces driving the worsening rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Palestinian Authority and UN member states must commit themselves to ensuring such impunity ends in order to create the preconditions for a just political solution.

Thank you Mr. Vice President.