

May 15, 2018

70 years on: the Nakba Continues

On 30 March, 2018, Palestinians in the besieged and occupied Gaza Strip waged a nonviolent protest movement demanding an end to Israel's eleven-year blockade and the implementation of their internationally-recognized right of return.

Dubbed the “**Great March of Return**”, the protest movement drew tens of thousands of Palestinian women and men determined to keep calling for their most basic rights and freedoms. The majority of the participants in this ongoing protest movement are young refugees whose grandparents were displaced by Zionist forces during the Nakba, the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine where more than 750,000 Palestinians were displaced and 530 towns and villages were destroyed to make way for the creation of the State of Israel.

The Israeli Occupation Forces (*IOF*) responded to the overwhelmingly peaceful protests with live bullets and sniper shots, killing 100 unarmed Palestinians and injuring thousands during six weeks of demonstrations. These staggering figures lay bare Israel's utter disregard for international law and testify to the impunity it has continued to receive.

The clearest manifestation of this impunity could be seen on 14 May, 2018, the **bloodiest day** of the protest movement so far. While Israelis and the U.S. delegation were jubilantly celebrating the opening of the U.S. embassy in occupied Jerusalem, Israeli soldiers were gunning down unarmed protesters and journalists, **killing 59 people (including 6 children), and injuring 2,771 (1,359 with live ammunition) on just one day.**

The decision of U.S. president Donald Trump to move the US embassy to occupied Jerusalem, capping seven decades of unconditional U.S. military, political and financial support for Israel, has directly emboldened Israel to escalate its flagrant violations of Palestinian rights. But just as significantly, the silence of the international community and the lack of any concrete action to hold Israel accountable are also contributing to the continuation of Israel's unlawful and disproportionate use of force.

While there are numerous resolutions and motions adopted by the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly condemning the Israeli occupation, reiterating Palestinian rights, and denouncing the settlement enterprise, the international community has done very little to enforce those decisions or to put any meaningful pressure on Israel to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

As we mark **seventy years to the Nakba** and **fifty-one years** to the occupation of the oPt, we stress that this inaction continues to cost Palestinian lives and stand in the way of justice, self-determination and genuine peace. In occupied Jerusalem, the policies of house demolition, settlement expansion, and residency revocation, aim at forcibly transferring Palestinians from their city. In the occupied West Bank, Israel's regularization Law, rapid settlement expansion, and the threat of displacement facing Bedouin communities, are leading a reality of annexation. In Israel, the rights of Palestinian citizens are systematically trampled upon as the state treats



them as second-class citizens. And in Gaza, the illegal blockade approaches its eleventh year and those who protest its continuation are being met with lethal force. Meanwhile, millions of Palestinian refugees are still languishing in refugee camps and in the diaspora awaiting the implementation of UNSCR 194 that grants their right of return to their homeland.

Amid this reality of occupation, discrimination, denial of basic rights, and impunity, we call on our partners to lift their voices in support of Palestinian rights. We call on you to pressure your governments to take concrete steps towards the upholding of international norms and UN resolutions and hold Israel accountable for the killings in Gaza.