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**Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories**

Written statement* submitted by The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Human rights in the Occupied Gaza Strip

1. The Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) would like to bring to the council's attention the recent Israeli massacre of Palestinians during the Great March of Return protests taking place in the besieged Gaza Strip.
2. Palestinians are protesting because of the continued siege on the Gaza Strip for more than 11 years, and to demand the international community to recognize and implement their right to return to their homes and lands from which they were displaced in 1948.
3. Since the 30th March: 112 Palestinians, including 13 children, have been murdered by Israel; 13,190 have been injured (3,630 by live fire); 32 have needed limbs amputated.¹
4. The United Nations had called for an inquiry into the killings which has been denied by Israeli authorities. Four UN experts including Michael Lynk, UN special Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, released a statement condemning the killings by Israeli security forces of Palestinian protesters near the Gaza fence and noted that:

‘Israeli forces used live ammunition and teargas against the demonstrators, who had gathered in occupied Gaza on the occasion of Land Day to call for their right to return to their homes. Most of Gaza’s population - which has been subjected to a comprehensive air, land and sea blockade by Israel for 10 years - is comprised of Palestinians who have been forcibly expelled from their homes and lands since 1948.’²

5. Human Rights Watch concluded that the murder of Palestinians in Gaza was ‘unlawful’ and ‘calculated’ and that Israeli ‘officials green-light shooting of unarmed demonstrators.’ ‘Israeli soldiers were not merely using excessive force but were apparently acting on orders that all but ensured a bloody military response to the Palestinian demonstrations,’ said Eric Goldstein, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. ‘The result was foreseeable deaths and injuries of demonstrators on the other side of a border who posed no imminent threat to life.’³
6. The Israeli forces responded to Palestinians' legitimate right to protest a brutal siege by firing rubber bullets and tear gas canisters as well as live ammunition. According to Amnesty International analysis victims were shot in the upper body, including the head and chest and some from behind which shows they were deliberately killed or injured while posing no immediate threat to the Israelis.
7. In addition, many injuries resulted in extreme bone and tissue damage which is likely to lead to further complications, there is also high number of injuries to the knees which increase the probability of bullet fragmentation which suggests that Israeli army is intentionally intending to inflict life changing injuries. Gaza hospitals are unable to deal with the high number of injuries due to lack of electricity and medical supplies and Israel has been denying or refusing to transfer some of the patients in need of urgent specialised medical treatment in the West Bank.
8. Amnesty International has called for an arms embargo on Israel due to its disproportionate and unlawful killings of peaceful protesters. The UN Secretary General as well as the OHCHR has called for independent investigation into the killing of peaceful protesters and use of excessive force by the Israeli forces. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein stated “The loss of life is deplorable, and the staggering number of injuries caused by live ammunition only confirms the sense that excessive force has been used against demonstrators – not once, not

1 https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/who-health_cluster-special-sitrep-on-_gaza-may_13-22.pdf

2 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22924&LangID=E>

3 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/03/israel-gaza-killings-unlawful-calculated>

twice, but repeatedly, I am doubly concerned by reports of unusually severe injuries resulting from the use of live ammunition. Furthermore, many of those seeking treatment outside of Gaza have been refused permits by Israel to leave, which has increased the suffering.”⁴

9. The events of the Great March of Return shows once again Israel’s continuous disregard of international laws and Palestinians lives. The international community should do more to protect innocent civilians who when decided to call for their basic rights after 11 years of siege and 50 years of occupation and 70 years of displacement, were met with brutal force.
10. PRC calls on governments to pressure Israel to implement the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland and to publicly condemn Israel's extrajudicial killings. PRC also calls on member states of the Human Rights Council to consider accountability measures against Israel. PRC welcomes the Human Rights council decision hold an independent fact-finding mission to investigate Israeli crimes against Palestinians.

⁴ <http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22995&LangID=E>