



Al Mezan Center for Human Rights

Hiding Behind Civilians: April 2009 Update Report

Al Mezan report on

The Use of Palestinian Civilians as Human Shields by the Israeli Occupation Forces

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Introduction

In this update report Al Mezan presents seven case studies on the use of Palestinian civilians as human shields by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF). These case studies, based on comprehensive field investigations and witness statements, demonstrate that the IOF continues to systematically use Palestinian civilians as human shields, in breach of international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL) and even Israeli domestic law. Six of these incidents took place during Operation Cast Lead launched against the Gaza Strip between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, and one took place earlier in 2008.

In endangering the lives of civilian men, women and children through systematically using them as human shields, the IOF is committing crimes tantamount to war crimes and crimes against humanity according to IHL. Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations have taken all steps within their power to protect Palestinian civilians from this cruel and lethal practice, winning in 2005 a legal battle to secure a prohibition on the use of civilians as human shields under Israeli law. The Israeli authorities continue to refuse to implement the orders of their own highest judicial body, let alone adhere to their clear obligations as an occupying power under IHL. These practices, and the culture of impunity within the Israeli military system, compel the international community, and especially the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to act.

The practice of using human shields is just one of many grave violations perpetrated against Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). The State of Israel continues to impose a near total blockade on Gaza, carry out expulsions and home demolitions in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and kill civilians on a daily basis. During Operation Cast Lead alone, when Israel launched a wide-scale 22-day military offensive, at least, 1,410 Palestinians were killed (including 324 children and 109 women) and at least 4,004 were injured (including 860 children and 448 women). Thousands of houses were destroyed as a result of targeted air strikes and demolitions carried out by the IOF, as well as hundreds of vital public facilities, including police stations, the main prison in Gaza and civilian ministry buildings.

The first section of the report briefly presents relevant legal provisions related to the use of Palestinians as human shields. The second section presents seven case studies which provide yet further evidence of widespread and systematic grave violations of IHL and IHRL. In the first incident a 15-year-old boy was used as a human shield by the IOF and then detained in a hole for four days. The boy now suffers from serious mental health difficulties. In the second incident a 10-year-old boy was forced to carry-out life endangering tasks. When he was unable to complete a task, he was hit by an IOF soldier. In the third incident an elderly man was forced to run in front of IOF soldiers to protect them from potential attacks in an area that was under fire, placing the life of the man in grave danger. In the fourth incident, IOF soldiers ordered a civilian man to go into a house where Palestinian fighters were hiding to retrieve their weapons thereby putting his life in grave danger. The victim now suffers from psychological problems. In the fifth incident, the IOF used two brothers as human shields. One brother was shot and bled to death after the IOF fired on a rescue convoy including Red Crescent ambulances and a UN vehicle. The other brother was injured, denied medical care and as a result had two fingers amputated. In the sixth incident, a young man was used as a human shield by the IOF and severely beaten. In the seventh incident an old man is used as a human shield for several days and detained in Israel before being sent back to Gaza. The final section of the report calls on the international community to uphold its legal obligation to take immediate and effective action to protect Palestinian civilians.

2. Legal Context

This section briefly presents relevant provisions in IHRL and IHL; both of which clearly prohibit the use of civilians as human shields. Due to the extent of risk to life involved, the use of civilians as human shields is a war crime and when carried out systematically, a crime against humanity according to IHL. The section also presents the position of Israeli law on the use of human shields. For a more detailed discussion of the position of IHRL, IHL and Israeli law on the use of civilians as human shields please see an earlier Al Mezan report: Hiding Behind Civilians, July 2008, available at the following link:

http://www.mezan.org/en/details.php?id=8600&ddname=Crimes&id_dept=22&p=center

International human rights law: IHRL applies to territories falling under the jurisdiction of the state; including occupied territories. Israel is a party to several human rights conventions including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). As Israel maintains effective control over the oPt, it has specific obligations to respect, protect and, when required, to fulfill the rights enshrined in these conventions.¹ Accordingly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights obliges Israel to respect and protect the right to life, liberty, safety and decent and humane treatment of Palestinians. These rights are affirmed in the ICCPR.

International humanitarian law: While both IHL and IHRL accord protection to the life, well-being and dignity of a person, IHL applies to international and non-international armed conflicts whereas IHRL applies in times of peace as well as in times of war. IHL comprises a number of treaty and customary rules aimed at protecting persons affected by conflict. It also protects property not directly related to military operations. The Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907) on the Laws and Customs of War on Land restrict military operations and the conduct of belligerents and the Geneva Conventions and their relevant Protocols codify customary rules that apply in times of conflict.

The rules of IHL, and particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, apply to the oPt, which has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967. The international community, including UN bodies and two conferences of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention held in 1999 and 2001, has repeatedly confirmed the application of this body of law to the oPt. The International Court of Justice also affirmed its application in its Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the oPt, of 9 July 2004.

The Fourth Geneva Convention provides protection for civilians in war time, including those who live in occupied territories, and places explicit restrictions on the use of force. The Fourth Geneva Convention also explicitly prohibits the taking of persons who are not directly involved in hostilities as hostages at all times. This prohibition includes combatants who have laid down their arms and those rendered unable to fight because of disease, injury, detention or any other cause. Whether or not this practice is ordered by government officials or upheld by courts, the use of human shields remains an illegal practice under international law. In addition, Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court lists the taking of hostages and directing of attacks against civilians as war crimes.

¹ This position has been asserted by all of the UN treaty bodies; including in the 2007 concluding observations by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, of 14 June 2007; available online at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/424/79/PDF/G0742479.pdf?OpenElement>.

Israeli law: Following a three-year battle by Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations, Israel's High Court finally banned the use of Palestinians as human shields on 6 October 2005. The legal battle commenced in May 2002 when seven human rights organizations filed a petition seeking a ban of the practice. In response, the IOF informed the court that it would partly cease the use of civilians for military tasks, with one exception: the 'neighbor procedure'.² Under this procedure, civilians are asked to knock at a neighbor's door, usually at night, and pass orders from the soldiers; usually an order for a person to surrender themselves. A few months later, in August 2002, a young Palestinian man was killed while adhering to soldiers' orders under this procedure. In the same month, human rights organizations filed a new petition and the court issued a temporary injunction prohibiting the use of this procedure. However, evidence from the field demonstrates that the IOF continued to employ it systematically under the cover of new terminology, "the prior warning procedure." In January 2003, the Court reduced the scope of the injunction by excluding cases in which Palestinian civilians consent to 'give assistance to soldiers' and, in doing so, their life is not put at risk. As Amnesty International pointed out in 2005:

"In practice...Palestinians in the Occupied Territories who Israeli soldiers ordered or asked to carry out certain tasks in support of their military operations were not in a position where they could freely give their informed consent, for fear that any refusal would result in punishment or other reprisals."³

It took the court until 6 October 2005 to rule that the use of human shields, including the so-called 'prior warning procedure' is illegal under applicable international law. The response of the military establishment to this ruling was revealing as to the systematic nature of the human shields policy. For years, Israel alleged that this type of practice was carried out by soldiers on an individual basis and did not express or represent official policy. Nevertheless, the Israeli military announced that it would freeze the use of Palestinians as human shields following 2005 ruling and Israel's then Defence Minister, Shaul Mofaz, demanded the Court review the ruling and announced that he would appear before the Court in an attempt to revoke the ruling.⁴

As the case studies in this report demonstrate, the IOF has blatantly disregarded this legal ruling by its own high court, as well as its clear obligations under IHL, and continues to use civilian men, woman and most disturbingly children as human shields.

² See B'Tselem, Human Shields Timeline, available online at www.btselem.org/english/human_shields/timeline_of_events.asp; (accessed 24 March 2009).

³ Amnesty International Statement 7 October 2005 www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/050/2005/en/19bdb402-fa16-11dd-999c-47605d4edc46/mde150502005en.pdf; (accessed 24 March 2009).

⁴ See www.ynetnews.com/articles/0.7340.L-3154142.00.html. (accessed 24 March 2009).

Case Study One: 15-year-old child used as a human shield

In this case study, a 15-year-old child was used as a human shield by the IOF and then detained in a hole in the ground with around one hundred other people for four days. The child now suffers from serious mental health difficulties and refuses to speak to strangers. The Al Mezan researcher was able to take this statement only after the child's parents coaxed him into telling his story over the course of several hours. Following are excerpts from his statement:

"We stayed in the hole for four days...I saw the soldiers bringing a lot of people to the hole until the number reached around one hundred people." **Victim statement**

Statement One: 'Ala Mohammed Ali Al-Attar, 15-years-old, male

During Operation Cast Lead, I could hear a lot of explosions in the area where I live. During this time, I stayed at home with my brothers: Naafith, 17-years-old; Ali, 16-years-old; and Fadi, my 15-year-old twin. I was really scared because of the sounds of the explosions. We were gathered together in the living room where I was sheltering in the arms of my mother and father, shaking with fear. My father decided to leave the house because of the danger in the area, and go to my Uncle Sameer's house as we were very scared. The Israeli soldiers refused to let us leave. They kept shooting at the house and so we kept moving from one room to another because of the bullets. It wasn't safe. We were lying on top of each other inside the rooms and the bathroom. I was really scared. My mother said to us: "Say the *shehada*" (a prayer). I said to her: "I don't want to die. I don't want to die."

This terrifying time continued for an hour. A little while later, I heard her saying to the soldiers: "We have children and old people with us and we want to leave the house." I heard a soldier say to her in English: "No." Then I heard several shots. I was lying on the floor sheltering with my mother. A few minutes later, I heard the voice of a man calling my Uncle Sameer. My uncle replied to him saying: "Come downstairs." So we all went downstairs. As soon as we opened the door, I saw a large number of soldiers. One of them was pointing his weapon at me. He said words that I did not understand. Then I saw my uncle and brothers lined up against the wall. I saw the soldier signaling at me to stand beside them. So I did. Before I got to the wall, he pushed me towards it. My brother Ali was standing next to me, and on my left side was my cousin Hussein. I saw the soldier put his hands up. I understood that he wanted me to put my hands up. So I did. Another soldier came and searched me from top to bottom. He searched my genital area. Then he took off the jacket I was wearing. He tied my hands to the hands of the people next to me. So he tied my left hand to my cousin Hussein's right hand and my right hand to my brother Ali's left hand; and so on. They did the same with my brother Ali.

A lot of our neighbors and relatives had been detained by the IOF before we arrived. I stood by the wall. A few minutes later one of the soldiers came and kicked me. It hurt where he kicked me. About two hours later, they ordered us to walk. They pulled the person at the front of the human chain to the south. So we all walked side by side. After ten meters they made us go into Khalil Al-Attar's house, which is on the Al-Atatara crossing opposite the water-well. Inside, the soldier asked me what my name was and I saw him write it on a piece of paper he was holding. He did the same for the people who were in front of and behind me. Then he made us all go, as a chain, into one of the rooms. We stayed in this room until the evening. At the beginning, I talked to the person next to me. Then the soldier came and blindfolded our eyes with a piece of cloth. I felt it had become dark in the area. I heard the soldier speaking in a

language I didn't understand.

Then he pulled the person sitting beside me, so he stood up. Then he (the person beside me) walked and so I walked also. We went outside of the house. Outside, they took the blindfold off my eyes. I then found myself sitting in a low-lying area located west of the junction next to the Al-Atatara water-well with the rest of the people. I heard the sound of a huge explosion in the area. After ten minutes they took us back to the same house, and as soon as we got into the house they blindfolded my eyes. After about an hour, they took us out of the house. I was blindfolded. We went into a farm. I knew that because tree branches were hitting me and then the blindfold fell down from my eyes. I knew for sure then that we were inside the Hamada family farm which I know well.

They made us sit on the ground until dawn the following day. Then they took us outside the field. As soon as one of the soldiers saw my eyes were not blindfolded, he came towards me, tore my vest, made a blindfold out of it and blindfolded my eyes. We walked for around 300 meters. Then we stopped. They lined us up next to a wall. Then they searched me. Then they lead us, without me knowing what was around me, to a low-lying area. They made us sit on the ground. There, they untied my hands from Hussein and Ali's hands. They tied my hands in front of my stomach. Then they searched me a third time and made me sit on the ground. After they made us sit down, my uncle took my blindfold off on the orders of the soldiers. After they took of my blindfold, I saw around six women with two children around me, sitting in a corner away from the men. There was me, Ali, Hussein and Khalil Al-Attar; we are all children. They tied our hands in front of our stomachs and not in the chain like before. I realized where the low-lying area was. It is a hole made by Israeli forces in Al 'Aklouk land south of the American school.

We spent the whole night in this hole. I couldn't sleep. The weather was really cold and I wasn't wearing a lot of clothing. We stayed in this hole for four days. During this time I could see Israeli armored vehicles moving around us everywhere. I could hear the sound of shooting and explosions near the place where we were. The soldiers would give us one meal every afternoon. The first meal was a luncheon meat sandwich. On the third day that I was in the hole I saw a soldier making a wire fence around the hole. I saw the soldiers bringing a lot of people to the hole until the number reached around one hundred people. On the morning of the fourth day of us being in the hole, an Israeli soldier came and untied me, my brother Ali, my cousin Hussein and Khalil. They told us and the women to go to Jabalia.

Case Study Two: 10-year-old child used as human shield and physically abused

In this incident, several families sheltering from shelling in the basement of their apartment block were detained by the IOF. A 10-year-old boy was forced to open bags belonging to the families, and when he was unable to open one of them, a soldier hit him, making him urinate with fear. Following are excerpts from the statement 10-year-old boy's mother.

"The soldier told me to open a second bag but I didn't know how to open it, so he grabbed me and slapped me." **Victim statement**

Statement Two: 'Afaaf Mohammed Rabah, 47-years-old, female

My name is 'Afaaf Mohammed Rabah and I am 47-years-old. I live in Tel Al-Hawa on the sixth floor of Al Azhar tower. I have one son and two daughters. My son is called Majed and he is 10-years-old. Dalia is Majed's twin and she is 10-years-old, and Nisma is 8-years-old. They have six other siblings from their father and another mother. None of them are in Gaza except for my husband's son, Nimer Rouhi Rabah. He is married with two sons.

On 27 December 2008, Nimer and his wife and their two boys came to stay with us in the flat. They have their own apartment but came to stay with us due to the Israeli shelling. We stayed like this for over two weeks due to the Israeli operations and the sound of heavy continuous shelling. On 14 January 2009, after 8.00 in the evening, we heard a significant increase in the sound of explosions; they were gradually getting closer to our area. At around 9.00 in the evening of the same day, my stepson Nimer suggested that we go down to the basement of the building to shelter there as our apartment is on the sixth floor, and it could have been hit by shells or missiles.

When we got to the basement we found that other families were already there. The men were sitting in one area and the women in the opposite area. There was no electricity. We stayed sitting and the sound of the explosions was getting stronger and more intense, until the glass of the basement fell and broke on the head of my daughter Dalia lightly injuring her. At around 5.30 the next morning, on Thursday 15 January 2009, we heard the sound of heavy shooting. It was clear that there was shooting near us and we then heard smashing. Then, one of the men in the basement said that the women in front of them should go behind them as the Israeli soldiers were firing directly at us. There were exactly 37 of us in the basement. I know that because all night I had been counting the number of the people in the basement as a form of entertainment.

Suddenly, around 20 armed soldiers carrying machine guns with red lights came into the basement. They were wearing helmets. The soldiers came towards us and one of them said: "Come to us one by one." The first man went over, and he was Nimer, my stepson. Then, one of the soldiers shot above his head and below his feet. Then he tied his hands behind his back and took him out of the basement. They took the men one after another, tied them up and took them out of the basement. My son, Majed, who is 10-years-old stayed with me. When the soldiers finished taking out the men, one of them noticed my son Majed and signaled for him to come. My son didn't go and the soldier came to him and grabbed him by his left shoulder and took him outside. Then the soldiers told us to give them our bags and cell phones. We gave them to the soldiers and they took them outside the basement. Then, we (the women) heard the sound of shooting outside of the basement. At that moment, I thought that they had shot my son Majed. Even my daughter Nisma, held my hand and said to me: "They've killed him, Mama, they've killed him." After around ten minutes, my son Majed came back to the basement. He came to me and said: "Mama, the soldier told me to open the bag, so I opened it. Then the soldier told me to open a second bag but I didn't know how to open it, so he grabbed me and slapped me, and pulled me away from the bag and shot it. Mama, I urinated on myself because I was so scared." I said to him: "Don't worry, my son, don't worry."

Then, in front of us, some of the soldiers shot the mattresses and blankets that we were using. Then one of the soldiers said in English: "Who can speak English?" Nimer's wife responded that she could speak English and one of the soldiers said to her: "What's this?" and he pointed with his hand to a small sandy mound that children had made in the basement. She told them that the children were playing there and that they made a mound. The soldier told her to take down the mound. She said: "I can't, I'm a woman." Then, the soldier shot the mound. The soldier then told us to close our ears because there would be loud shelling. There was then

loud shelling and a very loud explosion. Then the soldiers gave out sweets and food to each other and they began to eat. Nimer's wife, May, said to them in English: "There are children who have nothing to eat and they are hungry." The soldier told her to tell them to be patient.

The children took turns to go to the toilet after getting permission from the soldiers. The children would go by themselves without being accompanied by their parents. We stayed like this until around 3.30 in the afternoon of the same day. Then the soldiers said to Nimer's wife: "Tell them all to go out carrying white flags and to go to Al Quds hospital. This was after they had demanded the keys to our flat and taken them. I took off my white headscarf as there was no white material with us. I gave it to May, Nimer's wife, and I put on another black scarf. We went out of the basement and then May, Nimer's wife, said to them: "We want to go to Al Quds hospital from between the towers." The soldier said to her that we had to take the main street that is near the preventative security premises. Then we carried the white scarf and walked towards Al Quds hospital. On route, we saw the destruction, and there were small fires spread on the road.

When we reached Al Quds Hospital, the hospital administration put us in one of the hospital rooms. While we were sitting, other people came to the hospital from other areas. We stayed there until around 8.30 in the evening of the same day until people inside the hospital began to shout saying that the hospital would be destroyed. I gathered my children and we began to run in the street towards Al Azhar University. We heard heavy shooting but we weren't sure exactly where from. After running for a while we stopped and went back because we didn't know where to go or where the soldiers were. When we were running back, I heard the voice of May, Nimer's wife calling me. She was sitting in an ambulance, so me and my children went to her, got in and went to a Red Cross building in Tel Al Hawa. Then we went to relatives living in the port area and stayed there for three days. We went back to the towers on the morning of Monday 19 January 2009 and went to the sixth floor to our flat. We found our flat open and that the soldiers had shot inside the flat at the computer, cupboards, curtains and walls, so we couldn't stay in the flat. We went to stay in Nimer's flat near Al-Khour Square until we could repair our flat.

Case Study Three: Elderly man made to run in front of soldiers

In this incident, an elderly man was forced to run in front of IOF soldiers to protect them from potential attacks in an area that was under fire, placing the life of the man in grave danger. The man is then forced to go to the house of his sons, one-by-one, and instruct them to leave their homes. Following are excerpts from his statement:

"Then they made me stand up and run in front of them. One of them had his gun on my shoulders from behind and he pushed me to run forward." **Victim statement**

Statement Three: Ibrahim 'Aayish Hamdan Al 'Amour, 62-years-old, male

At around 2.00am on Friday 23 May 2008, I was woken up by the sound of heavy shooting. I felt the movement of tanks near my house and felt that the IOF had invaded the area. My house is around 2000 meters from the separation fence. The IOF have invaded here number of times before. I gathered up my children, my wife and my grandchildren (Ibrahim 'Aatif Al-'Amour, 3-years-old and Sally 'Aatif Al-'Amour, 6-years-old) in a western facing room of the house as I thought it was safer. My family and I stayed in that room for about two hours. During

that time I could hear the movement of invading Israeli military vehicles and bulldozers in the area and I could hear the sound of heavy shooting. At around 4.00 in the morning, I heard heavy knocking at the door and the sound of a walkie talkie.

I asked my wife to go to the door and open it during which I heard the sound of a number of soldiers speaking in Hebrew. One of them was speaking in Arabic. I heard him say to my wife: "Where is your husband?" So I went towards them and I saw around 30 heavily armed soldiers carrying rifles. They had police dogs with them standing outside the door of the house. One of them pointed his rifle at me and one of them ordered me to put my hands up, and turn all the way around. Then he ordered me to take my family out of the house. So I told my children, my grandchildren and my wife to leave the house. One of the soldiers tied my hands behind me with a plastic tie. They made me and my family stand about five meters away from the house. Then some of them went into the house.

During that time, one of the soldiers asked me in Hebrew about my son, Manar's house. I told him (I speak Hebrew well) that Manar's house is around 200 meters south of my house, separated from my house by open farm land. One of the soldiers put his rifle on my shoulder from behind (he fixed his gun on my shoulder) and ordered me to walk towards my son Manar's house. He was walking behind me and pushing me, and there were about ten other soldiers with him. They had a police dog with them. About half way there, I heard the sound of shooting from the west to the east. I could hear the whistling of the shells which landed around us and making lights and fire. At that moment the soldiers fell to the ground and made me fall on the ground. One of the soldiers said to me in Hebrew: "These are the missiles of Hamas; see what Hamas is doing." I saw the soldiers shooting intensively from around me towards the source of fire and shells. That lasted for around ten minutes.

Then they made me stand up and run in front of them. One of them had his rifle on my shoulders from behind and he pushed me to run forward. When we reached my son, Manar's, house, they ordered me to call him. Manar, who is 40-years-old, came out. They made him bring out his eight family members from the house. I could hear his children screaming with fear. Then I saw one of the soldiers tie my son, Manar's, hands behind his back with a plastic tie. A number of the soldiers broke into his house, then they came out of the house and made us all – me, and Manar and his family – walk towards my son, Marwan's house that is around 200 meters from Manar's house. Their houses are separated by agricultural land. We walked in front and the soldiers walked behind us. They were pointing their guns at us. When we reached Marwan's house, the soldiers ordered me to call him. So my son, Marwan, who is 38-years-old, came out. Then, they ordered him to bring out his family of six members from the house. One of the soldiers tied his hands behind his back. They ordered us all to sit on the ground by Marwan's house while some of them took Manar to another place.

We stayed sitting on the ground and there were a number of soldiers around us. After around 20 minutes, the soldiers came back with Manar, bringing with them my nephew, Hasan Mohammed Al-'Amour, 36-years-old. His hands were tied up. Then they left the women and children on the ground and ordered us (the men) to stand up. They led us with them with our hands tied to Manar's house for a second time. The soldiers entered, with us with them, into the house and forced us to sit in the living room. I saw a number of the soldiers lying on the ground, and several others stayed standing by the windows of the house. This continued for around three hours, during which time I could hear the sound of heavy shooting the whole time, and I could hear the sound of armored vehicles and bulldozers in the area. Then, I saw them bringing a number of my relatives and they detained them with us in the same house. Then the IOF arrested Muneer, Munthar, Mohammed Hamdan Al 'Amour, Mohamed 'Aabed Al

'Amour and 'Atiya Al 'Amour. Then they withdrew from the area towards the borderline. I came out of the house and I saw massive destruction of the agricultural land and the houses. They had bulldozed the trees and destroyed parts of the houses in the area. At around 6.00 in the evening of the same day, they released all of the members of my family. I learned that the IOF had detained them for a number of hours at a military installation near the borderline.

Case Study Four: IOF force civilian man to give instructions to Palestinian fighters

In this incident, IOF soldiers ordered a civilian man to go into a house where Palestinian fighters were hiding to retrieve their weapons, thereby putting his life in grave danger. The victim now suffers from psychological problems.

"I refused. I asked him to let me return to my family. I said to him, 'this (Going into that house) means death, and I don't want to die.'" Victim Statement

Statement Four: Majdi al-Abed Ahmed Abed Rabbo, 40-years-old, male

At around 9:30 am on Monday 5 January 2009, I was in my house when I heard a loud sound at my door. I said, "Who is it?" I heard someone say, "Open the door," loudly and in broken Arabic. I arrived at the door and opened it. I was surprised to see an IOF soldier hiding behind a man in his twenties and pointing his gun at me. He said in Arabic, "Take off your pants." I took off my pants. Then he pointed at my underwear, so I took that off, too. My lower half was now completely naked. He then pointed at the clothes on my upper half, and I took them off. Then he said, "Put your clothes on," so I did. 15-20 Israeli soldiers then entered the courtyard of my house, wearing their usual Khaki clothes and black makeup on their faces

Then, one of the soldiers grabbed my neck from behind and put his gun to the back of my head. Two other soldiers hid behind me, one on the left and the other on the right. The three of them were tightly grouped; one tightly gripping my neck. Then they told me to lead them to the roof, where they searched pigeon coops that I keep in two rooms there. Standing in one corner of the roof, the soldier then asked me: "Whose house is that?" and pointed to the adjacent house to the south. I told him: "That house belongs to my cousin Hatem Abed Rabbo." Hatem Abed-Rabbo's house is connected to my house by a shared roof. There's no space between the two houses; just the wall. He asked me about the owner of the house. I said: "He has been in Sudan for four years and the house is locked." He said: "Are you sure?" I said, "Yes."

After that one of the soldiers brought a demolition tool and said, "Drill a hole here." He pointed to the three-meter high wall that separates my house from Hatem Abed-Rabbo's. I began to drill a hole in the wall. Then three soldiers went through the hole to Hatem's house. The Arabic-speaking soldier said "Enter," and motioned in the direction of the hole. I entered through the hole to Hatem's house. There, he stood me in the eastern corner and they pointed their guns at me. More soldiers came through the hole in the roof, until there were about 16 soldiers in Hatem's house. The translating soldier then said to me: "Get up. Get up," and grabbed me violently. I got up with him and entered with them through the hole back to my roof, and they all went as a group down the stairs. This happened quickly, amidst the shouts of soldiers. The whole group was running. I didn't know exactly what was happening. The young man who had been with them from the start descended with us.

The soldiers led me outside. I found myself in a mud road, which separates my house and the Salah Ad-Din Mosque. One of the soldiers was holding me and making me run with him. Another soldier was bringing the young man with him in the same way, and that young man had his hands tied. They pushed me into the mosque through its main door to the north on Abed Rabbo Street. They tied my hands in front of my stomach and tied my legs and sat me

down in the southern corner of the mosque in front of the entrance. We entered the house adjacent to the mosque to the west, which belongs to the Mazanen family. They took us out of that house and turned us toward another house next door to the south. Near the Al-Katari house, they sat me and other men down under a shady tree.

Fifteen minutes passed, and then the same soldier came and took me to the ground floor of the Al-Katari house, where there were two rooms and bathrooms. Thirty minutes passed and then I heard the sound of explosions and heavy gunfire nearby. It continued for about 15 minutes. After that, the soldiers came and took me, alone, and walked me outside the Al-Katari house, where I saw many soldiers. They took me to my neighbor Jem'ah Abed Rabbo's house, adjacent to Hatem Abed Rabbo's house. It is a large house, 300 square meters. Its entrance is deep, and in it was an Israeli officer with a three-striped rank on his shoulder. Around him, a number of soldiers were standing together in the same outer entrance, hiding against the walls. Once I arrived, the soldier who spoke Arabic said a few words to them, and then said to me: "In this house," and he pointed at Hatem's house: "There were gunmen and we killed them. Go take their clothes off and bring their guns and come back."

I refused. I asked him to let me return to my family. I said to him: "this (Going into that house) means death, and I don't want to die." He spoke in Hebrew with the officer, who was very tall, with light brown skin and light hair. The officer walked toward me and spoke in very poor Arabic. He said: "You are here to do what we tell you." He took me by the shoulder and pushed me in the direction of Hatem's house, and kicked me with his foot on my buttocks and said: "Go."

I walked about 200 meters to the house, where I saw that the house had holes in it from a bomb. The doors to the storage chest below had also been destroyed. I went in. Inside, the stairway had also been destroyed. I couldn't walk on it. I walked back to the soldiers and told the translating soldier about the destruction and said I couldn't enter the house. He spoke with the officer and told me: "Enter the house through the hole we made in your house. Go."

I went alone, hoping to find my family in the house. I entered the courtyard but didn't find anyone. I expected the worst. When I arrived at the entrance of the apartment, I saw three armed men standing there, wearing badges that said 'Al Qassam Brigades.' They appeared to be in good health. They were only holding rifles. I told them what had happened to me, and what the occupation forces had forced me to do. It was 6:00 pm. One of them said to me: "We saw everything." Then he said: "Go back now and tell them what you saw."

I went back up into my house then back down and out. I went toward the officer. Before I could get there, occupation forces stopped me at gun point and ordered me to take off all my clothes completely and hold them up piece by piece. Then I put on my underwear. The officer called me before I could finish putting on my clothes. I went to him with my clothes in my hands. He asked me what happened to me, and I told them there were three gunmen in the house, still alive, and the translating soldier asked me what kinds of weapons they had and I told them what I had seen. Then they spoke together in Hebrew. Then the soldier said to me, "The officer says he's crazy and if you are lying to him he swears by his mother he will shoot you."

I told him: "I only told you what I saw." They ordered me to put on my clothes, then tied my hands and took me to the Al-Katari house a second time and sat me in the ground floor by myself. A short time later, I heard the sound of heavy gunfire nearby. Twenty minutes passed, the gunfire stopped, the soldiers came and took me back to the officer, and the same soldier

said to me: "We killed them now. Go get them." I refused. I told them that they had told me that if I returned they would kill me, and he shouted at me: "We killed them."

They pushed me toward the house and said: "Go on." I went through my house through the same hole, entered the house and began to descend the stairs. I called before entering the apartment and no one answered, just as the time before. Then my view fell on the three young men. One was seriously injured and bleeding; the others were alive. I stayed in the apartment another 10 minutes, then went back toward the officer and the soldiers. Before I arrived, they made me take off my clothes as they had the last time. After dressing, I told them what I'd seen.

Then I heard the sound of heavy gunfire. The area became dark. A few minutes later, I heard the sound of a helicopter hovering above. Then I heard the sound of a very loud explosion and felt the ground shake. A few minutes later the soldier came and untied my hands and took me outside, where it was dark. The soldier said: "Go and make sure they are dead. We bombed the house again with planes." I said to him: "It's hard for me to get there. I can't." He said, "Figure it out. Go on." He said it violently and pushed me hard. I went to my house and through the hole as before. As I descended into Hatem's house, the house was lit by the soldiers from the mosque and the neighbors' houses. With difficulty I entered the apartment. Inside, I saw the three men still living, but they were under the rubble.

Majdi al-Abed Ahmed Abed Rabbo eventually located his wife and children after he was released by the IOF. His home was totally destroyed by IOF bulldozers and he remains extremely distressed.

Case Study Five: IOF kill one civilian and maim another while using them as human shields

In this incident, IOF forces used two brothers as human shields. One brother was shot and bled to death after the IOF fired on a rescue convoy including Red Crescent ambulances and a UN vehicle. The other brother was injured, denied medical care and lost two fingers as a result. Following are excerpts from the statement of the surviving brother:

"I followed the attempts of UNWRA to reach my brother Sameer, but they all failed, as they (the IOF) fired at UNRWA once and at the Red Crescent ambulances three times."
Victim Statement

Statement Five: Munir Rasheed Mohammed Mohammed, 41-years-old, male

I live in a four-story house opposite Salah Ad-Din Mosque in Ezbet Abed-Rabbo, east of Jabalia. I live there with my brother and father. Fifteen people live in the house. I work as a special mechanic. My brother is a deputy manager in the maintenance department at UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency). While I was in my house as usual, I heard the movement of vehicles making a lot of noise. Because I am used to these incidents, I realized they were Israeli vehicles heading towards Ezbet Abed-Rabbo which is where I live. This was at around 5.00 in the evening on Saturday 3 January 2009. I heard the noise getting closer to the

place where our house is. The vehicles deployed north of the house (in Jabal Al-Kaashif area), east of the house (from Al-Ezbah) and south of the house (from Al-Qirim area). Then I heard the sound of a variety of explosions; heavy and light ones in the distance and close by.

My brother Sameer, who is 45-years-old, and I decided to gather with our families on the second floor of the house in the north-facing apartment. We stayed like that for two days with noise, movement and explosions all around us. The children, women, and even us men, were living in a state of great fear and terror. On Monday 5 January 2009 at around 4.30 in the afternoon, I heard what sounded like demolition on the ground floor of our house. I was scared to leave the house to see what was happening. I expected that there were Israeli soldiers there. This continued for around an hour during which I could hear people speaking in Hebrew. After that, I heard what sounded like shooting coming from the door of the apartment. My brother and I got up and went towards the door. We saw a number of Israeli soldiers wearing khaki uniforms deployed on the stairs of the house. There were around 20 of them. They came in quickly and I saw them pointing their rifles at me and towards the other residents of the house. Some of them had paint on their faces.

One of them spoke to me in correct Arabic⁵ saying: "Women and children go to one of the rooms," while they spoke with me and my brother. They asked me what my name is, then they asked my brother and he told them that he works at UNRWA and gave them his ID card and UNRWA business card. Then they gave it back to him. They took us into the south-facing apartment on the second floor. This is my brother, Saleh's house (53-years-old). They put me and my brother in one of the rooms. A number of soldiers stayed in front of the door of the room and they were pointing their rifles at us. After a few minutes, I heard one of them say to my brother Sameer: "Come with us to show us the apartment." He went with them. I stayed in the room by myself and after 15 minutes Sameer came back to the room. He had been sitting down for just a few minutes when they took him with them for a second time. Then, one of the soldiers said to me: "Come with us," and three of the soldiers, including the one who was talking, moved. He told me to show him the ground floor and signaled for me to walk in front of them. They were pointing their weapons towards me. I felt the barrel of a rifle touching my back. I showed them all the rooms on the ground floor; then they took me to the apartment, and made me go in.

After 15 minutes, my brother Sameer came back. I didn't speak to him because of the atmosphere of terror they were creating as they pointed their rifles at us. After around 15 minutes, they told my brother, Sameer, to go with them. I sat by myself. This time they were gone for longer. An hour after my brother left with them, the soldier who speaks Arabic came, while I was sitting in the dark in the midst of the sound of continuous explosions and shooting that I could hear. The soldier said to me: "Your brother has been shot and severely injured." I asked the soldier to save him and became hysterical. I was full of anger. After half an hour, the same soldier said to me: "I called the ambulance. Come downstairs with me so we can wait for the car there." I went down to the ground floor and I saw them carrying my brother Sameer on a stretcher, taking him downstairs. I saw him bleeding from his chest; from the right and left sides. His shirt was torn and his face was red. They put him on the floor on the ground floor. I continued to shout at them, unaware of what I was doing. I could see my brother was still alive as I heard him moaning in pain. The soldier told me to go outside and wait for the ambulance. So I went out of the door of the house, then I crossed the entrance that leads to our house - a

⁵ Here the victim means that the soldier was speaking in 'modern standard Arabic' which is formal Arabic often taught to non-native Arabic speakers.

five meter wide road separating our house from the house of our neighbors.

I walked on Ezbet Abed-Rabbo Main Street for around 30 meters. I had my hands up in the air and was calling and shouting: "Ambulance! Ambulance!" I didn't see anyone in the street and I didn't see any vehicles or Israeli soldiers. As soon as I'd reached that distance, I heard the sound of shooting and an explosion, and I felt a pain in my right hand. Then I saw it was bleeding. I couldn't feel it. I held it and went back to the house quickly. While I was running, I saw a soldier hiding on the second floor of Salah Ad-Din mosque opposite my house to the south. He said to me: "Stop!" He said it in correct Arabic. He was pointing his weapon at me from the mosque window. So I stopped. Then he said to me: "Take off your clothes." I took off my clothes and stayed in my underwear – just shorts – then he said to me: "Put your clothes on and go back to the house." So I did, and went back to the house. I went quickly.

I saw the soldiers inside the house, so I shouted at them saying: "You lied to me!" I could see my brother. The soldiers were gathered around him. I could hear him speaking to them with difficulty. After around 30 minutes, during which I was still shouting, one of the soldiers said to me: "Shut up! Or I'll shoot you." So I went quiet. Then, three soldiers took me to the third floor in the northern flat. I sat in it. The three soldiers remained pointing their weapons at me. I was bleeding and had lost the feeling in my hand. The pain got stronger. So I shouted at them to treat me. One of the soldiers came and bandaged my hand. I stayed in the apartment for three days. I had to ask them for permission to go to the toilet. I prepared food and drink from the flat; it's my brother's flat. I tried to ask about my brother, Sameer, but they didn't tell me anything.

At around 2.00 in the afternoon of Wednesday 7 January 2009, the soldier said to me: "Go out of the house with your family," so I went out with all the family. I heard shooting and explosions around us. I saw dozens of neighbors leaving their homes just like us. We walked until Salah Ad-Din, then to Al-Jurun area in Jabalia town, for around 1000 meters towards the west. Then I stopped a civilian car and rode in it with my family to Jabalia refugee camp to relatives of mine; my uncle, Khaled Mohammed. Then I went to Kamal Odwan Hospital and they took me to the operating room where they amputated the index and ring fingers on my right hand. The middle finger was seriously injured. The next day, I followed the attempts of UNWRA to reach my brother Sameer, but they all failed, as they (the IOF) fired at UNRWA once and at the Red Crescent ambulances three times. At around 4.15 in the afternoon of Wednesday 14 January 2009, my brother's body was brought from our house by Red Crescent ambulances with help from UNWRA.

Case Study Six: IOF beats and use young man as a human shield

In this incident the IOF uses a young man as a human shield. The soldiers hold him hostage, beat him and injure him with a metal object. He is then detained inside an Israeli prison for two months.

"Then, one of them injured my right hand with a sharp tool, and it was bleeding. I stayed like that, naked, for around two hours." **Victim Statement**

Statement Six: Mohammed Mustafa Ahmed, 27-years-old, male

I am Mohammed Mustafa Ahmed. I'm 27-years-old. I'm single and I live in Tel Al-Hawa area west of Gaza City in Al-Muntaza Towers on the third floor. My brother, father and mother live with me in the apartment. On Monday 12 January at around 8.00am, I left my house and went

to Az-Zaytoun area south of Gaza City. There were IOF operations there, and tanks invading the area, as I had heard. So I went in the morning to watch the fighting and the Israeli armored vehicles.

When I reached Az-Zaytoun area, I'm not sure exactly where, there was a two-story house. Suddenly, I heard shooting coming from the house. It was around 9.00am on the same day. I looked at the house and I saw IOF soldiers standing on the roof of the house, looking at me and shooting to the side of me. The house was no further than 20 meters away. I went towards them afraid that they would injure me and said to them: "As-Salamu 'Alaykum" (a greeting in Arabic). At that moment, they began to shoot, so I moved back, I wanted to go back to the house.

But one of the soldiers started to call me saying: "Come, come". So I went back and stood in the middle of the dirt road. The soldiers on top of the house were pointing their weapons at me. One of them told me to take off my clothes so I took off my coat and pulled my clothes up from my stomach to my chest. Then, one of them ordered me to come towards the house. When I got to the entrance, three soldiers wearing military uniforms and helmets, and carrying machine guns came down.

One of them told me to go in, so I went in. A fourth tall soldier – taller than the other three – and wearing black material on his face, came down. I told them that I wanted them to target civilians less; so as not to kill people and cause damage. The tall one said to me: "Come," and he grabbed me by the right shoulder and made me sit on the stairs of the house. He put my hands behind my back and tied me up. Then he put a blindfold on my eyes. Then he beat me, and made me sit for a while without hitting me until around 6.00 in the evening of the same day. One of the soldiers started to ask me: "What's your name? What did you come to do? Who are you working with? What are the names of your brothers? What do you do?"

Then he beat me severely. It was clear from the voices that there was more than one person beating me and insulting me. I stayed like that all night. In the morning of the next day, Tuesday 13 January 2009, one of the soldiers ordered me to take off all my clothes and some of them spat on me. Then, one of them injured my right hand with a sharp tool, and it was bleeding. I stayed like that, naked, for around two hours. Then, one of the soldiers ordered me to get dressed after he had untied me. Then, they took me out of the house and I walked with them for a short distance, and they made me go into another closed place. I think that it was a house because there were stairs in it. Then the soldier took the blindfold off and made me go up the stairs to the second floor. There was a glass window so the soldier opened it and ordered me to stand and look out of the window and not to sit down.

I stood in front of the window and looked out, but there was no sound of shooting or fighting. I stayed like that for around ten minutes, looking out of the window at other houses. Then the soldier ordered me to sit down. Then he ordered me to stand up. Then he told me to go to a concrete column inside the house. He untied my hands from behind my back and tied my hands to the column, making me hug it with my hands which he tied. I stayed like that from Tuesday morning until the morning of Wednesday 14 January 2009, without any food or drink.

On Wednesday morning, one of them untied my hands from the concrete column. Then he tied them up again and made me go downstairs. So I said to one of them: "I'm not Hamas. Hamas fires missiles at Israel. Hamas is not good. I want to cooperate with you," and the soldiers started laughing. Then they took me out of the house. There was a tank by the door of the house, and they made me get in. They took me with the tank, still tied up, with some of the soldiers and put me in a semi-closed place, like a barracks. There were a number of other

Palestinians there. After I arrived, they brought ten people from Ezbet Abed-Rabbo area and the soldiers were beating some of them severely.

Sometimes the soldiers gave us some sandwiches and water in bottles. There was a separate toilet inside the barracks for us detainees. We stayed there for around four days. Then they took us by bus to the Naqab (Negev) Prison inside Israel and they took us to a court inside Israel. I stayed in prison for two months. Then they released me and took me to Erez Crossing. Then I went back into Gaza again.

Case Study Seven: IOF uses elderly man as a human shield

In this incident the IOF uses an elderly man as a human shield for several days during which he hears soldiers discussing whether they should kill him. He is then held in a detention center.

“One (soldier) was saying to the other: ‘Lets kill him.’ And the other said: ‘How?’ And the other replied: ‘Shoot him in the head” **Victim Statement**

Statement Seven: Abbas Ahmed Ibrahim Halawa, 59-years-old, male

(Mr. Halawa has asthma and needs his inhaler at all times)

When Operation Cast Lead started, I made my family leave the house, which is located in Al Israa' neighborhood west of Beit Lahiya town, and stayed there by myself. It was very difficult from 27 December 2008. The Israeli Occupation Forces were shelling numerous places near where I live. Then, the ground forces invaded north-west of the area where I live. I saw the vehicles at around 10.00 in the evening on 4 January 2009 advancing and stationing themselves in the vicinity of the Al Furusiya Club west of my house.

Then, those vehicles began to fire artillery shells towards the residential houses in the area where I live. It was very dangerous. So I put a mattress under the stairs inside the house – as there are stairs in the main entrance and stairs inside like in a villa. I stayed there listening to the sound of the shells falling around my house and near it. At around 12.05 am on 5 January 2009, I was surprised by the sound of a very strong explosion.

Then I heard heavy shooting near the door of my house. I couldn't move. After a few minutes I saw bullets hitting the walls around me, and the floor. So I put my head between my legs and started to say the *shehada* (a prayer Muslims say when they feel about to die) and recite the Koran. I started screaming. Then I was surprised by a large number of Israeli soldiers who had broken into the place where I was. They had torch lights on their rifles and helmets, and had painted their faces black. They were pointing their weapons and shooting so I continued to shout. I said to them in a loud voice – and in Hebrew which I speak well from working in Israel: “Ani po,” which means “I am here.” I heard one of them say in Hebrew what means: “Stop firing.” It seemed to be an officer.

He said to me in Hebrew: “Take off your clothes.” So I started to take off my clothes. They pointed the lights of their weapons towards my body. I took off all my clothes, except for my shorts (my underwear). Then he said to me: “Show me your back.” So I did. Then he said: “Get

dressed.” So I put on my heavy coat. Then he told me to open the external door to the house. Then he took me outside and made me sit in front of my neighbor’s (Abdul Aziz Bukheit) house. There, they tied my hands behind my back and blindfolded me. Then they tied my legs. After that, more than one soldier began to ask me: “Where are Hamas’ tunnels? Where are Hamas’ rockets? If you don’t tell us where they are we will blow up your house!”

I told them that I didn’t know where they were and I told them that I had worked in Israel for 30 years and had built hundreds of houses, and asked them why they would destroy my house. Then one of them said: “Why are you here?” I said: “I am in my house.” He said: “It is forbidden for you to be here.” So I said: “Why is it forbidden? I am in my house, is a man forbidden to be in his house?” After talking like this, which lasted for 30 minutes, they took me to another place, different from the place where they had put me before, and after quarter of an hour, one of them told me to stand up. So I did. He pulled me and walked with me. The ties on my legs were a bit looser, but it was difficult to walk. I felt that I was walking upstairs, but I didn’t know where I was. While I was walking, one of the soldiers was holding me from my collar and sometimes from the back of my head, and others times by my shoulders.

Each time, he would put the barrel of his rifle in my back and the back of my head. He was making me walk the way he wanted me to. He was saying: “Walk.” So I walked.” And then he would order me to stop, so I stopped. After that, one of the soldiers untied my legs and my blindfold. My hands remained tied. I saw a number of soldiers spread out around the house, and around 15 officers sitting in the living room. They had maps in front of them and radios. I recognized the house, as it is my neighbor’s house. It was the house of the engineer Abu Shadi Dahman. As soon as I had sat in the living room, one of the officers, who had three stripes on his shoulder, opened one of the maps. He asked me about the place where my house was. So I said: “I’m not good at reading maps.” Then he made me sit on a chair. My hands were still tied up. The same officer started to ask me about Hamas’ tunnels and where the rockets are fired from.

When I said I didn’t know, the officer said to his soldiers: “Blindfold him.” Before they did, I saw a man in pajamas sitting by the wall. I thought he was one of the neighbors, but I didn’t know. After they blindfolded me, the soldiers walked me downstairs to the road. I knew this because of the sand and mounds made by the tanks. They were holding me like last time from behind, and were putting their weapons in my head and back. I walked for a long distance, for around two hours during which they were stopping and trying to find people inside the houses. They were calling: “Who is in the house?” Then they would open fire; then they would make me go into the house while they were gathering behind me, then they would go out; and so on. I went into around five houses in the same way. We didn’t find anyone in any of the houses. They left the houses after a short while.

My eyes were still blindfolded. I could see through the blindfold a little. They kept walking with me in front of them on a long road, then on a second long road, then on a third. The route was very difficult because of the damage caused by the tanks and other vehicles. I could only hear the words: “Ta’tzor...Tamsheakh.” Which means: “Stop....Walk,” and so on. I didn’t hear them shooting for an hour during the walk. After that, we stopped and they sat me on the ground. I was shaking from fear, tiredness and cold. The weather was really cold. They left me for a long time so I asked for something to cover myself with. One of them brought me a blanket and put it on my shoulders. Then another soldier put a blanket completely over my head and body. So it became totally dark. But being with a blanket was a little better.

After sitting like this for a few hours, I realized it wasn’t as dark as before. I felt it was warm, so I

thought that the sun had risen. At this time, I heard the sound of a person moaning from pain next to me, a meter from me. Then I heard the same person say: "Please, my back hurts and I heard you speaking Hebrew. Ask them for some water for me to drink." So I asked him who he was and he said: "I'm Abu Douri Al Ajrami." I realized who it was as he is my neighbor. So I asked the soldiers for water for him and I told them that he was sick. They brought him water. After they left, I talked to Abu Douri and introduced myself. After an hour, one of the soldiers came and took the blanket off my head and body and said: "Get up." So I did. "Then he took the blindfold off my eyes, so I could see it was light. I thought it was probably around 10.00 in the morning.

I was in a place north of the American School. The tanks had made a military post around it, sheltering behind sandy mounds with barbed wire around them. The soldier said: "I'm an interrogator," and he asked me the whereabouts of Hamas' tunnels and the place where rockets are fired from, and the same questions as before. I told him I didn't know, as before. I said that because I really don't know anything about them. Then he said to me, you have five minutes to think, and then I'll come back. Then he blindfolded me and took me back to the first place I was in. After ten minutes, the soldier came and got me. Then he took off my blindfold and said: "What's new?" He spoke in Hebrew of course. I gave him the same response. Then he blindfolded me and took me back to the first place. Then he asked for my ID card, and I told him where it was in my trousers. He took it and went. I stayed where I was for many hours, until it was night.

None of the soldiers came over. They didn't bring any food or drink. So I called them and asked if I could relieve myself during the night three times. Each time they would take me far away and refuse to untie my hands. After I relieved myself quickly, they took me back to the place I was in before. It was really disgusting. The time went slowly, until I lost track of the time. I was still with them on the second night. Then the third. I spent the days one after another without any food or drink. They would only let me relieve myself (urine and feces) and only very quickly and in a disgusting way. As the sun was going down on the third day, I heard the soldiers speaking to each other saying in Hebrew: "*Po neroog oto*". "*Ekh neroog oto*". "*Natenlo Kadour Bikarakhat Shilo*." This was going on between two soldiers. One was saying to the other: "Lets kill him." And the other said: "How?" And the first replied: "Shoot him in the head in his bald spot." I was really scared and I began to say the *shehada* (a prayer) and recite verses of the Koran. Then I couldn't get a hold of myself. I was waiting for a bullet in the head. Then I shouted loudly, so they asked me: "What's wrong?" I said, "I need to relieve myself."

I did that so I could get away from those soldiers. I did actually relieve myself and went back to my place. The soldier who went with me threw a blanket over my head and body and left me. I was still scared. After two hours, they took the blanket off and made me walk with my hands tied and my blindfold on. They put me in a vehicle. There was a lot of space in it. Two soldiers rode beside me. They put their weapons on my head. Then I heard the sound of a large roar. Then the vehicle moved. I thought that I was sitting in a tank. It kept going for more than an hour. Then it stopped. They made me get out and said: "Sit down." I told them: "I'm ill, and I'm not strong enough to sit down."

After I insisted, they brought me a chair. So I sat in an open area that was very cold. I asked them for a blanket and after an hour the soldier brought me a blanket and put it on my head and body. After two hours, they came to me and said: "Get up." This was after they had taken the blanket off. They walked with me for 100 meters and put me in a mobile room. Then, I began to realize that I had been detained and that they had taken me somewhere far away from the

place where I live. Inside that room, they asked me what my name was and demanded my belongings. They put them all in a bag; then they retied my hands and blindfolded me, and took me outside. Then they took me back to the room. Time passed slowly, without any food or drink. Then I heard the sound of a vehicle stopping near where I was.

The soldier said to me: "Get up." So I did. I went up some stairs. Inside, they pushed me to the end of a gangway. I was in a big bus. It moved for over an hour. Then it stopped and they made me get out. They took my blindfold off. It had become dark. I saw a military place where there were men and women soldiers. They were all looking at me. Then a soldier said to me: "Take off all your clothes." I protested because there were women soldiers there. They forced me to do it so I did. After that, he said: "Put your hands up...turn around 360 degrees." Then they checked me with a black device, even though I didn't have any clothes on. Then I got dressed, and they blindfolded me and put me in a room. Inside, I heard a woman's voice. She said: "Untie him". So one of the soldiers took my blindfold off and I saw a woman soldier behind a desk with two soldiers next to her. She had a number of electronic devices in front of her. She told me to put my fingers in a device and explained how to do it.

So I put my forefinger, thumb and middle fingers in the place for them in the device and she seemed to be checking the finger prints. The same thing happened a second time. Then they blindfolded me and made me stand up. Then I heard what sounded like the flash of a camera. Then I realized that I was inside one of the Israeli detention centers. After that, they took me, blindfolded, to the prison doctor's room. There, he asked me a number of questions about the illnesses I suffer from. So I told him. He asked me how I felt. So I told him that my right leg hurt, and that my back hurt. He wrote it down and gave me two medicine tablets. Then they tied my hands and blindfolded me and took me to a third room. It was very small; four meters and looked like a cell. There was no mattress or cover. The soldier left me tied up and blindfolded and locked the door and went. I lay down on the floor to rest, but I couldn't bear the cold of the floor. So I asked for a mattress, and asked him (the soldier) to respect my age and my humanity. They said to me: "There aren't any; and shut up." The conversation with them was in Hebrew and in an angry way. They left me. After a few minutes, a soldier brought me a thin mattress and a small blanket. I wanted to sleep and rest. After a short while, I asked to go to the toilet. So the soldier took me there, and refused to untie me and take off my blindfold. After I went to the toilet, I went back to the cell.

Inside, I took the blindfold off my eyes and the ties off my hands, and I stayed like that for around two hours when I heard someone open the door. So I put the ties and blindfold on again quickly. The soldier who opened the door said: "Get up." And he led me outside and put me in a room. There, they undid my ties and blindfold and told me to take off all my clothes. There were two soldiers there wearing civilian clothes. I took off my clothes, and he checked me with a black device then I got dressed. Then they tied me up and blindfolded me. I walked for a short distance then they put me into a room. Inside, there was an Israeli Intelligence man sitting. They spoke to me and asked me a number of questions after untying me. Then they tied me up again and blindfolded me and led me to a wide place. Then they untied my hands and blindfold, and I found myself in a wide place with a number of soldiers in it. I sat on a blanket on the ground and I saw around 40 people sleeping in the place. I greeted them and sat down. I started to talk to them. They were from different areas; some of them from Az-Zaytoun, some of them from Ezbat Abed-Rabbo, some of them from As-Salateen and some of them from Beit Hanoun. All of them had stories similar to mine. They gave me some food; a luncheon meat sandwich and a piece of tomato.

I ate more than half of it then I fell into a deep sleep. When I woke up, I asked to use the

shower; there was a shower with hot water and a toilet in the same place. I stayed there for the whole day and slept there. In the morning of the same day, the soldiers called me. The said: "Get your things together and come." So I went with my trousers as I wasn't carrying any things. Outside of the big room, they tied me and blindfolded me. Then they brought my things that they had taken in a nylon envelope, silver colored. My name in Hebrew was on it. Then I asked about my ID card and they said: "You'll get it." Then they led me to a vehicle (a bus). I could see it from an opening in my blindfold. I heard them say to the driver: "Take him to Erez." I rode in it, for over an hour before it stopped. When we reached Erez they made me get down from the bus, and walked with me, then they took off my blindfold and untied my hands, and told me to run until 5/5 checkpoint on the Palestinian side of Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing. After a few meters, they started to shoot around me and above my head. I could hear the sound of shells whistling in every direction. The shooting continued until I was around 200 meters away. Then I reached Al-Jamarek and I asked people if the IOF was there, and they reassured me. So I continued walking in a semi-abandoned road and I didn't find any transportation until I got to Six Martyrs Square in Jabalia Refugee Camp where my son, Ala's house is.

Conclusions

These seven case studies provide yet further evidence that the IOF systematically uses Palestinian civilians as human shields during military attacks in the oPt. This cruel practice endangers civilian life and causes long-lasting psychological trauma. These cases are just a few examples of holding civilians hostage and frequently forcing them to carry out tasks that soldiers are supposed to perform, either inside their homes or in areas where military operations are conducted.

The practice of using civilians as human shields is a war crime according to IHL, and when used in a systematic manner, as is the case with IOF practices towards Palestinians, constitutes a crime against humanity. Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations have taken all steps within their power to protect Palestinian civilians from this terrifying and lethal practice. The Israeli authorities continue to refuse to implement the orders of their own highest judicial body, let alone adhere to their clear obligations as an occupying power under IHL.

These practices compel the international community, and especially the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to act. The international community must take immediate and effective action to prosecute Israeli war criminals who perpetrate or order these crimes.

Al Mezan Center calls on the United Nations Secretary General, the Human Rights Council and relevant Special Rapporteurs to further investigate, *inter alia*, the IOF's use of Palestinian civilians as human shields.

Al Mezan Center also calls on the European Union to consider the investigations held by Palestinian, Israeli and international organizations regarding the gross violation by IOF of the rules of IHRL and IHL, including the use of human shields, in its bilateral relations with the State of Israel. The IOF's systematic contempt of these rules, and of the rulings of the Israeli High Court, should not go unnoticed or unpunished by all the attainable judicial and diplomatic means.

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights strongly condemns Israel's continued disregard for the rules of international humanitarian law when dealing with civilians in the oPt, and its non-compliance with international human rights law.

Al Mezan Center emphasizes that the continued failure of the international community to fulfill its obligations and its silence on Israeli violations encourages Israel to proceed with its crimes.

Ends