



# Internal Violence

in Numbers

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## Statistical Report on Internal Violence and the Absence of the Rule of Law in Gaza

January - June 2018



## Introduction

Internal violence in the Gaza Strip, meaning violence stemming from Palestinian actors, is an indicator for the state of the rule of law and the prevalence of human rights violations and insecurity. Instability in the Gaza Strip threatens the unity and cohesion of Palestinian society and is thus among the major challenges faced by the Gaza population.

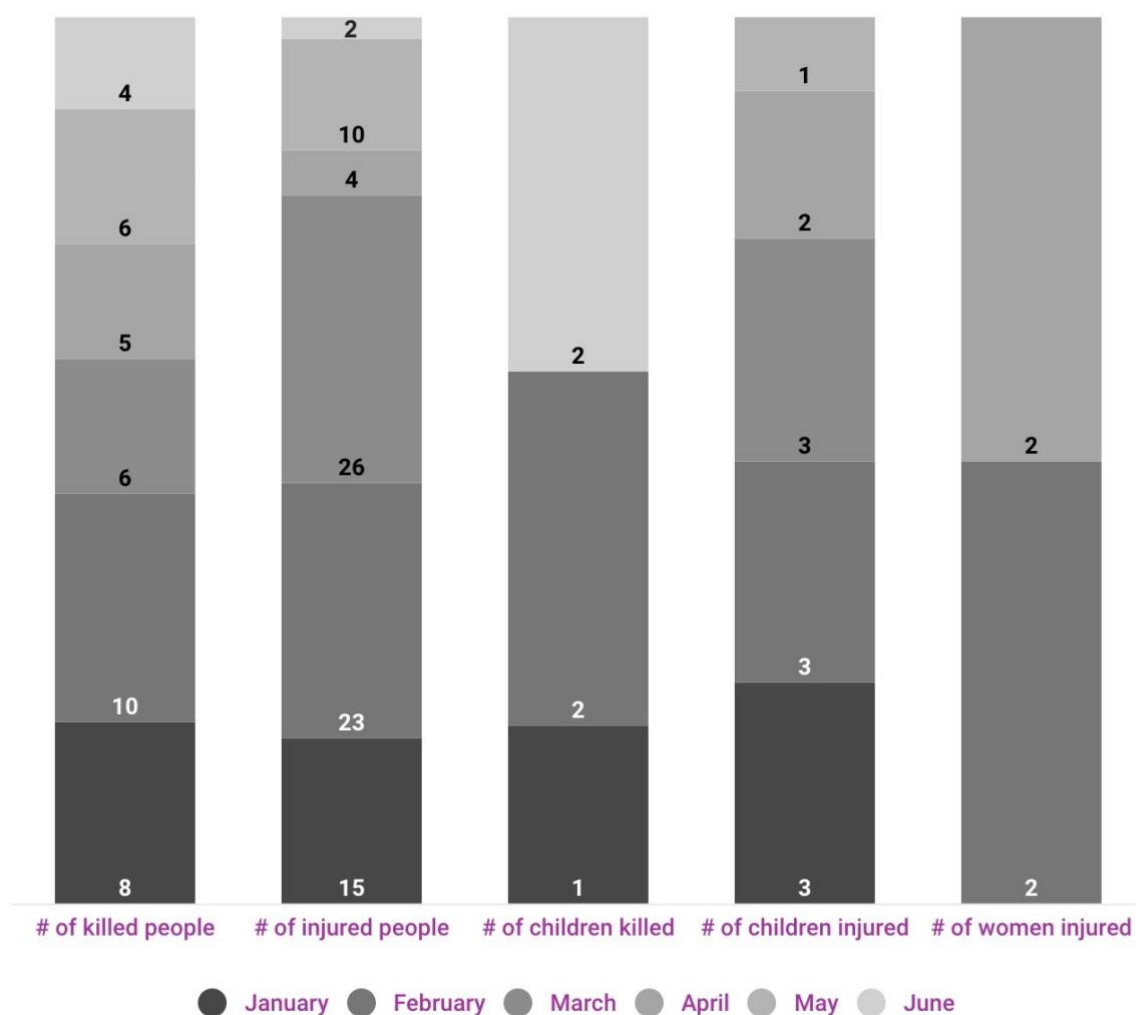
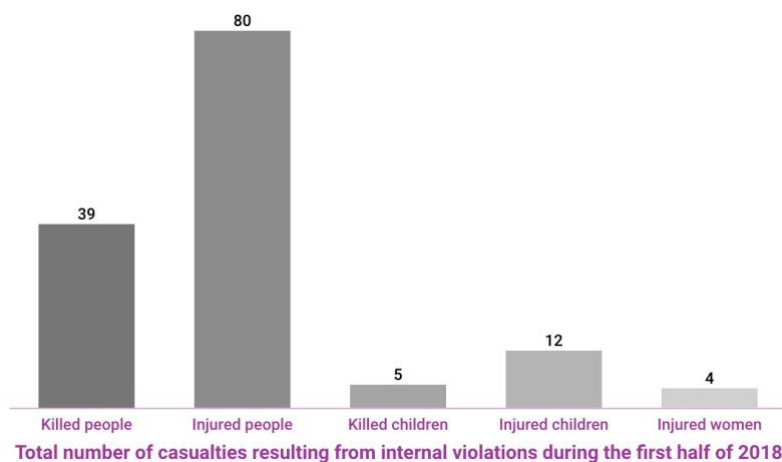
For years, the absence of the rule of law has fluctuated in terms of instigators and severity, with some trends remaining constant and others changing. For example, the instances of vigilantism, whereby people take the law into their own hands, vary in frequency from this reporting period compared to the same period in 2017. Certain incidents, including violations by law enforcement agents and armed persons, have increased in frequency during the period covered in this report. Shootings for different reasons, e.g. in family and personal feuds, stand out as a consistent indicator of instability. Internal explosions, i.e. in civil settings and on military training sites, are also reported here, with a focus on incidents where children were injured.

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights is issuing this report in order to publish its documentation and statistics on internal violence, as an indicator for the absence of the rule of law. Al Mezan hopes that by revealing the serious consequences of the breakdown of security and the rule of law in Gaza, policy- and decision-makers will be prompted to take steps to combat internal violence.

*There are different forms of internal violence, abuse of rights, and vigilantism. Should prompt actions not be taken, these serious indicators of absence of the rule of law will escalate.*

## Tally and Makeup of Victims

In the first half of 2018, 39 people died and 80 were injured, including children and women in incidents relating to abuse and misuse of firearms, in explosions and in incidents of people approaching explosive objects.



Total number of victims of internal violations during the first half of 2018 disaggregated by month

*People continue to  
fall victim to internal  
violence within the  
absence of the rule  
of law*

## Attacks on Personal Safety

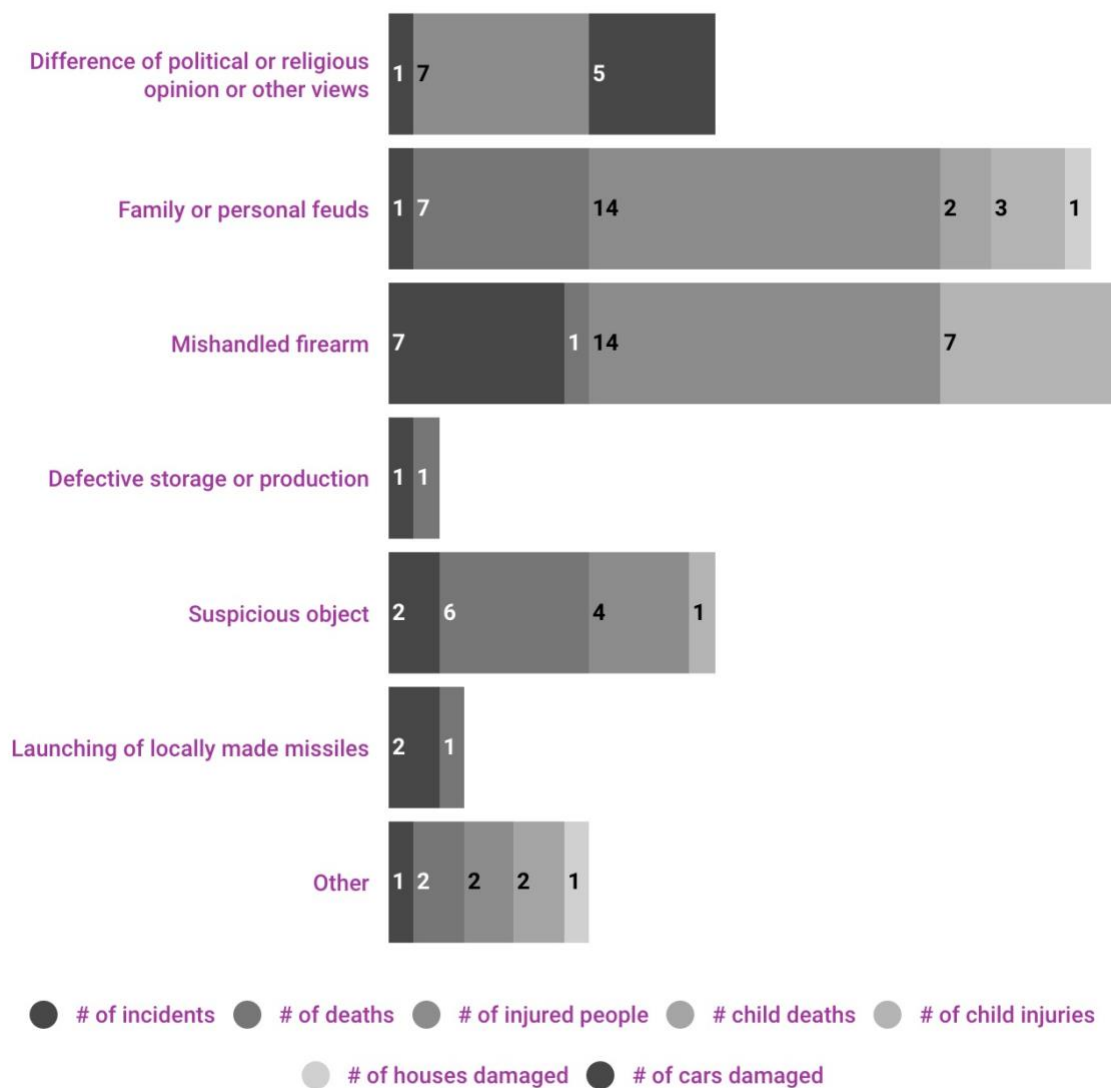
In this section, Al Mezan reports on areas where an increasing number of individuals faced a threat to life, whether in personal or family feuds, in events of mishandled firearms, in shootings, or in other related incidents. Both fatalities and injuries are included in the statistics. In terms of frequency and number of victims, family feuds were documented as the most prominent form of personal insecurity, as explained in the chart below:

<i>Type of incident</i>	<b># of incidents</b>	<b># of killed people</b>	<b># of injured people</b>	<b># of children killed</b>	<b># of children injured</b>	<b># of women injured</b>	<b># of damaged cars</b>
<i>Family or personal feud</i>	13	8	15	1	0	0	1
<i>Revenge</i>	2	0	3	0	1	0	0
<i>Anonymous shooting</i>	3	0	3	0	0	2	0
<i>Mishandled or misused firearm</i>	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Theft</i>	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Demonstration</i>	1	0	10	0	0	0	0
<i>Detention</i>	2	4	5	0	0	0	0
<i>Collaboration (with Israel)</i>	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	27	18	36	1	1	2	1

## INTERNAL EXPLOSIONS

Frequent explosions in the Gaza Strip, whether intended for revenge or being unintended consequences of military activities or the mishandling of firearms, claimed the lives of 18 persons in 15 incidents during the reporting period, as shown in the following table.

Category	# of incidents	# of deaths	# of injured people	# child deaths	# of child injuries	# of houses damaged	# of cars damaged
Difference of political or religious opinion or other views	1	0	7	0	0	0	5
Family or personal feuds	1	7	14	2	3	1	0
Mishandled firearm	7	1	14	0	7	0	0
Defective storage or production	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Suspicious object	2	6	4	0	1	0	0
Launching of locally made missiles	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	2	2	2	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>



## ATTACKS ON PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY

Attacks on public and private property, including offices of governmental and non-governmental organizations, continued to be recorded during the first half of 2018. Al Mezan documented three such incidents, none of which resulted in casualties or damages.

Category	# of incidents
Difference of political or religious opinion or other views	1
Protest	1
Other	1
Total	3

## VIOLATING THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Violations of the right to peaceful assembly continue to be perpetrated in the Gaza Strip. Competent authorities demand that permission be obtained before organizing any assembly or public event. Such a demand constitutes a breach of the spirit and text of the Basic Palestinian Law as well as of Law No. 12 of 1998 on Public Assemblies. The competent authorities have entitled themselves to intervene in meetings held on private property, in blatant violation of privacy, assembly and association freedoms that are the foundation of any democracy. Further, these authorities have used force to break up peaceful assemblies—sometimes even when prior permission has been granted.

The following table represents in numbers the violations of the right to peaceful assembly:

Category	# of incidents	# of injured people
Protests	2	3
Difference of political or religious opinion or other views	6	0
Total	8	3

## DEATHS IN PRISONS AND DETENTION CENTERS

During the reporting period, Al Mezan documented one case of death inside a prison or detention center. Al Mezan has demanded that the competent authorities launch an urgent, effective and transparent investigation into the incident to assess whether the proper arrest and detention procedures were followed by law enforcement and whether the detainee was subjected to any form of ill-treatment or torture.

## ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS

This reporting period saw an increasing number of restrictions and attacks perpetrated against journalists by police and security forces. Journalists were also attacked by ordinary citizens, while nearby policemen looked on but did not intervene. In this period, Al Mezan documented eight different cases in which journalists were prevented from working and physically assaulted in incidents ranging from being prevented from working, to arrest and detention, and to confiscation of recorded materials.

One of many examples of attacks on journalists took place at 1:45pm on Friday, 4 May 2018, when a person in plainclothes, who claimed he was with the Ministry of Interior, arrested journalists Samir Skaik, 38, and Shaheer Elhelo, 27. The journalists were busy preparing a media report about the meeting of the Palestinian National Council (PNC). The two journalists were conducting interviews with citizens to survey their opinions about the convening of the PNC and the decisions of President Mahmoud Abbas. Both journalists were detained in the street for around two hours before an official from the Ministry of Interior arrived and insisted a permit was required prior to an interview with citizens. The journalists were released after the security personnel took away the memory card containing videos of the interviewed citizens.

A statistical breakdown is provided in the following table:

Category	# of incidents	# of detention cases	# of casualties
Assault on journalists	8	4	1

## CONCLUSION

The statistics compiled in this report illustrate the prevalence of internal violence that entails the violation of rights and speaks to the absence of the rule of law. These conditions are worsened by the practice of citizens circumventing the legal system and taking the law into their own hands. Effective measures must be applied to ensure the rule of law and prevent the escalation of violence internally in the Gaza Strip. Reform measures must be applied not only to ordinary citizens but also to law enforcement agents. The latter's adherence to the provisions of the law must be closely monitored in order to minimize vigilantism by citizens who view the abuse of power and authority, and of propagating insecurity and corruption, as justification for taking the law into their own hands.

Al Mezan therefore stresses the critical need to initiate a multi-level collaboration between civil society and governmental agencies. Civil society must be able to monitor the role of the executive authorities in order to enhance the rule of the law in Gaza and thus create more stability and security.

Stressing the importance of the rule of law and of the separation of powers as basic requirements to ensuring the fulfilment of rights, and in seeking to enhance stability, social cohesion, and a democratic society, Al Mezan is calling for:

- The application of measures to ensure that laws and legal limitations are followed, and to hold to account all individuals, especially law enforcement agents proven to have broken the law;
- The introduction of measures to control and regulate ownership and use of firearms as well as to prevent the storage of weapons and explosives in populated areas, with the dual aim of preventing abuse and misuse of weaponry and of protecting innocent lives;
- Effective steps to be taken to protect and promote the right to freedom of association, including of non-profit organizations; and
- The right to peaceful assembly to be respected, especially in the case of private meetings.