



The Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights  
Grievances Department

Date: ٤ June ٢٠٠٨

**May ٢٠٠٨ Report on Human Rights Violations in the Palestinian Territory**

This report highlights human rights violations as monitored by the **Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR)** throughout the controlled territory of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) over the month of May ٢٠٠٨.

It should be noted, however, that reported violations are not necessarily exhaustive as to cover all infringements and aggressions against human rights in the PNA-controlled territory. Events addressed in this report include only those monitored by **ICHR** based on Palestinian citizens' complaints and **ICHR** field research team's documentation.

Over May ٢٠٠٨, **ICHR** reported the following violations against human rights throughout the PNA-controlled territory:

**١. Violation of the right to life and physical safety:**

During the month of May ٢٠٠٨, **PICHR** reported that ٧ citizens died throughout the PNA-controlled territory. Of those, ٥ citizens were killed in the Gaza Strip and ٢ others in the West Bank. Affected citizens were killed on grounds of various causes:

*Fatalities caused by arms abuse:*

In the Gaza Strip, ٧ citizens were killed due to arms abuse in the Gaza Strip. On ٣ May ٢٠٠٨, the corpse of ٥٥-year-old **Abdul Ra'ouf Ahmed Thabet** was transported to the European Hospital in the city of Khan Yunis. An armed confrontation took place between members of the Hamas Movement and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, during which Thabet sustained fatal bullet wounds in the stomach and left thigh. Additionally, the dead body of **Muhyi ad Din Ahmed Abdul Rahman Abu al Ka's**, ٢٩ years old, was transported to Ash Shifa' Hospital in the Gaza city. In an armed fight with several persons, Abu al Ka's was shot in the back, with the bullet hitting his lung.

*Deaths at Detention and Interrogation Centres of Security Agencies:*

On ٨ May, **Hasan Jum'ah Hasan Khaled**, a Palestinian Preventive Security captain, died in the detention centre at the Palestinian Military Intelligence headquarters in the city of Ramallah due to a brain stroke. Khaled died in less than ١٠ hours after he had been admitted to the detention centre, which is designated for Palestinian military personnel.

According to **ICHR** documentation, Khaled was transported to Ramallah Public Hospital after he had sustained the brain stroke. Later, he was announced dead.

*Deaths of detonated explosives:*

On 11 May, a number of activists of the Hamas-affiliated Al Qassam Brigades were planting a landmine in the area of Al Qarara on the eastern border of the Khan Yunis governorate. However, the landmine exploded, killing 30-year-old *Usamah al Astal* and injuring two others.

On 22 May, a number of children located an unexploded ordnance (UXO) while they were playing in the vicinity of their houses east of the area of Al Qarara near the eastern border of the Gaza Strip. A child threw the UXO in the yard of the Al Qarara Sports Club. Shrapnel scattered, resulting in the death of 9-year-old *Bara' Yousef al Astal* and injury of three other children.

*Casualties generated by excessive use of force:*

On 18 May, *Abdul Hadi Shatti as Soufi*, 38 years old, died while he was attempting to flee from a Police patrol in the Gaza Strip. According to the Police forces, a Police patrol was transporting As Soufi to a Police station for further interrogations. The Police vehicle, however, broke down near a Palestinian Naval Police station in Rafah. While Police officers were repairing the vehicle, As Soufi fled. Although a Police officer tried to stop him, As Soufi escaped. At this point, another Police officer opened fire, shooting As Soufi in the back. After he was transported to An Najjar Hospital in the city of Rafah, As Soufi passed away.

*Citizens killed in family fights and acts of revenge as well as under obscure circumstances:*

On 4 May, *Budour Theeb 'Ajaj Abu Tayyem*, a female citizen, died under unknown circumstances.

*Injuries*

During the month of May, **ICHR** reported that more than 34 citizens sustained wounds in incidents of family fights and firearms abuse. Other citizens also sustained wounds in unknown conditions.

On 6 May 2008, an armed confrontation took place between the Islamic Jihad-affiliated Al Quds Battalions and Palestinian security forces in the town of Qabatiya in the governorate of Jenin, during which 3 citizens, including 2 civilians and 1 activist of the Al Quds Battalions, were injured.

On 21 May, an explosion took place in a house belonging to Majed Abdu Sha'ban, a Hamas activist, leaving 10 citizens with serious and moderate wounds. According to the Palestinian Police, the explosion resulted from tampering with a hand grenade.

On 4 May, a university student threw a hand grenade in the western part of the Science Faculty yard at Al Azhar University during a fight between a large number of students.

As a result, ١٥ students sustained injuries. On ٢١ May, a number of armed individuals raided a factory in the eastern governorate of Nablus and opened fire towards Ziyad Ibrahim Dweikat, leaving him with four bullet wounds in the legs. The attack took place on grounds of a problem that took place between Dweikat and others.

**٢. Violations against the freedom of opinion and expression:**

On ٨ May, the Palestinian General Intelligence agency arrested *Usayd Abdul Majid Ata Amerneh (Al Maqdisi)*, a ٢٣-year-old journalist from Ad Duheisha refugee camp in the governorate of Bethlehem, while he was taking photographs of a procession in commemoration of the ٦<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nakbeh in the city of Bethlehem. General Intelligence officers arrested Amerneh as well as confiscated his camera and press ID. Though released on ٩ May, General Intelligence officers did not hand back Amerneh's press ID and camera.

In the city of Qalqiliya, Palestinian General Intelligence officers also arrested ٤١-year-old *Mustafa Ali Abdullah Sabri*, a journalist, on ٨ May and released him two days later.

On ١٠ May, the Palestinian General Intelligence agency arrested *Mohammed Omar Douri (Athbeh)*, a ٣٢-year-old cameraman of the Associate Press and owner of Marah Studio in the city of Qalqiliya. Douri is still held in custody.

Also in the governorate of Qalqiliya, Palestinian General Intelligence officers arrested *Dr. 'Issam Mohammed Yousef Shawar*, a ٤٢-year-old dentist, on ٨ May. Shawar writes the Opinion Column on the Gaza-based *Falastin* newspaper. It should be noted that a prohibition has been in place on the newspaper in the West Bank since ١٤ June ٢٠٠٧.

On ٢٥ May, Police forces of the Hamas' deposed government in the Gaza Strip detained Sameer Khalifeh, correspondent of the Sudan Satellite Channel, as well as Ahmed Zaki ar Ras, cameraman of Ramatan News Agency, at the Ash Shuja'iya Police station for ٢ hours. Police officers interrogated Khalifeh about his relations and work for the Palestine Satellite Channel as well as his adherence to the decision of the deposed Ministry of Interior, issued on ٤ March ٢٠٠٨, as to prevent him, along with Adel az Za'noun from covering any news for Palestine Satellite Channel.

Until ٢٠ May, the Palestinian General Intelligence agency continued to detain Mus'ab Qatalouni in the governorate of Nablus. Qatalouni has been held in custody since ٥ March ٢٠٠٨.

As the *de facto* government in the Gaza Strip also continued to prevent Palestine Satellite Channel from operating or broadcasting over the month of May ٢٠٠٨, the PNA agencies also prevented the Al Aqsa Satellite Channel from broadcasting in the West Bank. Moreover, PNA security agencies prevented distribution of the *Ar Risalah* and *Falastin* newspapers in the West Bank.

**٣. Violations of the right to assembly and peaceful gathering:**

On ١ May, Police forces in the governorate of Rafah obstructed a celebration organised by the National Activity Factions on the occasion of the World Labour Day. Planned to

take place in the Rafah Services Club at ١٤:٠٠, Police forces were dispatched to the area and ordered that the celebration be cancelled. It should be noted that factions sponsoring the celebration included the Fatah Movement, Popular Strife Movement, Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA), Arab Liberation Front, and Palestinian National Initiative (AL MUBADARA).

On ١٠ May, Police forces also suspended activities of the Second Annual Conference on *Negotiations, Resistance and Looking for a New Reconciliation*, organised by Badael Centre for Studies and Research via videoconference in Ramallah and Gaza at the Commodore Hotel. Claiming that sponsors of the Conference did not obtain the necessary licence, police forces disconnected the videoconference and suspended conference sessions.

Also on ١٥ May, police forces used force to prevent and disperse a public peaceful gathering held in commemoration of the ٦٠<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nakbeh. The gathering was organised by the Higher Committee for the Commemoration of the Nakbeh Anniversary of the National Activity Group. Claiming that it was not licensed by the Ministry of Interior, police officers dispersed the gathering and beat several members and activists of the National Activity Group, including Sarhan Sarhan, Jamal Abu Habel and Tayseer Zaqqout.

#### **٤. Attacks on public and private Institutions and property:**

On ٢٤ May, armed individuals affiliated with the Hamas Movement seized control of offices of the Khan Yunis Youth Sports Club as well as Khan Yunis Municipal Union Club in the city of Khan Yunis. According to **ICHR** documentation, a number of masked armed individuals of the Al Qassam Brigade raided a house belonging to Mazen Abu Zeid, a board member of the Khan Yunis Youth Sports Club, and insisted that he give them keys of the Club. At the same time, several other masked individuals went to Mahmoud al Qerem, a board member of the Club, and demanded that he hand the keys. On the same day, two vehicles transporting a number of Hamas activists arrived at the Khan Yunis Municipal Union Club offices, located in the Sports City in the area of Qizan an Najjar south of the city of Khan Yunis, and forced the guard to hand over the Club keys. The guard, however, replied that they should contact chairman of the club or Khan Yunis Municipality. As the Hamas activists insisted, the guard had to hand the keys over. In the evening, a Hamas activist forced Ibrahim Ghuneim al 'Aqqad, a board member of the Khan Municipal Union Club, to hand official documents and stamps of the Club.

On ٢٨ May, **ICHR** also reported that an explosion took place at the entrance to Lafitte Boutique (a women's clothes shop belonging to Mazen Mohammed Abdul 'Aziz, ٤٣ years old) along the An Nasr Street in the Gaza Strip. Though causing light damage to the boutique entrance, no casualties were reported.

On ٣١ May, a group of masked armed individuals raided the building housing Al Manarah Kindergarten and School belonging to the Holy Book Association (the Baptist Church) in Az Zaytun neighbourhood in the Gaza city. The armed individuals detained, blindfolded and beat guards as well as confiscated their mobile telephones. An armed individual also used a guard's mobile telephone and threatened the principal of the Al

Manarah School. Before they left, armed individuals told guards that they wanted to send a message as to threaten the American principal of the school. Moreover, the bus belonging to the Holy Book Association, which was parked in the garage along with other vehicles, was reported to have been missing as well. It should be noted that the Al Manarah School was also attacked during the month of February 2008.

**5. Violation of the right to fair litigation:**

During the month of May, ICHR received 22 complaints against the Ministry of Interior of the *de facto* government in the Gaza Strip. In these complaints, affected citizens claimed that they were arrested by security agencies (namely the Internal Security and Police forces) on arbitrary grounds and in disregard of applicable, sound legal procedures.

At about 23:00 on 19 May, Usamah Abdul Sattar al Farra, Governor of Khan Yunis, along with 3 Fatah activists, were taken from their houses in Ash Sheikh Nasser neighbourhood in the city of Khan Yunis, claiming that a number of national factions intended to hold a festival to pay tribute to labourers in Khan Yunis. The Governor and other Fatah activists were detained until 02:30 on the same day.

In the West Bank, ICHR received 10 complaints on arbitrary detention and contravention of relevant, applicable legal procedures. Of those filed, 9 complaints were lodged against the General Intelligence agency, 8 against the Preventive Security, and 2 against the Civil Police.

Palestinian security agencies in the West Bank also continued to bring civilian detainees before military judicial authorities, thereby breaching guarantees of fair trial safeguarded by the Palestinian Basic Law and relevant international conventions.

On 10 May, the Palestinian General Intelligence agency arrested An Nadi and Abu al 'Izz, female citizens, and released them two days later. It should be stated that both female citizens are wives of Riyadh an Nadi and Ahmed Abu al 'Izz, who are detained by the Israeli occupation forces.

**6. Violation of right to protection against forcible disappearance:**

Over the month of May 2008, Islamic Jihad-affiliated Al Quds Battalions activists abducted and interrogated a number of persons on grounds of collaboration with the Israeli occupation forces. On 20 May, the Al Quds Battalions issued a flyer stating that its security agency arrested a group of 4 persons charged with collaboration with the Israeli occupation authorities. Based on interrogations, these persons confessed that they did collaborate with the Israeli army. Later, videotaped confessions of 4 persons were disseminated on CDs and online. It should be noted, however, that the Al Quds Battalions abducted the said persons from their houses and on streets. These persons were also interrogated in unknown places for a period of over 10 days.

On 7 May, masked individuals (introducing themselves as members of the Internal Security agency) kidnapped Mohammed Ahmed Zaghbar, 28 years old, from his house along the Ash Shanti Street in the area of Ash Sheikh Radhwan in the Gaza city. At

around ٢٣:٠٠ on ١١ May, approximately ٢٠ masked armed individuals also searched Zaghbar's houses for about ٣ hours. Ever since, Zaghbar has disappeared and his whereabouts still unknown.

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