



WILPF STATEMENT
14 May 2021
Updated 17 May 2021

Statement from the WILPF International and MENA sections to the Israeli Authorities, the international community, international organisations, activists and activist organisations

Statement on the Ongoing and Escalating Violence in Palestine

On the eve of the 73rd anniversary of the Nakba, we are witnessing horrific scenes of relentless shelling by Israel of civilian buildings and neighbourhoods in Gaza, the rise of settler violence terrorising unarmed peaceful Palestinians in Occupied Jerusalem, and the targeting of Palestinians in Lod, Haifa, and elsewhere by mobs. This is the reality of Israeli policy towards Palestine and it must be addressed. Israeli authorities must be held accountable for their continuous violence to ethnically cleanse entire neighbourhoods of their residents. This has been going on for over 70 years. The scenario played out in Sheikh Jarrah has been playing out since the eve of the creation of the State of Israel.

WILPF stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their right to resist in the face of the violent systematic settler colonial policies in effect and apartheid system founded on land theft, violence, and the denial of basic human rights. The right to peaceful protest has been penalised with targeted killing and reprisal against entire families and communities. We support the residents of Sheikh Jarrah who are defending their homes and resisting illegal forced displacement and ethnic cleansing in occupied East [Jerusalem](#).

Background

Tensions had been escalating in Jerusalem for weeks in reaction to settler colonial policies, including [new restrictions](#) on Palestinians observing Ramadan, and the assault on worshippers engaging in religious rituals at al Aqsa mosque. In recent weeks, settler organisations have also attempted to forcibly displace Palestinian families from their homes in the historic Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem. These actions were undertaken with the protection of the Israeli state and its heavily armed military and police, as part of continued efforts to ethnically cleanse Jerusalem of its Arab Palestinian population. The aggression against Palestinian families came as a result of a judicial challenge by the settler organisation Nahalat Shimon, taking advantage of the discriminatory laws inherent in the [apartheid judicial system](#) maintained by the Israeli government.



Palestinians in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood held protests in response to the imminent threat of forced displacement. Israeli police responded to these protests with attacks on Palestinians, by raiding and damaging houses; firing tear gas canisters, sound bombs and skunk water; arbitrary arrests; and shooting potentially-lethal rubber-coated bullets at those inside the courtyards of [Al-Aqsa](#). This violence resulted in the injury of hundreds of Palestinian protesters, worshippers and emergency medical staff. In a few days, 915 Palestinians were injured in Jerusalem, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. In response, Hamas and other militant groups have fired rockets into Israel. Israel bombarded Gaza, one of the most populated regions in the world with a campaign of relentless airstrikes, pulverising buildings, offices and homes wiping out entire families - violence which continues at the time of writing this statement. It is worth noting that the Palestinians have in the past tried to peacefully protest only to be met by Israeli violence such as in 2018 when the [people of Gaza demonstrated at the border](#). Nonviolent resistance has also been and continues to be met with violence.

There are [gendered impacts](#) to the violations experienced, including the manifestations of long-lasting psychological harm. Women are disproportionately impacted by forced displacements due to their roles as primary caregivers of their families and managers of household livelihoods. They often suffer the double burden of not only losing their domestic space, but also being forced to find refuge in the homes of other families, resulting in overcrowding and increased tensions.

Israel and Israeli settlers have no legal claim over Occupied East Jerusalem, which is Palestinian land that the Israeli military has been occupying since 1967, and is recognised as such by the UN and international community.

It must be recalled that Israel has specific legal obligations as the Occupying Power under International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law. [International law criminalises](#) any form of collective punishment and the forcible transfer of individuals and communities in the occupied population. Israel has consistently failed to comply with these obligations, and must be called to account by the United Nations and the international community.

We call on the Israeli authorities to:

- End illegal forced ethnic displacement of Palestinians, illegal settler activities in the Palestinian Territories, and the annexation of Palestinian land;
- End the use of unlawful violence against Palestinian protesters in Jerusalem and throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories;
- Halt the arbitrary arrests of protestors and activists in Jerusalem and across the Occupied Territories, and release all individuals who have been arbitrarily arrested;
- Stop the collective punishment of the people of Gaza by lifting the siege on the enclave and ending the use of disproportionate violence and explosive weapons in civilian-populated areas.



We also call for an immediate ceasefire, an end to the rising settler violence, police violence and aggression against Palestinians and the indiscriminate attacks on civilians in the Gaza Strip that have resulted so far in at least [181 deaths](#) including 52 children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry on 16 May. At least 1,225 others have also been injured in the attacks.

Oppression and violence only begets more violence. Violence, harassment, aggression, land and home theft of occupied Palestinians must cease. We condemn all targeting of civilians particularly the use of explosive weapons in civilian areas must stop immediately.

The international community has failed repeatedly to take [effective measures](#) to hold Israel accountable for its continuous violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights law, in effect continually undermining the international legal system. The ongoing impunity must no longer be tolerated, and the international community must break the silence in the face of apartheid.

We call **on the international community** to take a firm stance against the continuous blatant violations committed by Israel in total impunity. The international community should support all efforts of international justice, namely the ICC investigation into the Situation in Palestine; impose economic sanctions on Israel including incremental restrictive measures; and impose an arms embargo on Israel.

We call **on international organisations, activists and activist organisations** to use their platforms to share information on what has been happening; and to use their platforms to amplify the voices of local activists who are experiencing the situation on the frontlines.