



# Gaza Fishermen ... Pathetic Catch

( A report documenting the suffer of Palestinian fishermen in the Gaza Strip, and the violations that the Israeli Navy Forces committed against them in 2014 )

## Summary

During last year, 2014, the Israeli occupation authorities intensified attacks on fishermen in the Gaza Strip by chasing them at sea on an ongoing basis, threatening their lives and safety. In addition, they prevented fishermen from carrying out their daily work in fishing by confiscating their nets, equipment, and boats, as well as manipulating the limits for fishing by allowing sometimes 3 nautical miles and other times 6 nautical miles. This affects fishermen and makes them unable to continue their work in fishing because of the dangers imposed on them by Israeli Navy Forces.

Those forces launched attacks against fishermen at sea by machine guns, artillery and missiles directed towards their boats to force them to leave their fishing areas. They detained the fishermen in an unjustified way at sea and transferred them to unknown locations inside the occupied Palestine. They do all these acts of aggression without any alert to fishermen, which spreads fear and panic among them and prevents them from doing their work freely and safely. Also, this leads fishermen to unemployment and deprives them of their right to work. According to the information and statements collected by Hemaya Center, the Israeli forces prevent fishermen from practicing their work, insulting them and threatening their lives. In addition, they are causing damage to fishermen's equipment, tools and boats. These practices violate the obligations of the Israeli Occupation under international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention on civilians during war which prohibits collective punishment and targeting civilians and their own property. These practices also violate the Israeli obligations under the two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

During 2014, according to Hemaya Center for Human Rights, the naval Israeli forces launched 129 attacks on fishermen at sea, killing one fisherman and directly injuring 14. The forces also arrested 47 fishermen.

Fishermen face very hard conditions due to the sea blockade and the Israeli restrictions and daily challenges that make it hard for them to practice fishing. Around 3800 fishermen, working along 40 km at the Gaza coast and taking care of around 50 thousands persons in Gaza, are affected by these Israeli practices. In addition, 2000 families, more than ten thousand persons, who are making living from other activities related to fishing are affected. These families are facing very miserable conditions of poverty, unemployment, and inability to meet their basic needs. Based on the statements collected from fishermen, most of them are no longer able to fish or to make good income from their fishing, and their families are suffering the lack of daily needs.

According to the information collected by the Center, the occupation forces carry out cruel practices against fishermen. These practices include imposing maritime blockade, attacking fishermen suddenly at sea, detaining, abusing, beating, humiliating, interrogating and intimidating them, opening fire deliberately at them at sea, and damaging or confiscating their fishing nets. They also include confiscation of their boats and their fishing equipment, pursuing them by the Israeli marines at sea and preventing them from fishing by forcing them to leave the rich fishing areas to other places. Furthermore, there is reduction and manipulation of the fishing limits allowed for Palestinian fishermen.

The Israeli practices against the Palestinian fishermen are incompatible with article 1/2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, which states, “All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law.” They are inconsistent with article 1/6, which state, “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right. It may not be acceptable in any way for a people to be deprived of their own means of subsistence.” They also contradict with article 52 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which states that “the prohibition of all measures that would lead to the unemployment of workers in the occupied country or restrict their possibilities order to induce them to work in the service of the State of the occupation.”

## **Introduction**

During the last year, the Israeli forces intensified their violations against fishermen in the Gaza Strip especially after the last Israeli aggression. They manipulated the sea fishing limits by allowing sometimes 3 miles and other times 6 miles.

They continued their attacks on fishermen at sea through opening fire at them and targeting their ships by artillery shells in order to force them to leave their fishing areas and not to sail again. They humiliate them and confiscate their boats, in addition to detaining them while they are fishing and sending them to unknown places in the occupied territories.

These violations are made without any previous warnings terrifying the fishermen and leading them to unemployment by preventing them from fishing.

The Israeli forces attack the fishing boats on Gaza seaport or beach, as they did in the last offensive, causing real damage to them and to the fishing equipment. These violations go along with the continuous Israeli siege that is against international law and international covenant on human rights and the international law in political, economic, social and cultural human rights.

In this report, we are showing what kinds of violations fishermen faced during the last year, especially what is related to the right of living and working. According to the collected information by Hemaya center, the Israeli forces prevent the fishermen from fishing, humiliate them and harm them physically on purpose. These attacks are against the Israeli obligations of the previously mentioned laws and conventions.

### **The Israeli restrictions on the fishing limits**

The Israeli naval forces ban the Palestinians right of reaching out to the sea and fishing. They have been continuing their policy of imposing isolation and restrictions on the fishermen since 2006, and Israel is still ignoring the agreement signed with the Palestinians and all other human rights agreements, such as international covenants and the fourth Geneva covenant.

According to the Oslo Accords that Israel signed with the Palestine Liberation Organization, Palestinian fishermen are allowed to sail for 20 nautical miles (37 km) from Gaza coast. However, Israel allowed them to sail for only 12 nautical miles, which is a blatant violation of the Oslo Accords and international law.

This situation continued until June 26, 2006, when Israel imposed a complete maritime blockade on the Gaza strip and completely banned fishermen from sailing. In September of the same year, Israel allowed them to sail and reduced the fishing limit to 6 nautical miles. In January, 2009, Israel reduced the limit to 3 nautical miles (5.5 km).

On November 24, 2012, Israel increased the fishing limit to 6 nautical miles again. Then, after 3 months, Israel reduced it again to 3 nautical miles, and this continued until May, 2013. Then Israel allowed the fishermen to sail in 6 nautical miles and this is still the case until the time of writing this report.

## Difficulties facing fishermen

In the Gaza Strip, fishermen face many problems and harassments due to procedures and practices imposed by the Israeli forces. Since 2000, Israel has been imposing very tough restrictions on the fishermen's right of sailing in the appropriate fishing limits using false pretexts to ban them sometimes from fishing completely. The Israeli restrictions against fishermen include:

- Complete maritime blockade.
- Sudden attacks at sea.
- Arresting, humiliating and beating fishermen.
- Opening fire at them.
- Destroying and confiscating their fishing nets.
- Detaining, interrogating and terrifying them.
- Confiscating their boats and fishing equipment.
- Forcing them to leave the rich fishing areas.
- Reducing the fishing limits.

## Sea limits according to Oslo Accords

1. Article 11 of Oslo Accords specified the limits for maritime activities.
2. It divided the maritime activities in the Gaza sea to 3 zones (K, L, M) as listed below:
  - (a) Zone K extends to twenty nautical miles into the sea from the beach in the northern part of the Gaza sea and to 1.5 nautical miles in the south.
  - (b) Zone M extends to twenty nautical miles into the sea from the beach and to 1 nautical mile in the wider Egyptian waters. According to the conditions in this article, both K and M zones are closed and the navigation there is limited to the Israeli maritime activity.
  - (c) L zone is bounded from the south by M zone and from the north by K zone. It also extends to 20 nautical miles in the sea from the beach. L zone shall be open for fishing and all kinds of recreational and commercial activities according to the following items:
  - (d) Fishing boats would not come out of zone L to the open sea and their engines can reach around 25 hp if they were above the boat's surface, and their maximum speed is up to 15 nautical miles for internal

engines. Boats would not carry weapons or ammunition and would not fish using explosives.

- (e) Entertainment boats are allowed to sail to three nautical miles from the beach unless they get permission in special cases by the Maritime Coordination and Cooperation Center referred to in paragraph 3. Boats may have engines of up to 10 hp. Marine motor bikes or water jets would not enter or operate in zone L.
- (f) Foreign ships entering zone L would not get closer than 12 nautical miles from the beach except for the activities mentioned in paragraph 4 below<sup>1</sup>.

## Sea blockade and international law

All Israeli practices towards the fishermen are against the International Covenant of 1966 on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 1/2 states, "All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic cooperation that is based on the principle of mutual benefit, and international law<sup>2</sup>. People may not in any way be deprived from their own means of subsistence."

The occupation forces practices contradict with the international conventions of the protection of the occupied state's rights; article 52 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 prohibits "all measures aiming at creating unemployment or at restricting the opportunities offered to workers in an occupied territory, in order to induce them to work for the Occupying Power."<sup>3</sup>

They also contradict with article 1/6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which states, "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Oslo agreement in 1994, extension of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area Extension (1) Protocol on the withdrawal of Israeli military forces and arrangements.

<sup>2</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).

<sup>3</sup> A report issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

<sup>4</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).

## The economic situation of fishermen in the Gaza Strip

The Palestinian fishermen face very hard living conditions due to the Israeli sea blockade and restrictions that make it hard for them to practice fishing. Around 3800 fishermen, working along 40 km at the Gaza coast and taking care of around 50 thousands persons in Gaza, are affected by these Israeli practices. In addition, 2000 families, more than ten thousand persons, who make living from other activities related to fishing are affected. These families are facing very miserable conditions of poverty, unemployment, and inability to meet their basic needs. Based on the interviews that the Center researchers collected, most of the fishermen are no longer able to fish or to make good income from their fishing, and their families are also suffering from the lack of daily needs.

Ramzi, a 45-year-old fisherman, has been working in fishing since he was 16 years old. He takes care of 10 members of his family. Describing his suffering, he said, "My living condition is very bad; I am no longer able to fish because of the high price of both gasoline and gas. The price of the fuel that my boat needs is 200 shekels daily. This situation has been going on for many years and we cannot tolerate it anymore." He added, "We face daily shooting from the Israeli forces. What makes my condition worse is the increasing numbers of fishermen as many of the unemployed people go to fish."

Ahmad, a 52-year-old fisherman, has never practiced any job other than fishing; he said that he lost his source of income after the Israeli forces had imposed very intense restrictions on fishermen. He added that they reduced the fishing limits to 3 km and intensified their attacks and shooting against fishermen, which "makes our fishing income hardly covering our expenses and our needs. Therefore, we do not go fishing regularly, especially after the rise of the fuel price, so I cannot ensure my six-member family's basic needs."

## The Impact of the Last Israeli Offensive 2014 on Fishermen

In the last Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip, many sectors were affected particularly the fishing sector. The estimated cost of the fishing destruction was around \$5m of direct and indirect loses distributed as:

**First:** Damage of the fishing boats and tools were estimated of about \$4.5m.

**Second:** Damage of the fishermen building and shops were estimated of about \$1m.

**Third:** Damage of the fishermen associations and union were estimated of about \$ 50 thousand.

According To the Data and Statistics Collected by the Center, the loss and damage were as follows:

Gaza has the highest rate of damage in the fishing sector as it is estimated of about \$5.5m reaching 85 percent in Gaza City. Both KhanYounis and Middle Gaza are the second by 5 percent each. Rafah is the third with 4 percent then North Gaza is only 2 percent. Table (1)

**Table (1) loss of Fisheries in percentage (1)**

No	Governorate	Loss
1	North Gaza	2
2	Gaza	85
3	Middle Gaza	5
4	Khan Younis	5
5	Rafah	4
	Total	100

About 345 fishermen of different governorates were affected during the offensive; 170 fishermen from Gaza city, 50% of the total number, 70 in Middle Gaza, 45 in Khan Younis, 35 in North Gaza, and 25 in Rafah,

**Table (2) Number of affected fishermen in Gaza Governorates**

No.	Governorate	Affected fishermen
-1	North Gaza	35
-2	Gaza	170
-3	Middle Gaza	70
-4	Khan Younis	45
-5	Rafah	25
	Total	345 fishermen



The estimated damage of fishermen boats and equipment were about \$5.5m as explained in the next table

No	Damage	Total/ Partial
1	Small boats	95
2	Motor	120
3	Fire motor for retrieving nets	30
4	Small boat with paddles	50
5	Large mesh net for sardines with fittings( floats and weights)	55
6	Small mesh net for tuna with fittings (floats+ weights)	20
7	Trap net for sardines/ birds	2300
8	Net for shrimp/ squid and the like	750
9	Beach drift net	10
10	Net for crab	400
11	Trap for guitarfish with fittings ( floats, weights etc)	850
12	Multiple hook fishing line	450
13	Multiple hook fishing line with steel/ lead for rays and large fish	52
14	Receiving rope/chain block board	300
15	GPS machine	75
16	Echo sounder	250
17	Oil selector	25
18	Bilge pump for engine	8
19	Flashlight	500
20	Electrical motor	250
21	Suction pump with motor	95
22	Motor for chain block or crane	50
23	A 180 battery	150
24	Solar/ oil	21000
25	cork	120000
26	Ballast lead for net	3500
27	Mesh net/ trap and the like	650
28	Net hitch	120
29	Empty box	50000
30	Welding machine/ drill/ grinding disk/starter/dynamo	51
31	Propeller for net motor	170
32	Pulley with stand	20
33	Chain block mesh	370
34	Furniture ,beds, blankets	95
35	Motor spare parts	100
36	Gas canister	150

## Attacks on fishermen at Gaza Sea

Israeli forces have intensified their attacks against fishermen since 2014 as they opened fire on them, prevented them from fishing and limited their fishing zone to 3-6 nautical sea. By doing this, Israel violated the signed agreements, Rules of International Law and Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 which prevents the occupying authorities from depriving the

citizens of occupied country of using their country's natural resources or banning them from working or humiliating them. During January to December 2014 Hemaya observed "129" attack by Israeli forces on fishermen at sea which caused the death of a fisherman, direct injury of other fourteen, and the detention of 47.

Table (4)

Month	Direct Fire	Deaths	Injuries	Detention	Child Detention
January	17	-	-	2	1
February	11	-	-	3	1
March	12	-	3	4	-
April	8	-	-	2	-
May	14	1	2	17	-
June	9	-	-	-	-
July	-	-	-	-	-
August	-	-	-	-	-
September	17	-	1	11	2
October	10	6	6	7	1
November	13	2	2	-	-
December	18	2	2	12	0
Total	129	16	16	58	5

**Hemaya researchers prepared a list of the names of the fishermen who were fishing when they got detained by Israeli Naval Forces:-**

Table (5) names of the detained fishermen at Gaza Sea

No.	Name	Age	Area
1	Ahmad Kamal Abu Wardah	17	North Jabalia
2	Yousef Ameen Abu Wardah	18	North Jabalia
3	Fadel Jamal Ramadan Sultan	24	North Beit Lahia
4	Mohammed Abd Alnbi Rajab Elsalibi	41	Al Shati camp- Gaza
5	Ahmad Abd Alnbi Rajab Elsalibi	17	Al Shati camp- Gaza
6	Jihad Bashir Shaban Abu Reyala	24	Gaza
7	Shabaan Adnan Abu Reyala	34	Gaza
8	Saddam Abd Elbari Sultan	21	North Beit Lahia
9	Mohamed Yaseen Zayed	19	North Beit Lahia
10	Ayman Khaleel Abd Allah Elbardaweel	43	North Al Salateen
11	Alaa Khaleel Abd Allah Elbardaweel	41	North Al Salateen
12	Ramez Sadi Mohamed Jomah	29	North Al Salateen
13	Abd Alrahman Shneno	21	Rafah- Tal Al sultan
14	Fathi Sa'd Al Sa'idi	34	Rafah- Tal Al sultan
15	Ahmad Aldin Khilil Ahmad Mansour	24	North Al salateen
16	Ibrahim Khamis Murad	44	Rafah- Tal Al sultan
17	Ahmad Al Jizawi		Rafah- Tal Al sultan
18	Haitham Ali Al Habil	33	Al Shati camp- Gaza
19	Fuad Ali Al Habeel	30	Al Shati camp- Gaza
20	Sa'di Saleh Al Adgham	42	Al Shati camp- Gaza
21	Rebhi Jamal Abu Watfa	22	Al Shati camp- Gaza
22	Zeiad Zaki Tarroush	25	Al Shati camp- Gaza
23	Zayed Zaki Tarroush		Al Shati camp- Gaza

24	Ismail Zaki Tarroush	22	Al Shati camp- Gaza
25	Mahmoud Sa'id Al Sa'idi	20	Al Shati camp- Gaza
26	Mohammed Ali Murad	19	Al Shati camp- Gaza
27	Khamees Ibrahim Murad	19	Rafah- Tal Al sultan
28	Mohammad Ishaq Mohammad Zayed	18	Rafah- Tal Al sultan
29	Mosa Talal Ata Al Sultan	24	Rafah- Tal Al Sultan
30	Tareq Abd Al Hadi Sultan	18	North Beit Lahia
31	Isam Abd Elbari Mohammed Al Sultan	12	North Beit Lahia
32	Bahaa Yousef Mohammed Al Sultan	25	North Beit Lahia
33	Ahmad As'ad Mohammed Al Sultan	22	North Beit Lahia
34	Sofian Mohye Al Deen Kollab	47	Gaza
35	Mohammed Yousef Abu Awda	24	Gaza
36	Mustafa Haidar Abu Awda	25	Gaza
37	Ahmad Zeyad Alshareef	32	Gaza
38	Abd AL Raheem Abu Selmia	30	Gaza
39	Khaleel Jawhar Baker	22	Gaza
40	Majed Fadel Hasan Baker	55	Gaza
41	Omran Baker	27	Gaza
42	Mohammed Baker	22	Gaza
43	Fadi Baker	26	Gaza
44	Mahmoud Adel Abu Reyala	16	Al Shati camp- Gaza
45	Ibrahim Matar	20	Al Shati camp- Gaza
46	Adham Khaled Alhabeel	26	Al Shati camp- Gaza
47	Ahmad Mohammed Al Arayshi	24	Al Shati camp- Gaza
48	Mahmoud Naser Mahfooth	23	Al Shati camp- Gaza
49	Bilal Abu Awda	23	Al Shati camp- Gaza
50	Sofian Mahfooth	26	Al Shati camp- Gaza
51	Yaser Othman Meqdad	26	Al Shati camp- Gaza
52	Adham Othman Meqdad	27	Al Shati camp- Gaza
53	Bahaa Al Deen Al Najar	22	Al Shati camp- Gaza
54	Safwat Al Sultan	30	Al Salatin Neighborhood Beit Lahia
55	Saed Mahmoud Zayed	32	Al Salatin Neighborhood Beit Lahia
56	Mahmoud Mohammad Zayed	29	Al Salatin Neighborhood Beit Lahia
57	Ahmad Mohammed Zayed	30	Al Salatin Neighborhood Beit Lahia
58	Muhammad Amin Abu Warda	22	Jabalia Anazla

End

Hemaya Center for Human Rights

Friends of Humanity Intl.