



**Al Mezan Center for Human Rights**



**Annual Narrative Report**

**Core Program: Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

**1 January – 31 December 2014**

**Gaza – January 2015**





## 1. Introduction

This is the final narrative report for the year 2014. It reports on the third, and final, year of the 2012-2014 strategic plan of the Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights (Al Mezan). The reporting period saw dramatic developments and challenges for human rights defenders in Palestine and beyond.

The achievements detailed in this report are based on information collected using Al Mezan's monitoring and assessment mechanism, which is based on staff reports, observations, evaluation/assessment of activities by the beneficiaries, and follow-up phone calls with random samples of the beneficiaries to check whether they used information/skills obtained from the activities in certain ways.

During December 2014 and January 2015, a team of consultants conducted an external evaluation for Al Mezan for the years 2012-2014 and strategic planning for the years 2015-2017. These participatory exercises are carried out in line with the 2014 plan of action. They were scheduled to start in August 2014; however, the conflict conditions forced a delay until December. The evaluation report and the new strategic plan will be shared with the partners in early February 2015.

The reporting period saw dramatic developments that influenced human rights in the Gaza Strip. In May 2014, an agreement between Palestinian political factions created a government of national consensus, which was relentlessly opposed by Israel, yet enjoyed internal and international support. In June, Israel launched a campaign of arrests, closures and other measures in the West Bank following the abduction of three Israeli teen settlers, who were found dead later. In July, Israel launched a full-scale military operation on the Gaza Strip which lasted for 51 days and led to vast destruction and killing. Gaza has since been further devastated, with reconstruction efforts stumbling and accountability distant.

During the escalation of armed attacks in July and August Al Mezan detected a pattern of serious human rights and IHL violations by the IOF. The attacks were intense and numbered in thousands. Most concerning was the deliberate airstrikes on homes; including inhabited homes. About 999 people; the vast majority of whom were civilians, were killed in these attacks. In four areas in Gaza, the IOF carried out intense artillery and aerial attacks during the ground invasion of the Gaza Strip. Artillery attacks were murderous and quite arbitrary, causing hundreds of deaths among civilians. The invasion of Khuza'a, east of Khan Younis, saw most interaction between the IOF and civilians. The documentation of Al Mezan shows that serious violations were committed; including wilful killings, indiscriminate armed attacks, the using civilians as human shields, prevention of ambulance access, and torture. In Beit Hanoun and Al Sheja'iya, intensive artillery shelling and airstrikes killed scores of civilians and left vast destruction of civilian property. In Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip, an IOF bombardment during 1 and 2 August, which was justified by aborting the capturing of an Israeli soldier, was so intense and killed over 200 people both in their houses or when they were trying to escape.

The conduct of the Israeli army raises further concerns in other areas. The IOF directed attacks on water and power facilities and workers. This includes an attack on the power plant in Gaza, which halted its work and worsened the humanitarian conditions. The IOF ordered the residents of about 45% of Gaza to evacuate to city centers; the very centers that were being bombarded. About half a million people were displaced. However, the IOF directed fire at UN shelters in at least four occasions; killing dozens of displaced civilians. Six of Gaza's hospitals, which were under severe pressure, were rendered non-operational as the IOF directed armed attacks on eight hospitals. Ambulances were attacks on dozens of occasions and medics were killed and wounded, even in situation where ambulances' access to certain areas was reportedly approved by the IOF through the ICRC. In the last days of the escalation the IOF directed fire at tall buildings in Gaza;



probably to spread greater fear among the population, and hundreds of housing units were destroyed.

The situation in the summer of 2014 indicated that the pattern of serious disrespect and systematic violation of the rules of war still characterizes the IOF conduct of its military operations in the Gaza Strip. Attacks were often directed to civilian objects. Others were disproportionate. In numerous incidents it was clear that no effective precautions were taken, as warnings were too general and did not direct civilians to safer places. This pattern was worsened when the IOF attacked shelters on several occasions. The IOF use of 'knock-on-the-roof tactic' as a warning method is of much concern. Missile attacks on inhabited homes cannot be considered a means of warning, but armed attacks. In fact, these attacks killed many civilians. Al Mezan's conclusion that violations of human rights and humanitarian laws would only be expected to worsen under the culture of impunity prevalent in Israel are clearly true, which prompted Al Mezan and three human rights organizations to join forces to document the violations committed during this escalation and prepare a variety of interventions into them with a focus on ensuring better protection through accountability.

In the background of this situation, the closure/blockade of Gaza continued in 2014. And so did the associated regime of the enforcement of buffer zones (or access restricted areas) along Gaza's border with Israel and in the sea. The ground closure continued to hamper people's access to healthcare, education, family life and a decent standard of living. The closure/blockade of Gaza can only be seen in the context of Israel's policy of separation and fragmentation of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), which; in conjunction with the policy of settlement, represents the major feature of violating the right to self-determination. In brief, the closure/blockade of Gaza is understood to be motivated by Israeli policy rather than security, a policy that is in violation of international law and must stop without further delay.

The human rights situation is expected to be influenced by a number of factors in 2015. First, the negotiations between Palestinian factions; including the Palestinian Authority, and Israel should be concluded in Egypt to finalize the terms of a permanent truce. Those have been delayed for months due to the worsening situation in Egypt. Second, it is yet to be seen how the UN brokered mechanism to facilitate the reconstruction of Gaza, which is of prime importance as over 50,000 housing units were destroyed or damaged during the summer of 2014. Those added to previous destruction of homes and the civilian infrastructure. So far, this mechanism has not been working efficiently. It lacks any accountability components and gives much leverage to Israel to further control life and development in Gaza. There are no guarantees that such leverage would not be abused and become part of the policy of collective punishment in pursuit of political gains. Moreover, the fate of Palestinian-Palestinian unity is still unclear, although a government of national consensus has been formed, it was not able to take control of the situation in Gaza and the process of reconciliation has regressed during the past months, leading to further violations of human rights by Palestinian actors in Gaza. These factors demand immediate as well as strategic interventions from Palestinian civil society. Al Mezan will play a role in this effort during 2015 and beyond.



## 2. Program progress: 1 January – 31 December 2014

### 2.1. Overall achievement/Beneficiaries

During 2014 the monitoring and documentation of human rights violations in the Gaza Strip were carried out continuously. A sharp increase in the number of documented cases occurred due to the Israeli military operation in July and August 2014. In response to this operation, Al Mezan worked closely with three sister NGOs to ensure timely documentation of violations committed during it. Led by Al Mezan, a large-scale campaign was organized in close cooperation with the three partners who can rely on a unified database for reporting and intervention. Consultations were also made to extend the cooperation to the areas of legal intervention and advocacy. Legal intervention saw significant progress and is being led by PCHR using resources from Al Mezan. Gathered information was used in reporting, legal interventions, and advocacy. Information was also passed to UN agencies and other organizations working on human rights. Al Mezan also continued its awareness and training activities and research programs.

In addition to the cooperation with human rights organizations in the oPt, Al Mezan also worked to strengthen cooperation with human rights NGOs and coalitions in Israel and internationally. Notably, Al Mezan's role in the EMHRN and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) was strengthened. Moreover, Al Mezan worked jointly with human rights NGOs in the Arab region, especially in Tunis and Egypt. Work with United Nations (UN) agencies and other international humanitarian and development organizations was also developed during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, Al Mezan achieved the following:

- Documentation of 29,362 rights violation incidents in its databases,
- Participation of 6,254 people in its training and awareness raising activities in Gaza and abroad. Of those, 835 were women, 4,522 children (2,597 girls), and 897 men.
- Contributing to building society capacity to challenge human rights violations by training lawyers, students and civil society groups; including women's groups in Gaza, on human rights-related skills. During the reporting period, 793 awareness/training hours were delivered; of which 126 hours were delivered by external trainers and the rest was delivered by Al Mezan's staff and volunteers trained by Al Mezan.
- Publication of 1,287 releases, news briefings, press statements, short news headlines, and joint releases/letters and database reports were produced and published on the web site and social media.
- Participation in 12 international advocacy missions and held meetings with Palestinian officials, UN officials and agencies, INGOs, diplomatic missions and EU officials 522 times.
- Legal advice to 544 victims of human rights violations committed by Israel or the Palestinian authorities,
- Making 634 legal interventions in response to violations; benefiting 3,804 victims and their families. Of those, 523 interventions were with the Israeli authorities and 109 with the Palestinian authorities.
- Campaigning on four human rights issues: accountability/access to justice, closure of Gaza, the right to food, with media work, advocacy missions, and publication.



2.2. Progress in implementing the activities (1 Jan – 31 Dec 2014)

**Result 1: To develop AI Mezan's strategies, policies and procedures**

**1.1. 2014 Action Plan, 2015-17 strategic plan, and external evaluation:**

- External evaluation and strategic planning were scheduled for August – October; however, due to the conflict situation they started in December. The evaluation report and strategic plan are expected to be finalized in February 2015.
- The Action Plan for 2014 was developed and shared with the Board and donors.

**1.2. Fundraising and Human Resources strategy developed**

- Deferred to 2015-2017 strategic plan.

**1.3. Administrative and Financial policies and procedures manual revised.**

- New administrative and financial manuals were reviewed by an external consultant. They were further reviewed by the external evaluation consultants under the external evaluation exercise and deemed as requiring further development, which will be one of the actions in the 2015-17 strategy.

**Result 2: To enhance the capacity of AI Mezan's staff.**

**2.1. *Training for 5 members of staff and/or BoD***

Eight staff members received training during 2014.

- The Information Systems Officer received specialized training on social media network. The training has had a positive impact on AI Mezan's work using social media during 2014.
- Two field workers received advanced training on monitoring and documentation organized by the OHCHR in Gaza.
- Five lawyers took part in a training on building case files for legal intervention organized by AI Mezan with participation from PCHR.

**2.2. *AI Mezan BoD, management and staff attend 12 conferences, seminars, workshops and forums annually locally, regional and internationally***

AI Mezan was invited to attend and/or speak in dozens of events organized in Gaza or internationally. Major participation involving presentations and papers occurred in 17 events.

**Result 3: To develop AI Mezan's information systems**

**3.1. *Database, web site and Information System developed:***

During the reporting period, the following MIS activities were implemented:

- Database restructuring for six questionnaires to serve the partners' database which documents the impacts of the Israeli military operation in the summer of 2014;
- Expand the database to cover more patterns of violations; e.g. destruction of bird and animal farms.
- Develop and update the main 'Graphical User Interface' of the system to provide better usability and accessibility.
- Develop and enhance the 'Log Record System', to strengthen monitoring of the system and facilitate verification of the data.

**3.2. *In-house resource centre (library)***

- The main resource library was moved to the main office in Gaza City in February, enabling more students and researchers to access it. A significant part of the library remained in Jabalia office, where people in North Gaza also accessed it.
- Between 27 August 2014 and 22 January 2015, the library services were not available to the public because the library space was used to host dozens of data-entry officers who inputted data about IOF violations during July and August 2014.



- 198 new books were purchased and/or added to the library during the reporting period.
- Sources during the reporting period.

**Strategic Goal 2: Contributing to the promotion of a culture of human rights and democracy in Palestinian society, especially in the Gaza Strip**

**Result 1: To disseminate HR and democracy resources, information and knowledge**

**1.1. Human rights publications produced and published (6 ad hoc publication pamphlets, booklets, brochures on human rights and at 2 posters).**

The following ad hoc materials were produced during the reporting period:<sup>1</sup>

- One guide for Pass-the-Word Program to help volunteer students educate peers;<sup>2</sup>
- One guide for facilitators who work with children on child rights.
- One booklet highlighting children narratives during the conflict in the summer of 2014.
- A notebook for school children with space for writing and human rights paintings and texts for awareness.
- A film documenting the circumstances around the killing of four children from Bakr family during the IOF military operation in the summer of 2014.
- A publication with women narratives and violations of IHRL and IHL against them during the IOF military operation in the summer of 2014.
- A factsheet on women in armed conflict highlighting IHRL and IHL violations against women during the IOF military operation in the summer of 2014.
- One brochure on the protection of women and children in IHL.
- One poster on the violations against women in armed conflict.

**1.2. Research studies conducted (2 studies/reports on ESCR issues published)**

Al Mezan's Research and technical Assistance Unit drafted the following documents on economic and social rights during the reporting period:

- One special report on the blockade and its impact on the human rights situation in the Gaza Strip.
- One report on the challenges of the right to food in the Gaza Strip, focusing on food security and health.
- Report on the policy of the Palestinian Land Authority in the Gaza Strip and its potential impacts on human rights.
- One special report on the IOF attacks affecting cultural sites and structures in the Gaza Strip during the IOF military operation in the summer of 2014. Such sites included historical structures, museums and places of worship.
- One report on the impacts of the IOF during the IOF military operation in the summer of 2014 on the education sector in the Gaza Strip.
- Contribution to a joint report on the human rights implications of the IOF military operation in the summer of 2014. This report will be published jointly with PCHR, Al-Haq and Al Dameer based on their joint documentation of the IHRL and IHL violations during this military operation. Al Mezan contributed to four chapters in the report; all of which on ESCR.

See also under advocacy below the work on accountability for home demolitions and unlawful attacks by the IOF, where a film, a legal factsheet and a case s were issued.

**1.3. Human rights training manual developed & training manual for the 'Pass the Word' program on HR, IHL & democracy developed.**

<sup>1</sup> Some of these activities were implemented as part of Al Mezan's response to the IOF military operation in the summer of 2014 mostly covered by emergency projects.

<sup>2</sup> Same as reported below under 1.3.



The Pass-the-Word Program manual, which guides volunteer students on how to organize and facilitate discussion sessions with their peers, was developed and handed to the students. It includes advice on facilitating six discussion sessions (three on human rights, two on democracy and the rule of law, and one on IHL), and information about these topics. The manual helped volunteer students conduct discussion sessions to raise awareness on human rights and IHL among their peers in university campuses across the Gaza Strip. See 2.1 under Result 2 below for further details.

**1.4. Al Mezan's website activated and online resources disseminated (20 new items added monthly)**

The web site, which is connected to social-media through a Facebook page, a twitter account and a YouTube channel, was updated 1,287 times during the reporting period; mostly by posting Al Mezan's publications and releases. On average, the web site was updated approximately 107 times monthly. Al Mezan's Facebook page was updated on almost daily basis. There are 3,601 likes for the Facebook page and close to 1,000 followers on the Twitter account. The YouTube channel received 11,707 views.

**1.5. Al Mezan's outreach increased via staff and affiliates articles & presentations; increased copies of publications distributed; increased contacts on mailing list; & increased number of journalist contacts.**

- Al Mezan staff made numerous presentations at events organized by other organizations on human rights issues. They spoke and/or made presentations at 91 events during the reporting period; including 37 major presentations on food, access to water, torture, international criminal court, the UN Commission of Inquiry, health conditions in Gaza hospitals, freedom of expression, Palestinian justice system, Palestinian reconciliation, ill-treatment and arbitrary detention.
- The mailing lists, both the general list and the journalists list, were expanded significantly during the reporting period; including by online subscription. Media coverage of Al Mezan's work and journalists' attendance of the activities increased significantly during the reporting period.

**Result 2: To promote a culture of human rights and democracy among, lawyers, students, professionals, and the community.**

**2.1. University and community college students sensitized & educated in human rights, democracy & IHL (25 students receive two trainings by Al Mezan courses; 400 students attend awareness sessions held by trained students; awareness materials for students distributed.**

Under this item, the following activities were completed during the reporting period:

- Two training courses for volunteer students comprised of 42 hours over seven days for 34 university students.
- The volunteer students who attended the two trainings organized 20 awareness courses comprising 100 discussion sessions. The total of 753 university students attended the awareness courses; of whom 448 were women and 305 were men. The discussion sessions covered topics in human rights, IHL and democracy.

**2.2. Lawyers sensitized & educated in IHL (60 lawyers attend courses on HR & IHL)**

Four courses were conducted as follows:

- Course on the rights of people with disability in Palestinian Law and human rights law, attended by 15 lawyers (5 women).
- Course on Palestinian legislations in the context of Palestinian internal political schism, which impacted Palestinian law. This course targeted 37 lawyers (6 women and 31 men).
- Course on documenting IHLR and IHL violations for litigation for a group of 41 lawyers (13 women) in preparation for deploying young lawyers to the field to document cases of serious violations which occurred in July and August 2014.



- Course on torture and ill treatment and lawyers' role in identifying and intervening in torture cases for a group of 23 lawyers (7 women).

The annual six-month training course targeting young lawyers was initiated, as reported under Result 3 below.

116 lawyers benefited from these trainings during the reporting period. Of whom, 31 were women.

**2.3. Various community groups sensitized & educated on human rights (250 people attend IHL workshops; 1000 people in marginalized areas attend awareness sessions; specialized human rights materials prepared and distributed.)**

- Five awareness courses were conducted targeting workers at local CBOs, children, and lawyers in the Gaza Strip. A total number of 207 people (49 women and 48 men, 40 boys and 70 girls) attended the workshops. Participants were sensitized in human rights and IHL issues.
- Another two courses were organized in Egypt for Syrian activists who work on human rights with Syrian CBOs. They were organized in cooperation with the Cairo-based Arab Organization for Human Rights with the aim to pass Al Mezan's experience and skills to Syrian civil society. The two activities focused on human rights NGOs' work under conflict. AL Mezan delivered trainings on the basic principles of IHL, monitoring and documenting IHL violations, using IHL in advocacy, and fund-raising under emergency and conflict situations. 47 Syrian human rights activists attended the two courses; of whom 31 were women.
- 27 awareness workshops were also held targeting 818 individuals from various community groups (304 men, 206 women, 225 girls and 83 boys). See Annex 1 for details about these workshops.
- Among the above 27 workshops, the following deserves highlighting:
  - Five workshops for children to train them on monitoring violations against children and support children's contribution to reporting under CRC and UPR;
  - Following the Israeli military operation in the summer of 2014, it was revealed that a girl from the above children's groups was killed and several were injured or lost family members. In response, Al Mezan organized five days for leisure, psycho-social support and monitoring for these children. A booklet was produced with some of their narrative (reported under Result 1, 1.1 above).
  - Five workshops focused on the internal Palestinian political split and its impacts on legislative reform, civil society, free speech, and association rights.
- One conference was organized jointly with the OCHAR and the Gaza Community Mental Health Program on the occasion of the International Day for Solidarity with Torture Victims; attended by 56 women and 133 men.

**2.4. School students sensitized & educated in human rights (500 school students attend awareness sessions; awareness documents for school students prepared and distributed)**

- 5 training courses were organized and attended by 111 school students (70 females and 41 males). Students were sensitized on the Convention of the Rights of the Child and CRC reporting mechanisms.
- Another 5 awareness workshops were also held for a group of children on how to monitor violations at schools and in their neighbourhoods, in order to strengthen children's input for reporting to the Committee on the rights of the Child in the future.
- One other workshop was also held targeting young university graduates on how to facilitate recreational and training activities for children.
- Another 40 lectures were also delivered to 1,074 students from schools across the Gaza Strip (555 girls and 549 boys).

**2.5. Two human rights prizes awarded.**

- This activity was deferred to January 2015. Due to the conditions that prevailed in Gaza following the summer conflict, Al Mezan found it inappropriate to launch this activity until December 2014. School children in government and UNRWA schools were invited to draw paintings about how they view human rights. In January, 3001 school children; including 1,747 girls, responded and submitted drawings. A committee from Al Mezan, UNRWA and the Ministry of education; supported by freelance artists Maysara Baroud, short-listed about a hundred distinguished drawings based on their human rights content, relevance and artistic features. 36 school children were selected as winners in January 2015 and an event was being organized to hand them prizes for their work. An exhibition of the 36 drawings and a selection of drawings that did not win, but were of high standard, were also being organized when this report was being drafted.

**Result 3: To strengthen the HR related skills among lawyers, professionals, activists and civil society.****3.1. Lawyers strengthened their human rights related skills. 25 lawyers attend six-month training course on human rights related skills.**

The annual six-month training course targeting young lawyers was initiated. This year, it was attended by 27 lawyers, who received training on international human rights law, IHL, human rights standards, and Palestinian law. They were also trained on basic skills for lawyers to enable them to improve their case management and litigation. This course offered 161 training hours for the trainee lawyers. Of those, 16 hours were practical involving site visits to detention centers in Gaza and relevant NGOs to familiarize lawyers with their work. 145 training hours were theoretical where trainers delivered training sessions on various topics. This course was delayed for three months due to the situation during and after the Israeli military operation in the summer, but was resumed in late November. Sessions were moved to 2015; scheduled to end in the first week of February. By the end of the reporting period 67 hours were implemented out of the 161 planned hours. The rest were completed in early 2015.

**3.2. CBOs staff strengthened their human rights related skills. 60 CBOs staff attended human rights mechanism training course; 60 CBOs staff attend training course (two 24 hrs training courses: 1 local & 1 regional) in monitoring and documentation of women and child human rights violations.**

During the reporting period, Al Mezan held seven trainings for Community-Based Organizations; two in Egypt and five in Gaza. (See result 2.3 above).

**Strategic Goal 3: Contributing to the respect and protection of human rights (particularly ESCR) in Palestinian society, especially in the Gaza Strip.****Result 1: To disseminate information on human rights violations locally and internationally****1.1. Database on human rights violations maintained (2000 cases documented; database reports produced and shared, 10 field meetings with victims & people at risk**

The following chart provides the key figures regarding the monitoring and documentation and referral activities during the reported period:

Activity	Number of times	Notes
Documenting incidents involving violations	5,194	One incident may include more than one violation and/or multiple victims.
Number of questionnaire forms filled in and supported with documents	15,038	This excludes the questionnaire forms concerning violations during Israel's military operation in July and August. Over



		45,000 questionnaires were collected about this operation; about 30% of which by Al Mezan and the rest by three partners: PCHR, Al-Haq and Al Dameer.
Number of cases inputted in the database	29,362	This includes the questionnaires above and brief documentation of incidents not covered by questionnaires
Field visits	5,181	Visits by field workers to locations of violations, government and NGO offices, and interviewing victims and witnesses for the purpose of documenting violations.
Documentation of detention cases	271	Including 17 detained by the Israeli forces and the rest by the Palestinian authorities.
Referrals to Al Mezan Legal Assistance Unit	327	Internally to Legal Aid Unit or other units for intervention.
Referrals externally	178	
Written affidavits/witness testimonies	1,319	
Provision of information	6,6663	Including regular updates to OCHA & diplomatic missions, and regular updates to UNICEF and OHCHR to feed into UN databases overseen by the Protection Cluster, or for verification purposes. The number dramatically increased due to demand on data about the Israeli military operation in the summer.
Meetings with victims/people at risk in the field	30	To collect information about a violation or a risk and discuss interventions with the people interactively.
Design new questionnaire forms	1	One new form was developed after the Israeli military operation to cover bird and animal farms destroyed in IOF attacks because this type of destruction formed a pattern. A database was created to fend for the documentation campaign for the partners, using AL Mezan's model and questionnaire forms.
Tours for visiting delegations	9	

**Field meetings:**

30 field meetings were held with victims, survivors and people at risk by field workers to collate information from them, discuss possible solutions or interventions and provide general advice to them. 725 people took part in these meetings; of whom 36 were women and 11 children. The majority of the meetings took place during and after the Israeli military operation during the summer of 2014.

Date/Place	Target group	Issues raised
5 Jan / Beit Hanoun	7 farmers who own land in the ARA	IOF violations in the ARA and improving protection
6 Jan / Beit Hanoun	12 farmers in the ARA	IOF violations in the ARA and improving protection
14 Jan / Al Moghraqa, Deir Al Balah	12 victims of IOF bombardment (2 women, 2 children)	Documenting damages and securing access to aid
4 Mar / Gaza City	Over 100 university students	Students rights, equal access to university benefits



26 Mar / Jabalia	10 fishermen	Restrictions on fishermen by the local authorities and the limitations of the role of fishermen's representatives
24 Jun / Jabalia	25 children	Identifying violations and psychosocial needs for victims of IOF attacks on the ARA
16 Jul / Al Maghazi refugee camp	7 survivors of IOF military attacks	Identifying violations, gathering information and general advice on accountability and redress
16 Jul / Gaza City	14 members of the management and staff of Al Wafa Hospital	Follow up on the IOF intention to bombard the hospital, gathering information and possible alleviation responses
20 Jul / Jabalia	28 displaced people from Beit Lahiya who took shelter in Jabalia	Displacement of people from Beit Lahiya who took shelter in Jabalia to gather information about the violations they witnessed and their conditions and needs at the IDP center
23 Jul / Gaza City	About 50 displaced people sheltering at Shifa hospital	Gathering information about the violations that led to displacement and assessing the needs of the group; including relocation to official IDP centers to secure access to aid
25 Jul / Rafah	18 displaced people (3 women) from east Rafah who took shelter in Rafah refugee camp at UN school	Displacement of people from east Rafah who took shelter in Rafah refugee camp at an UNRWA school to gather information about the violations they witnessed and their conditions and needs at the IDP center
26 Jul / Gaza City	15 displaced people outside IDP centers	Problems faced with families who did not find places in IDP centers and securing shelter and access to aid for them
27 Jul / Beit Hanoun	15 displaced people at IDP center in Beit Hanoun	Gathering information and assessing needs following the IOF attack on the IDP shelter in UNRWA school in Beit Hanoun
27 Jul / Khan Younis	About 40 displaced people (8 women) from Khuza'a, Abassan and Al Qarara	Gathering information about violations IDPs were subjected to, assessing their needs and discussing possible interventions
2 Aug / Jabalia	21 displaced people UNRWA school in Jabalia	Gathering information and assessing needs following the IOF attack on the IDP shelter in UNRWA school in Jabalia
7 Aug / Jabalia	35 displaced people at UN IDP shelter	Assessment of the IDP conditions and needs following an IOF attack at the UN shelter at Halab school in Jabalia
30 Aug / Al Maghazi refugee camp	13 victims of IOF attacks in eastern Al Maghazi camp (3	Gathering information from victims of the area which was harshly attacked by



gee camp	women and 2 children)	the IOF, dealing with UXO problems, and providing general advice as to redress and accountability
2 Sep / An Nuseirat refugee camp	A group of 7 women in the refugee camp	IOF violations and their impact on women and available venues of redress
3 Sep / Khan Younis	A group of 25 residents of Az Zanna area in Khuza's	Gathering information about the violations the victims were subjected to, assessing their needs, and explaining potential venues of redress
8 Sep / Gaza City	30 displaced people	Assess the conditions of IDPs from Al Sheja'iyah neighborhood and discussing potential venues for redress
9 Sep / Khan Younis	30 IDPs from Khuza'a (7 women)	Assess the conditions of IDPs from Khuza'a and discussing potential venues for redress
10 Sep / Rafah	A group of 21 victims of IOF attacks (4 women and 3 children)	Assess the needs of the victims of IOF attacks on 1 and 2 August in Rafah and gather information about the violations
5 Oct / Gaza City	7 victims of IOF attacks	Support to the victims to access healthcare and aid
10 Sep / Gaza City	About 100 residents of Al Sheja'iyah neighborhood	Assess the urgent needs of the residents and secure power, water and sewage access to them. The meeting was followed up with the authorities who fixed the lines within 10 days.
10 Nov / Beit Hanoun	26 IDPs who had to leave their damaged homes due to rain storms	Assess the urgent needs of the IDPs, gather information about the violations they were subjected to, and provide general advice as to potential accountability and redress venues
15 Oct / Gaza City	10 owners of industrial facilities	Assess the needs of the victims whose businesses were destroyed or damaged and the need to provide support for them to amend the infrastructure in their area so they can re-start their work
16 Oct / Khan Younis	14 fishermen	Assess the damaged to fishermen's storage rooms, boats and equipment and discuss potential venues of redress with them
20 Oct / Gaza City	6 victims of denial of access to medical care	Gather information about Israel's denial of access to medical care outside Gaza and provision of legal advice and support to the victims
15 Nov / Rafah	14 victims of IOF attacks in	Gather information about the violations, assess their needs, especially those



	Al Shoka area	whose homes were destroyed or damaged, and provide general advice as to venues of redress and accountability
8 Dec / Wadi Gaza village	14 persons from families of children detained by the IOF (2 women and 4 children)	The increase in IOF detention of children near the border fence, child protection, and gathering information about detentions.

**1.2. Periodical reports on human rights violations published and distributed (12 monthly reports; 1 semi-annual report; 1 annual report; 3 reports on women & children in armed conflict)**

30 documentation and special field reports were published during the reporting period by the Field Work Unit as follows:<sup>3</sup>

- 12 monthly database reports (6 on IOF violations, and 6 on internal violations) posted on the web site; two quarterly reports on IOF violations, two quarterly reports about violations by Palestinian actors, two semi-annual reports about IOF and internal violations in the first half of 2014; 2 quarterly reports on IOF violations in the ARA, 2 quarterly reports about children and armed conflict, 2 semi-annual reports about IOF violations in the ARA and on children and armed conflict, 3 annual reports covering 2013 were issued in early 2014 (on IOF, children & armed conflict; and violations against fishermen); and one ad hoc report.
- Reports covered widely by local media; posted on the web site, circulated to emailing lists.
- Reports used by Al Mezan in advocacy trips, press releases, Special Rapporteur communications, and by the UN Protection cluster updates.

**Result 2: To contribute to the protection of human rights through effective monitoring and legal intervention**

**2.3. Communications/complaints to Israeli & Palestinian authorities about violations (120 complaints; 150 cases referred internally and externally)**

Overall, the Legal Aid Unit at Al Mezan made 634 interventions on behalf of people in Gaza during the reporting period. 523 of them were with the Israeli authorities and 109 with the Palestinian authorities.

- Three cases were litigated before courts; two of which in Israel and one in Gaza in 2014. In Israel, a civil case was followed up for a family that was subject to two IOF attacks. This case is subject to serious challenges from Israeli law, namely amendment 8 to the law on state liability. Another case was heard at the Israeli Supreme Court in a petition filed by Adalah on behalf of four victims in Gaza who demand access to courts to attend hearings for their cases. The Supreme Court declined the petition; allowing the State to continue to prevent victims and witnesses' access to court hearings, which automatically lead to dismissal of their cases. In Gaza, one case was taken to the Palestinian High Court in Gaza (2nd case since November 2007). This case was a petition against the arbitrary lay off of the public relations and executive directors of the Chamber of Commerce in Middle-Gaza district; both of whom were sacked arbitrarily by the Chamber's Board, with possible political motivations. The court accepted the case and the hearing has been pending. This case, like the freedom of expression case in 2013, is an exception and is considered a test case with the courts in Gaza.
- 569 complaints were filed with the authorities in Israel and Gaza; including 460 to the Israeli authorities and 109 with the Palestinian authorities:

<sup>3</sup> Another 14 reports were supposed to be produced; however, due to the IOF military operation in the summer, plans had to change and monthly reports were not produced as the Field Work Unit was engaged in a large-scale documentation operation with three partners.



- From among 460 complaints taken with the Israeli authorities, 164 were about movement and access of Palestinians from Gaza. 88 cases were about access to healthcare outside Gaza (24 were successful); 44 cases were about access to family life (6 were successful); 9 cases about disappearance (9 were successful). Another 15 cases dealt with grievances to do with access to pension, work, education and property.
  - In response to the IOF military operation in July and August 2014, Al Mezan submitted 21 complaints and requests for criminal investigations with the Israeli Military Advocate General's office (MAG). Responses were received about 11 of them; of which two were negative; i.e. refusing to investigate the case, and 9 positive; i.e. confirming that a preliminary examination for the case would be initiated by the MAG.
  - During the reporting period, Al Mezan submitted 293 civil complaints; i.e. notifications to the Israeli Ministry of Defence within 60 days of a military attack leading to loss of life or damages, on behalf of people in Gaza. 278 of those were submitted after the IOF military operation in the summer of 2014. The Israeli authorities did not send any responses to these complaints in 2014.
  - From among 109 interventions with the Palestinian authorities, 21 were about arbitrary detention of persons by the Palestinian police of security service. In 16 cases, the interventions led to the release of the detainees. In another 3 cases, lawyer visits were secured to the victims.
  - Two of the detention cases involved further complaints about torture and ill-treatment. Four cases were about access to healthcare or medical negligence leading to death. One case was about the rights of persons with disability; including access to passport and education. Two of the cases were about access to compensation, seven access to fair trial, two access to adequate housing, one about the right to form an association, and other cases regarding family law. Another 19 cases were about complaints gathered by Al Mezan's lawyers during visits to prisons and detention centers across the Gaza Strip; including 6 complaints about access to health, 3 about visitation rights, and ten cases about problems with access to free trial.
- 176 referrals were made to HR NGOs in the oPt and Israel. Of those 11 cases were referred to NGOs in Gaza upon receiving them as Al Mezan does not handle the type of cases they were. Another 11 cases were referred to the Gaza Community Mental Health Program for psychosocial support and rehabilitation; including 6 cases of victims of torture and ill treatment. In addition, Al Mezan worked jointly with Physicians for Human Rights and Gisha on 164 cases involving access and movement.

**2.4. Interventions and follow up human rights mechanisms strengthened (20 lawyers trained on using human rights mechanisms; 500 legal advices; 20 visits to Palestinian prisons.**

- 544 legal advices made through Al Mezan's three offices in the Gaza Strip during the reporting period. Legal advice focused on arbitrary detentions, abuse, temporary disappearances, restrictions on movement, excessive summoning of individuals on political grounds, intimidation of civil society organizations, and IOF attacks during the summer military operation and in the ARA.
- During the reporting period, the Centre's lawyers carried out ten visits to Palestinian prisons in the Gaza Strip. They looked at the general prisons' conditions and interviewed hundreds of prisoners. They took 19 complaints that were raised with the prisons' authorities and resolved.
- During the reporting period, Al Mezan interacted with various UN human rights mechanisms. 16 communications were made to UN Special rapporteurs, reporting serious human rights violations in the Gaza Strip. Two of those were major complaints that included dozens of cases of violations that formed patterns of violations.



**2.5. International advocacy and networking against violations of human rights strengthened (assistance to building one case/intervention before international human rights mechanisms and/or courts; interventions for policy changes; issuing information/advocacy documents (statements, letters, appeals, factsheets...etc.) sent to intergovernmental bodies (e.g. UN, EU, Arab League).**

- A case was built around the lack of accountability and access to justice for Palestinians in Israel due to the lack of criminal investigations into serious breaches of international law and as a result of legislative reform in Israel (especially Amendment 8 to the State Liability Law) which obstructs access to redress and reparation for Palestinian victims of unlawful armed attacks who suffered losses and/or damages.
- The case was analysed in a case study and a legal factsheet. A detailed communication for UN Special Procedures was drafted and sent to three special rapporteurs urging for ensuring access to justice.
- Two advocacy missions to Brussels and Geneva were organized around this case.
- See 3.3 and 3.5 below for information about advocacy missions and advocacy publications.

**Result 3: To enhance local and national advocacy and networking for human rights.**

**3.3. Advocacy campaigning conducted (3 campaigns on human rights cases; 5 open meetings and/or advocacy workshops on ESCR with officials, experts and victims; 3 advocacy media appearances/ articles on human rights violations).**

- During the reporting period, campaigning took place at the local and national levels on four issues: 1) internal Palestinian reconciliation and violations of human rights in its contexts; including arbitrary detention and repression of freedoms; 2) accountability, with a focus on Palestine joining international human rights treaties and the ICC; 3) ending the Gaza closure/blockade; and 4) Torture and ill treatment of prisoners and civilians in Gaza.
- Eleven joint letters and statements were issued during the reporting period. One of them was handed to the Palestinian President's office urging for Palestine's accession to the ICC. Another two letters were sent to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs in support of accountability for IHL violations and in support of Palestinian reconciliation, asking the EU to play a positive role. Two open letters were also addressed to the UN Human Rights Council, and one letter to the UN Secretary General. Joint statements and appeals were also issued in support of opening Rafah Crossing and denouncing death penalty, force-feeding legislation in Israel and the Israeli policy in East Jerusalem. A joint statement was also coordinated with local and international child rights organizations calling for an end to IOF attacks on houses and compliance with international law during the IOF military operation in the summer.
- As part of the campaigning on accountability, the Communications and International Relations team produced two short films about access to redress and unlawful attacks on children.
  - Legal Fact Sheet: A Story of Barriers in Access to Justice Abu Is'ayid;
  - Case Study: The Abu Is'ayid Family, A Story of Attacks in the Access Restricted Area, and Waiting for Justice.
- Two advocacy workshops were organized as part of the local-level advocacy. The workshop raised the issues of food safety in the Gaza Strip under the weak government monitoring and enforcement of the relevant standards, and the second workshop raised the issue of legislation reform under the Palestinian internal political schism.
- Al Mezan made 523 media appearances during the reporting period; allowing advocacy on various issues; including violations by the IOF and Palestinian actors. Two articles were also drafted and published.

**3.4. Networking and consultations with relevant stakeholders/networks concerned with advocating human rights strengthened (3 meetings government and civil society officials; 20 meetings with UN and diplomatic missions in Gaza; 2 consultation workshops conducted with networks, experts and civil society in Gaza)**



- Al Mezan maintained active membership in a dozen coalitions and networks. In particular, the work with the Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC) was advanced. Al Mezan took the lead coordinating PHROC for a year. Coordination was also active with the Euro-Med Human Rights Network (EMHRN); on which board Al Mezan sits and is playing a very active role. Al Mezan's participation with FIDH was also significantly activated in 2014; involving three meetings, several coordination calls and facilitating a fact-finding mission dispatched by FIDH to Gaza.
- Al Mezan organized a consultation on administrative detention, the law on unlawful combatants, torture and force feeding; resulting with a well-attended joint conference and a declaration. Al Mezan also played a key role on seven consultations with civil society on accountability in the oPt and Europe.
- During the reporting period Al Mezan had 118 meetings with government officials, 119 meetings with UN representatives, and 93 meetings with diplomats in the Gaza Strip. Another 64 meetings took place with international civil society actors in Gaza. Another 128 meetings took place with UN, EU officials, diplomats and civil society officials outside of Gaza.
- Al Mezan also produced a short film and was part of three other films about human rights in the oPt.

**3.5. *Communication/coordination with other organizations and stakeholders concerned with advocating human rights established (100 joint and individual press releases, appeals, or letters on violations issued; at least 2 international advocacy missions to Europe conducted annually.***

- 109 press releases were issued by Al Mezan during the reporting period on economic, social and cultural rights issues. The most issues covered by Al Mezan's press releases during the reporting period include IHL violations by the IOF, the closure of Gaza; particularly denial of movement and abuse of patients, ARA (attacks on fishermen, farmers and other civilians), the consequences of Palestinian internal split on economic and social rights, death penalty, and public freedoms, and accountability.
- 32 joint press releases, statements and letters were issued during the reporting period; out of which Al Mezan took the lead in 4. Three joint letters were also sent to Palestinian and international leaders.
- Al Mezan carried out six advocacy missions to European capitals and two small missions to Jordan and Egypt. Al Mezan was also part of organizing another six advocacy missions in cooperation with partner coalitions or networks during the reporting period. The following points provide more details:
  - January: Mission to Stockholm in cooperation with Diakonia. Meetings with MFA and political parties in the parliament and media work. Focus: human rights and IHL in the peace process.
  - March: Mission to Geneva to the UNHRC with a side event at the UN and an oral statement in addition to meetings with diplomats and UN staff. Focus: Gaza closure/blockade and accountability/access to Justice.
  - March/April: Mission to Berlin organized by the EMHRN and Medico-Germany. Meetings with the MFA, parliament and civil society. Focus: accountability, settlements, Gaza closure/blockade, and Business and HR.
  - May: Mission to Copenhagen. Meetings with MFA, parliament, civil society and media work; including live interview with largest TV. Focus: fall of the peace process, accountability and Gaza closure/blockade.
  - May: Mission to Brussels. Meetings with the MFA, parliament, European Parliament, EU External Action Service and five MAMA Representatives. Focus: accountability and access to justice and reparation.
  - June: Mission to Geneva by Al Mezan's director, Mr Issam Younis, to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to inform the HRC's 26<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the HRC about the developing human rights situation in Gaza and the escalation on the ground. Al Mezan submitted a written statement and was part of two other written statements. Mr. Younis



- delivered an oral statement during the session and met with government and UN officials, and civil society representatives in Geneva.
- June: Mission to Cairo and Amman, also by AL Mezan's director who met with government officials and civil society organizations to discuss the human rights situation in Gaza and discuss the role Egypt and Jordan can play to alleviate the implications of closure and human rights violations.
  - October: Mission to Germany, which was also carried out by AL Mezan's director and involved meetings with officials in Berlin and with partner civil society organizations in Germany.
  - October: Mission to Brussels, which was organized by the EMHRN and involved AL Mezan's director and communications director who met with Belgian and EU officials and EU Member States representatives in Brussels. This mission focused on accountability and access to justice as well as the reconstruction of Gaza.
  - October: Mission to Geneva to take part in the CCPR session when the CCPR considered Israel's report. This mission was organized in cooperation with Adalah and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, who submitted a joint parallel report to the CCPR. During this meeting, Al Mezan attended a briefing with the UN HRC Commission of Inquiry to discuss ways to cooperate with the Commission in its investigations of violations committed during July and August 2014 in Gaza.
  - October: Mission to Brussels which was organized by the EMHRN and focused on accountability and access to justice following the Israeli military operation in the summer of 2014.
  - December: a small mission to London which involved meetings with the FCO in cooperation with Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights, and focused on accountability and access to justice.
- Dozens of coordination meetings were held with the PHROC and partner NGOs in Gaza during the reporting period to coordinate positions and actions regarding human rights in Palestine. In particular, Al Mezan held meetings with PCHR, Al-Haq and Al Dameer to coordinate joint actions and interventions during and after the Israeli military operation on Gaza in the summer of 2014. As a result of these meetings, the four organizations started to work in full partnership on documentation, legal action and advocacy. Two other meetings were held with Adalah and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel in Copenhagen in the context of the partnership to work on torture and ill-treatment. Four other meetings were held in Brussels with the EMHRN in Copenhagen and Brussels; including two meetings for the Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians Working Group. AL Mezan's director of communications also attended the meeting of the Executive Committee of the EMHRN in Paris in October 2014; having missed two previous meetings due to restrictions on movement imposed on Gaza. Two meetings were also held with the OSF in Amman, and several meetings were held with PHROC meetings. In the aftermath of the IOF military operation on the Gaza Strip, Al Mezan held or participated in meetings with dozens of INGOs to coordinate, exchange information, and discuss possible joint responses. This includes Amnesty International, Medical Aid for Palestine, Lawyers for Palestinians Human Rights, the Norwegian Refugee Council and several other organizations.
  - In October 2014, Al Mezan took part in a legal roundtable on litigation at the University of Amsterdam, in which Al Mezan made two presentations about the IHRL and IHL violations in Gaza and the experiences regarding litigation at the domestic and international levels.



### 3. Challenges/Lesson:

Obstacles	Responses
<b>Internal Obstacles:</b>	
<b>Staff and financial issues:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Key staff members were still missing in the structure; including a coordinator of the Legal Aid Unit. The Communications &amp; Int'l Relations Director worked from a distance until February.</li> <li>- International staff and/or interns were not available as was hoped. Only one international staff members was recruited.</li> <li>- The financial resources required for implanting the new salary scale and the entirety of the plan of action were not raised in full. Risk of skilled staff leaving continued.</li> <li>- A deficit from the past three years was pointed at by the auditors and one of the core donors.</li> <li>- Staff fatigue continued to be a factor, with field workers, lawyers and researchers dealing with serious violations, but with no psycho-social support or tension release much available in Gaza to help them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A senior lawyer continued to be acting coordinator of the Unit. The Center will advertise this post again in 2015. Director of Communications returned and assumed his work from the office.</li> <li>- Contacts with partner INGOs were made to check the possibility of recruiting staff; two temporary staff were recruited.</li> <li>- The Centre decided to keep using the old salary scale in 2014. A modified budget to this effect was shared in September 2014.</li> <li>- Discussions took place with the auditors, donors and internally. Two donors accepted to allow using part of their funding to fund the deficit. A plan was developed to ensure the deficit is dealt with and was shared. Private, unrestricted donations from individuals were raised through direct communications and via a website funding campaign. Over 50% of the deficit was raised during the reporting period.</li> <li>- Further new funding was sought for core support as well as for projects with components of the core program, providing more financial support in 2014, which is not expected to see any deficit.</li> <li>- A one-day all staff outing was arranged in a small resort in Gaza for the staff for recreation; however, work pressure disallowed it. A retreat will be added to take place annually in the 2015-17 strategic plan.</li> </ul>
<b>External Obstacles</b>	
<b>Restrictions on movement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remained an obstacle restricting interaction with Palestinian civil society in the West Bank and globally.</li> <li>- Reduced the possibility of action on the UN and the EU,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local and regional opportunities for capacity building were sought to build staff capacity.</li> <li>- Coordination with Palestinian and Israeli partners, and using the services of</li> </ul>



<p>or attending capacity-building activities outside of Gaza.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dictated delays or cancellations of certain activities that required travel or capacity building by international experts.</li> </ul>	<p>lawyers in Israel, enabled certain services to continue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support from INGOs and diplomatic missions was sought and allowed travel via Erez twice; however, it is a one-time arrangement every time and is not sustainable.</li> <li>- Travel plans for staff members were made through the Rafah crossing whenever it was opened.</li> <li>- Capacity building plans were deferred to the second half of the year or to 2015 in the hope experts can come in.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Repercussions of impunity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of trust of the effectiveness of legal interventions has increased due to Israeli legislative reform suppressing accountability for Palestinians as well as the Palestinian internal political schism.</li> <li>- Despite the reported improvement and greater access to prisons and other places of custody in Gaza, there is not much trust in investigations and punishment of wrongdoing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Campaigning and advocacy efforts based on clearer analysis of the Israeli legislative reform were carried out to challenge impunity and make more publicity.</li> <li>- Communications with UN special mechanisms on this issue and on violations were made frequently.</li> <li>- Coordination and networking; especially with the EMHRN and PHROC increased. And further cooperation on the matter was established with INGOs.</li> <li>- Cooperation also increased with the UN bodies; especially the OHCHR and also increased on this matter.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Electricity crisis:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blackouts worsened during the reporting period, hampering the capacity significantly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A power generator with greater capacity was purchased, and extra resources for fuel were raised.</li> </ul>

**4. Outcomes/Achievements (as per the 2014 Plan of Action)**

**See Annex 2**