Press Release: Al Mezan welcomes the decision of the Human Rights Council to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate violations of international law in the oPt and Israel

May 29, 2021

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights

<http://www.mezan.org/en/post/24000/Press+Release%3A+Al+Mezan+welcomes+the+decision+of+the+Human+Rights+Council+to+establish+a+commission+of+inquiry+to+investigate+violations+of+international+law+in+the+oPt+and+Israel>

On Thursday, 27 May 2021, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) decided to “urgently establish an ongoing independent, international commission of inquiry, to be appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council, to investigate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021, and all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity.”[[1]](http://www.mezan.org/en/post/24000/Press+Release%3A+Al+Mezan+welcomes+the+decision+of+the+Human+Rights+Council+to+establish+a+commission+of+inquiry+to+investigate+violations+of+international+law+in+the+oPt+and+Israel" \l "_ftn1)

For years, Palestinian human rights organizations have repeatedly called on the international community to investigate Israel’s systemic regime of racial supremacy, oppression and domination over the Palestinian people and gross violations of international law. However, since 1948, this is the first UN resolution of its kind to grant the appointed commission of inquiry an ongoing, broad mandate to investigate not only all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, but also “all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict” therein.

This resolution comes after several unsuccessful attempts to address Israel’s systematic discriminatory policies against the Palestinian people. In 2017, for instance, a UN chief requested the removal of a report by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) from the ESCWA website as the report provided evidence establishing that Israel’s policies and practices amount to the crime of apartheid.

For decades, the international community has failed to recognize Israel’s settler-colonial and apartheid regime as the main driver of the conflict, which ultimately led to a deeply embedded state of impunity that encouraged Israel’s denial of Palestinians’ right to self-determination and access to justice and accountability, with Palestinian civilians bearing the brunt of the continuing conflict.

Among the violations that must be immediately investigated are Israel’s clearly apparent war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated during its recent military offensive against the Gaza Strip between 10-21 May 2021. In the course of the 11-day assault, 254 Palestinians were killed, including 67 children and 39 women, while another 1,212, including 277 children and 204 women, suffered injuries. Israel’s airstrikes also led to the large-scale destruction of power and WASH networks, as well as thousands of square meters of vital paved roads. Simultaneously, the Israeli authorities banned the entry of fuel, food, and medical supplies into Gaza as part of its tightening of its closure policy.

Meanwhile, renewed violence in Jerusalem is mainly attributable to Israel’s intensified discriminatory policies and practices of ethnic cleansing against Palestinian residents, amid continued inaction by the international community.

Along with tens of other human rights organizations, Al Mezan has always held that challenging Israel’s impunity and triggering accountability mechanisms would be the only effective deterrent to the future commission of crimes and to ensuring respect for international law. Yet, our calls—including those demanding the implementation of previous UN recommendations on Israel’s impunity—were to no avail.

Al Mezan welcomes the Human Rights Council’s decision to establish an international commission of inquiry into all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law leading up to and since 13 April 2021 and urges the commission to submit annual reports entailing accountability measures. The international community and the United Nations face a historic challenge to prove in practice their commitment to the values of justice, human rights, and respect for international law. Accordingly, Al Mezan calls for expediting the formation of the commission of inquiry and facilitating its work through ensuring Israel’s full cooperation, considering its long history of hindering international investigations and systematic violations of its obligations under international law.

[[1]](http://www.mezan.org/en/post/24000/Press+Release%3A+Al+Mezan+welcomes+the+decision+of+the+Human+Rights+Council+to+establish+a+commission+of+inquiry+to+investigate+violations+of+international+law+in+the+oPt+and+Israel" \l "_ftnref1) A/HRC/RES/S-30/1, para. 1.