

Israel's use of weapons : case studies of Gaza

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the present chapter an attempt has been made to focus on the incidents and situations which the people of Palestine faced during the 22-day Israeli attack. This would enable us to understand the plight of the people of the Gaza. However, Israel's justifications have only established its superiority from time to time. It not only has hidden its crimes, but also given an attractive format to the venture. The study attempts to study the fewer case studies investigated by specific organizations to understand the situation of Palestine just after the Israel's big attack. It not only tells the real picture of destruction, but also enables the reader to know about the difficulties faced by the residents of Gaza. The restrictions imposed by Israel on Gaza have already brought a virtual breakdown in the life of the people and Operation Cast Lead made that condition beyond control.

II. OPERATION CAST LEAD

On December 27, 2008, Israeli army suddenly launched air raids on the Gaza Strip. It was coined by Israeli Officials as "Operation Cast Lead". According to Israel, they launched Operation Cast Lead for the response to years of rockets and mortar fire emanating from armed Palestinian groups operating in the Strip, involving self-defense under article 51 of the UN Charter. *"Nothing in the present charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations"*¹

Israel throughout the years has maintained this justification for the armed forces and the operation. The whole operation was to dismantle the ability of Hamas and other terrorist Palestinian groups, which were, according to Israel, attacked the Israeli Civilians with rockets and mortars. However, instead of Israel's numerous claim, no one could deny the fact that on the first day of the operation itself, even within the few minutes of "Operation Cast Lead" alone, Israeli forces killed 99 members of the Palestinian police forces in Gaza.²

If the issue was to attack the Hamas and terrorist only then how the killings were very high even on the first day. Israel's justification could not make the illegal deeds into the right one. "Operation Cast Lead" was a major catastrophe for the Gaza's people who already faced a major Israeli closure for many years. That closure made their life pathetic, which became more adverse on sudden attacks by Israel in the form of "Operation Cast Lead". Israel's military operation left thousands of homes partly or totally destroyed. Many people in Gaza lost a child, parent, another relative or a friend. The whole of the Gaza was turned into rubble. And this small strip was cut off from the outside world.

Israel throughout the occupation, restricted the basic amenities to reach to Gaza, it included food, fuel, medicines which made the people of Gaza disabled in all spheres of the life. Many documents and reports exemplified the difficulties faced by the people of West Bank and Gaza. However, the true impact of the offense could not be measured in terms of statistics and figures alone. Although various case studies were investigated which showed the humanitarian crisis to that society which already were in a volatile situation. Number of case studies could be documented, but every case has its own agony, pain and this has been only an attempt to understand the less depth of this devastation. Every case enabled us to get closer to the Gaza people, that lead to the same result: More deaths, casualties and killing.

¹ Britain Eakin, "Operations Cast Lead : A Critical Study of the Goldstone Report" ,The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, <http://www.miftah.org/display.cfm?docid=21407&categoryid=21>.

² Ibid.

III. CASE STUDY-I

Tel al – Hawa Neighborhood, Gaza City

On January 15, 2009 around 7 am, the IDF started the operation with high explosives and White phosphorus artillery shells in the Tel al-Hawa Neighborhood in South eastern City of Gaza. This was a fully residential area with many multi-storey buildings.

The operation lasted for approximately three hours, and during that time White Phosphorus killed four civilians, members of same family who were travelling in a car.³ Human Rights Watch, interviewed with residents of the neighborhood, and one of them, Fathi Sabbah told them:

"I woke up at 7 am to the sound of heavy bombing in the area. The shells were falling around once a minute. I was watching and I saw white smoke and flames all over the sandy road, for a distance of 200 meters. When we saw the shelling was heavy we asked the residents of the building to go downstairs, women in the basement and men on the second floor. At around 10 am, a shell hit this building. After ten minutes, the owner of the apartments on the top floors went up to inspect. Two apartment owners on the south side said shells had hit their apartments. After an hour we smelled something. We went up later and found that a bedroom on the fifth floor was on fire. We call the fire department and the ICRC. They said the IDF was not allowing them to come."⁴

Sabbah had only one story which narrated the only partial part of this operation, but people were traumatized for many hours, and moreover the help was being denied to them as all the entries had been blocked by IDF. How many Sabba had been trapped in such situation, it could not be figured out.

Human Rights Watch interviewed Muhammad al-sharif on the same day and he told his story, that he came to know about the car which had caught fire during the operation. When he tried to rescue the people who were boarding on it, he was being stuck as the shelling was continuous. After the control of shelling, al Sharif and the other two men carried the wounded men to the neighbor's car and take him to the al-Shifa hospital. When he returned from the hospital, he found the car had been partially melted and the tank had been exploded.⁵

In his own words;

"My daughter told me there was a car on fire with people in it, I looked out and saw a young man who had lost control of himself trying to push his way into the burning car. When I got to the car he had fallen down and he was on fire. The shelling was ongoing and I dragged him to an alley and tried to talk to him, but he couldn't talk. One of his eyes had burned away and he was horribly injured."⁶

Israel's intentions to paralyze the life of Gaza and their people, is horrible. The true extent of the sufferings of the people could not be put here in the form of case studies. This agony is not understandable by words. Human Rights Watch, investigated about the survived men, from the burning car. He was Mohammad al-Haddad of twenty-five years old.

Mohammad al-Haddad who was treated in the burn unit at al-Shifa hospital, told Human Rights Watch team on January 27,

"We drove about 100 meters to the intersection at the end of our street, when we were hit. The power of the explosion threw me from the car. I lost consciousness, but then I went back to the car, and that's where Mr. al-Sharif said he found me. After that I woke up in the hospital."⁷

³ "Rain of Fire ,Israel's Unlawful use of White phosphorous in Gaza", *Human Rights Watch*, March 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Fati Sabbah, Gaza City, January 26, 2009 cited in "Rain of Fire ,Israel's Unlawful use of White phosphorous in Gaza", *Human Rights Watch*, March 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

⁵ "Rain of Fire ,Israel's Unlawful use of White phosphorous in Gaza", *Human Rights Watch*, March 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>

⁶ Human Rights Watch Interview with Muhammad al Sharif, Gaza City,Jan.27, 2009 cited in "Rain of Fire ,Israel's Unlawful use of White phosphorous in Gaza", *Human Rights Watch*, March 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>

⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Muhammad al-Haddad, January 27, 2009 cited in "Rain of Fire ,Israel's Unlawful use of White phosphorous in Gaza", *Human Rights Watch*, March 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>

Haddad had lost his left eye, apart from it; he suffered third degree burns to his legs, hands and forehead. Human Rights Watch, asked about the Haddad's burns to the head of the burn and plastic surgery unit at al-Shifa Hospital, Dr. Nafiz Abu Sha'baan, he told the Human Rights Watch that he had not treated any wounds which were caused by White phosphorous before "Operation Cast Lead". He told the team that due to lack of diagnostic tools, he could not classify injuries, as caused by White phosphorous.⁸ Upon asking the severity and types of burn, he told

*"We think it's from White phosphorous because the burns are very deep. We already excised burnt tissue and now his wounds are getting worse. When we saw him the first time the wounds were more superficial than they are now. We've got to operate again tomorrow to exercise more tissue."*⁹

So this case study indicates that white phosphorous has been used extensively during the operation and doctors did not have any idea of this type of wounds and their treatment. It resulted in large numbers of deaths and unclassified wounds and disorders which have to carry by the patients for a long time.

IV. CASE STUDY II

It is not a true statement that Israel caused devastation in Gaza, for a single time in the form of "Operation Cast Lead". It is worst solution which is prevailing from 2007 due to blockade of Israel. And during that period, all the people were subjected to harassment and were not following the basic human values. This is a another case study, which shows the society picture of those city which is kept aside from basic human values and dignity. It shows the plight of women who were unnecessarily becoming the worst hit of every bad situation in this world.

"Ramallah – Palestine Occupied Territory 15 May, 2007"¹⁰ Fatima's labor pain became intolerable, when she along with her mother reached to Aljaba checkpoint. They were moving from one checkpoint to another for three hours to get to the Ramallah Hospital. When they could not find a way from the car, they left the car and proceed on foot. But after taking a few steps, Fatima felt that the baby dropped in her pants. Fatima cries in pain and said to her mother

*"Yammah (mother) I think the baby is out. Please get help."*¹¹

They both screamed for help, and then some women gathered around them, and in this midst Fatima gave birth to her fifth child.

Fatima for help, after a few hours and she got two units of blood and her baby was kept in the nursery for a check up.

But this story does not have happy end here, Fatima could not be normal after many months. She found herself guilty and shameful of what she had experienced on the road. According to Fatima,

*"After what I have been through, I hated my body and that of all women I cannot look at myself in the mirror and breastfeed my own daughter, thinking she was the cause in all of this." She added, "For along time I isolated myself fearing to face my family's and the neighbour's questions about the incident. I feel besieged and cannot mentally and psychologically overcome it. I need help."*¹²

⁸ "Rain of Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White phosphorous in Gaza", *Human Rights Watch*, March 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Dr. Nafiz Abu Sha'baan, Shifa Hospital, Gaza City, Jan.29, 2009 cited in "Rain of Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White phosphorous in Gaza, *Human Rights Watch*, March 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>

¹⁰ Henrietta Aswad, "Checkpoints Compounded the Risks of Childbirth for Palestinian Women" *UNFPA*, 15th May, 2007, <http://www.unfpa.org/public/site/global/news/pid/310>.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid.

V. CASE STUDY III

During "Operation Cast Lead" the houses were damaged, the residents were compelled to leave their homes. They were subjected to continuous shelling around the area. Those who were not going to leave their area, were forcefully being removed, either by killing them or by making the panic around them. During the visit of Amnesty International delegates, to the North-West Gaza. They found the homes were converted into a rubble and people were being traumatized. They reached the destroyed home of the Mardi family in Atatra, where they found the mines, which were used by the Israeli military, but could not be exploded.¹³

The old man of 63 years old Na'im Mardi narrated the horrific incident to the delegates, *"22 people lived in this house. I and my wife and our two youngest children, and my four married sons and their wives and children. When the Israeli forces invaded on 3 January the situation became more dangerous in the area and most people fled. All my children went to stay with relatives nearby, but I refused to leave my home. All my life's hard work is in this house and I would not abandon it. The day after (4 January) my son and his wife and three children came back; they didn't want to leave me in the house alone with army all around the area. That evening the soldiers told us to get out; they said the house would be safe. We went to stay with the neighbours relatives next door. The following morning at about 9 am they started to blow up our house. There was nothing we could do."*¹⁴

This narrative of old man shows how the people were living in the such traumatic and fearful surroundings. They could not think of any other thing, as they were living in such harsh conditions, where their contact with the external world is being cut off. They were compelled to see rubble, destruction on every side.

Families are forced to live in such houses with scorched interiors, blood-stained floors and sometimes victims are forced to look at the discriminatory and offensive graffiti scratched into their walls by Israeli soldiers.¹⁵

VI. CASE STUDY IV

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights tries to document the civilian narratives with Faten el Sha'er, a 31 year old mother of one baby, who was a resident of adjacent of Gaza's southern border with Egypt, told to PCHR¹⁶,

*"I was baking bread when the bombing of the border area began on 28 December. Thousands of the people took to the street, trying to escape. Everybody was no move. My mother, my five year old daughter Nigham and I ran to my uncle's house, which is further from the border. Other family members were scattered at the homes of relatives."*¹⁷

She further added,

*"During the war there was daily bombing of this area – sometimes in the morning, sometimes at midnight. It went on for 22 days when the ceasefire was declared we came back to the house but had to evacuate it again the next day because they started bombing again."*¹⁸

Faten told the PCHR that the situation between the firing was pathetic. They could not sleep, they could not take rest, as they had to left their homes during the night. The plight of the children who were facing this trauma, was narrated by Faten herself

"The children are suffering real trauma, some of them are incontinent and they wake up in the night and start crying. My daughter Nigham has to hold on to me all the time. They understand it's a war".¹⁹

¹³ Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), "Update of the Document briefing to the committee against torture", *Amnesty International*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/014/2009/en/08c9f918-0092-4c47-b795-ac645e45f034/mde15014200gen.html>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "The Gaza war's uniquely detrimental effect on womens", <http://www.wordpress.com/2010/12/24/24/the-gaza-wars-uniquely-detrimentaleffects-on-women-news>

¹⁶ "Aftermath (1) "We never feel safe"", *Palestinian Centre for Human Rights*, Monday 09, Feb. 2009 <http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com-content&view=category&id=74> and Itemid=217

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid.

She added,

*"We never feel safe, we know Israel will bomb again. We just hope there will be a proper ceasefire so we can come back to our homes and start to rebuild what is left."*²⁰

Faten pictured the agony and despair of people who are facing acute life conditions in the Gaza strip. Children are being denied to schools, as there was no safety in that condition. Faten recounted the agony of her nephew, who is a student and was in school

*"When he heard an unmanned Israeli drone in the sky. He automatically picked up his schoolbag and ran home, crying. "The drones are still over my head. I can't take it anymore."*²¹

This is a wordings of seven year old children, who don't know about the war, the policies, the politics, etc. The Israeli army compelled the children of Gaza to live in panic condition and they forcibly made the children of there to become mature before time.

VII. CASE STUDY V

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, interviewed the many residents, who is compelled to live in harsh conditions of torture and mess created by the Israeli army. PCHR found in Jabal Al Rayes, North East Gaza, the house of Mos'ab Dardona, Israeli soldiers who had taken up positions in the civilian houses in the area left behind intricate drawings on the walls, some depicting soldiers urinating on toppled mosques, or devouring Palestinian villages.²²

The cases are numerous which shows the racial hatredness of Jews. In the other incident, during the Israeli's full ground offensive they made their bases in some of the homes of agricultural area of Johr-ad-Dik, out of many homes, they made their base in the home of Saleh Abu Hajaj. Their bases were made of the blood of the residents of this house.

On 4 January, 2009 in the morning, a shell landed near the home of Saleh Abu Hajaj. Apart from it Radio interceptions also made by the Israeli military to evacuate their homes. Saleh's 36 years old daughter Majeda Abu Hajaj trying to escape with all the neighbors. She had been shot dead, on her back. After few minutes tanks opened a fire to kill her 64 year old mother Raya.

After killings of all the residents they entered into the Abu Hajaj Home, and left graffiti in every room. Above Majeda's bed are the words "Death will find you soon. Other parts of the house carry the words "Have you ever wondered what hell looks like? Well ... look around you ...! Ha Ha Ha"²³.

PCHR, also found such offensive graffiti in the houses of residents. In the Zeytoun district, where 27 members of a Samouni family were killed by an airstrike while sheltering in a building they had been placed in by the Israeli army, the message on the walls are "Die you all", "Make war not peace", "Arabs need to die" and a gravestone engraved with the words "Arabs 1948-2009" referring to the dates between the creation of the state of the Israel and its latest military offensive.²⁴

A stairwell in Rashad Helmi Al Samouni's house a few doors down includes the following sentences written in chalk :

"There will be a day when we kill all the Arabs"

"Bad for the Arabs is good for me"

"A good Arab is an Arab in the grave"

*"Peace now, but between Jews and Jews, not Jews and Arabs"*²⁵

These are crimes done by the Israeli's army. They eroded the issues of nationality, racism, etc. and created a havoc in the minds of residents of Gaza during and after "Operation Cast Lead".

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² "Aftermath (5) Coming Home", PCHR, 18th March, 2009, <http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com-content&view=categoryid=74&itemid=217>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

In another report, Palestinian Centre of Human Rights documented that since the last two years since the "Operation Cast Lead", The Israeli government did not show any sign of transparency and credibility. According to the reports, only three soldiers have been convicted of committing offense related crimes. Out of the three, one is sentenced to seven months in Jail for the theft of a credit card. The other two were given a three month suspended sentence for using a nine year old boy as a human shield.²⁶

VIII. CASE STUDY VI : KHUZA'S VILLAGE

Khuza's village is the closest Palestinian residential areas in Israel. Israel forces done ground incursions between January 11 and 13 there, from the narratives of local officials "Sixteen civilians dead and dozens more were wounded, many by smoke inhalation from the extensive use of white phosphorous."²⁷

The IDF started the operation in Khuza's village around 9:30 pm. On January 10, with an intense artillery barrage in the area, including white phosphorous shells...²⁸

According to the local residents, Iman al-Najjar (30) :

"That night, starting around 9:30, they began to fire phosphorous randomly. Almost all the houses here got their share ... We thought it was fog but it was smoke. It was hard to breath. We tried to put out the fire. The whole neighbourhood came out ... Two phosphorous pieces landed in my house and it was on fire. People were choking, so we went to the neighbour's house".²⁹

Human Rights Watch confirmed the presence of white phosphorous shell during the operation.

Human Rights Watch investigated another person, Majidal Najjar whose wife Hannan al-Najjar had been killed during the strike. He left the house where he was staying to help an elderly couple escaping the flames, recalling his tragedy to the Human Right Watch :

"First the phosphorous pieces landed. We evacuated the old coupled and then the shell hit the house ... I saw and I heard the sound of the shell so I went back. I saw the children and men coming out, some of the were inured. My little girl Aya got burned and her right arm was broken. My son Ahmad burned his wrist and head – he is 12 years old.³⁰

Recounting the agony of that night he told about his wife, Hanan, who had been killed due to a direct attack of shell in her chest.

Human Rights Watch, inspected the house on January 24 and found evidence of white phosphorous all over around. Roof of the house had a white phosphorous canister and had the remains of unburned wedges, which ignited when killed.³¹

The chain of bombing and shelling by IDF did not stop there, they entered into the al Najjar district of Khuza'a on Jan.11, and began the assault on Jan.13, around midnight. Human Rights Watch, interviewed Ismail

²⁶ "Two years after Operation Cast Lead : Gaza remains off from outside World, Impunity for War Crimes Prevail's" *PCHR* ,27th Dec. 2010, http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_contentandview=article and id = 7196 : two-year-after-operation – cast lead.

²⁷ "Ashraf Khalil, "In Gaza Town, A bitter aftermath", *Los Angeles Times*, Feb.15, 2009,. Cited in "Rain of Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White Phosphorous in Gaza", *HRW*, March 2009. <http://www.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

²⁸ On January 10, an IDF Spokesperson, Capt. Guy Spiegelman denied that the IDF conducted operations In the area of Khuza on that day, and said "there is no use of WP, Adel Zaanoun, "3 Palestinian killed, dozens hurt in Gaza" Agence France-Prese, Jan.10. 2009. Cited in" Rain Of Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White Phosphorous in Gaza", *HRW*, March 2009. <http://www.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

²⁹ "Rain OF Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White Phosphorous in Gaza", *HRW*, March 2009. <http://www.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

³⁰ Human RightsWatch interview with Majid al-Najjar, Khuza's January 24, 2009. Cited in "Rain OF Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White Phosphorous in Gaza", *HRW*, March 2009, <http://www.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

³¹ "Rain OF Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White Phosphorous in Gaza", *HRW*, March 2009. <http://www.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

Khadr, a 50 year old farmer, he told the team " When the phosphorous landed we were on an island of smoke. Fires were everywhere and reached waist high. The pieces were like foam. Some of my farms was burned.³² Human Rights Watch inspected the hospital's records and found that on Jan.13 doctors there had treated thirteen persons for what the hospital called chemical burns. On asking about the patients, Dr. Yusuf Abu Rish, the director of Nasseer Hospital in nearby Khan Younis told the Human Right Watch :

"Even the ambulance bringing the victims was full of a fould odor. Many of the victims suffered from a shortness of breath, hysteria and muscle spasms".³³

IX. CASE STUDY VII

The case study is reported by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), and entails the story of a lady who was struggling for her life during Operation Cast Lead. This case study narrates the irony of a lady who has witnessed the true effect of the devastation of war and gave a blow to her death.

Wafa Al-Radea : "Beit Lahiya residents, Wafa Al-Radea (37) and her sister. Ghada (30), were visiting the doctor, for the Wafa, who was nine months pregnant. They went to take the advantage of the temporary ceasefire, on the 10th of January. Suddenly, they heard the drone, on the way. They wanted to run, but as Wafa was expecting a baby she couldn't make it. She recounted the day

"... I felt that we were going to be attacked there was no one around and the drone was so loud. I was calling out the Shuhadah ..."

But the rockets were fired from a drone, and it severely damaged the Wafa's left leg

"I saw my left leg, it was very bad, it looked like raw meat ... I couldn't see my sister I didn't know what happened to her. I was just thinking that I needed someone to cover me, my clothes and body were burned, I was nearly naked."

After 15 minutes, a car took Gada to the hospital, Wafa was thought to be dead. After 20 minutes, when she was taken to the hospital, the doctor performs a caesarean on her, and her son was delivered successfully. The doctors realized only during the operation that she was not dead. She was transferred for treatment on 12 January in Egypt. They have to pass the checkpoints amidst of many tanks. Recounting the agony Wafa's brother told

"It was very dangerous, to get to Rafah we had to pass through the Israeli positions ..."

During their travelling Wafa, who was still in coma, stop breathing. After taking help with Egyptian delegation, she started to breathe.

Wafa had six or seven operations in Zaytoun hospital in Cairo. Her brother narrated

"In the ICU her body was covered in bandages, I could only see her eyes. It took six hours for the nurses to change the bandages."

Wafa underwent numerous operations. There's one time when doctors performed an operation, she was found dead. Doctors stopped operating and returned her to ICU. But she had again got a life, and underwent another surgery. She was fitted with a prosthetic leg.

When Wafa came to know about her newborn son, she couldn't believe that she had given a child. *"I couldn't believe that I had delivered, I thought I had lost my baby. After two months I slowly started to believe it, I had to see his picture on the mobile phone."* She recounted the moments when she first met her baby. *"At first I didn't know he was mine, then he hugged me. They told me that this was Eyad."*

Wafa on being asked about Operation Cast Lead, said "I feel pain inside me now, I can't speak about it, it is too hard. I can't sit still, it is very difficult for me to sit up, I have to keep my (left) leg raised."

Wafa and Gada could not forget the agony of that time. She could not live their life happily even after many years.³⁴

³² Human Rights Watch researchers also found an illumination round just outside the house, marked ILLUM T₂1/84 155 My85A₂. Cited in "Rain OF Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White Phosphorous in Gaza", HRW, March 2009, <http://www.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

³³ Human Right Watch interview with Dr. Yusuf Abu Rish, Nasser Hospital, Khan Younis, Jan.24, 2009. Cited in " Rain OF Fire, Israel's Unlawful use of White Phosphorous in Gaza", HRW, March 2009, <http://www.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>.

X. CASE STUDY VIII

15th Jan. 2009

Hala-Herzullah : Palestine Centre for Human Rights interviewed Hala Herzullah (40) and her mother, Um Hader (73). On asking about the military action,

*"I was living in Tel-el-Hawa, all our family were together. During the offensive we all stayed in the same room, for safety. It was very difficult in Tel-el-Hawa, there was lots of fighting. My brother-in-law, Alaa, was phoning us from al-Yarmouk, he told us that we should come to his house, because the area was very safe and quiet. Around 11 in the morning on 15 January we decided to leave."*³⁵

The family rushed to the relatives. They recalled the day that white phosphorous were spread on all the way and dead people were there. They reached Alaa's house, with very difficulty. *"We hadn't slept properly in a very long time, the night of the 14th was very hard."*

When they went to bed, after a few minutes they found Israeli air force targeted Eyad Siam's house. Hala, remembered the day with grief "I didn't hear any noise, I just saw the wall above us and the stones. I was awake. but I was completely covered by the rubble. I felt like I was in a grave. I didn't know if I was dead or alive, I just kept thinking 'Where am I?' The wall didn't break fully, part of it covered me, the way it broke saved me. Thank God! Maram and her father weren't aware of anything, they were knocked unconscious."

Due to the intensity of the attack, Ahmed and Hossam were killed instantly. Hala was taken to the hospital, she were in medical supervision for ten days *"I could see sand in my eyes for a long time"*. She said. After the attack her middle section of the body suffered a lot. She told about her husband *"My husband was very badly injured, he has sharpened in his stomach."* Doctors had operated him.

Hala came to know about the death of her two sons in the hospital, she was being traumatized, and was feeling hopeless. She told that her home was very beautiful and her life was in a perfect shape before the attacks. They lived happily, but now she is a mental patient, she had lost two of her sons. She told PCHR pathetically

*"I had two sons, two daughters and my husband. Now everything is changed. I don't want to feel my pain all the time. I try to go out to live, but I have lost the taste of life, I just can't live normally. It is not like it was before. I can't forget my children. I can't forget what happened to us."*³⁶

Hala, told PCHR about her daughter, who was being traumatised for loosing her two brothers suddenly. She could not attend class for the remainder of the school year after the offensive as a result of her injuries."

XI. CASE STUDY IX – LEILA AL-IR

Leila Al-Ir was a resident of East of Jabaliya, Israeli's invasion in her area started around the starting in January. Usually as they were living near the border, they always watched tanks and military to pass them without any hassle. But in the beginning of January she realized that the intentions of Israel were not clear, so she along with her family decided to leave their area. When the family began to load their belongings onto a donkey cart, the shell destroyed the cart and killed her two sons on the spot. The other family members were sustained injuries. They tried to get help, but the ambulances were out of the reach due to intense military attack. Leila recounted the moments :

*"After the shell hit us, I didn't know who was alive and who was dead. I saw Ibrahim, his body was covered with blood. He was 12 years old, I put my hand on his head. I felt his injuries and I realised he was dying ... I held him when he took his least breath. After I took Ibrahim inside to protect him. I was afraid that if there was another attach, he would be cut to pieces. My daughter Nidaa', told me that Rakan was also dead. I ran outside and saw Fidaa's in pieces on the ground, like a slaughtered hen ... my daughter. I brought her inside, and but her beside Ibrahim. All her body was injured. I said to myself "Ibrahim is dead, Rakan is dead, now I will lose Fidaa also. I was calling out for my husband Mohammed, but I didn't know then that he had also been killed."*³⁷

Then after her house caught fire, she could not stop anything and had taken the shelter of her neighbor's house. She had taken all her children, who were dead. After that, they sheltered in a house where they had been

³⁴ "Through Women's Eyes – A PCHR Report on the Gender – Specific Impact and Consequences of Operation Cast Lead", 2009, PCHR, <http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/reports/english/pdf-spec/throughwomen's%20eyes.pdf>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

prevented to come out and went anywhere. They had no food, no water. For five days, they had lived in an isolated area, where they had been cut off from every basic need. She told *"I slept with my dead children."*

They were hungry and had no bottle of water. When they tried to signal the army, for their need, army responded by shooting at the direction of them. Leila told about the atrocities of Israel's military :

"At approximately 8 a.m. on Thursday, 8 January, two Israeli soldiers approached the group, asking who was inside, Mohammed Atawna's mother told him, "We were here, with our neighbours, we are 15 people ... Mohammed (Atawna) tried to show them his ID, but they said they didn't just want his ID, they wanted his RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade). They said we were Hamas, Mohammad told them "we are not Hamas or resistance fighters, we are Bedouin and animal farmers."³⁸"

This verdict of Leila shows that Israel's primary motto is to exploit the people, who were innocent. They tried to create panic around the city of Gaza, so that the supremacy of Israel could be maintained by the people of Gaza. Then soldier back with bulldozers. They want to bulldoze the house, but Leila and others were pleading for burying the dead bodies. But the cruel military did not give their ears to them and start bulldozing the area. According to Leila

"they destroyed everything, the land, the animals. I left my children. It was a matter of life and death, we kept running, I couldn't carry them I saw the bulldozer when it started to take over the land, when it look the bodies. I tried to go back but Nidaa said no, they are dead. I asked my children to forgive me, that I couldn't save him, that I couldn't bury them. I saw the bulldozers destroying everything, even the bodies. You cannot imagine the feeling, I couldn't carry them, I couldn't bury them. We ran until we reached Jabaliya town..."³⁹

They ran until they reached Jabaliya, they were completely exhausted and tired. They were in a bad condition. But their sufferings were no end Leila got admitted to hospital where she came to know that her husband was also killed. When she heard the news, she could not remain stable. She was being traumatized and stayed in hospital for treatment. When she returned from hospital, she was not able to sleep properly. She was staying with her brother, after a month of offense, She told PCHR,

"I have been with them for three months. They visit me twice a week and give me medicine to sleep because I can't sleep without it."

After the ceasefire, they could not rebuild their home, their land was damaged. All of their sources were abruptly snatched from them. The male of this family were fearing to return their land because of the chances of again military action. These situation created a havoc for this family.

XII. CONCLUSION

Israel did all this, which breaches International humanitarian law and principles. They intentionally kill all civilians, and there is no point of doubt that they wanted to create panic among the residents of this area, therefore they had done all this.

All the case studies given in this chapter try to visualise the real picture in the name of "Operation Cast Lead". Israel had made the attacks since many years, either on Labanon or on Gaza. It seems that they have a factory of ammunitions, so they wanted to experiment it in some region. It attacks uniformly without any discrimination. So the death toll must be high without any doubt. Israel's uses of weapons on Gaza, during these 22 days, seems that it is a long time strategic planning because it had probably transported the weapons from United States supposedly for this reason.

All the case studies given here, tells the same ironic story. The story of a nation, which wants to get up, but converted into rubble every time. Every chance of its stand is being hit by another nation which is powerful enough, to destruct the life of people, to kill the people without any mercy. People who had lost the family member, relatives and friends could not forget the day of devastation. They had lost their body parts and were in utmost sadness and trauma. What are the ways, so that they could stand up and live their life are uncertain. They were passed from traumatic incidents in which they saw their loved ones being cut off, being in blood coated. So, how will they come out of such grief. It is a major question.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

But yes, it is true Israel wanted to show its power and its high-tech weapons to the world, which requires war. So, it chooses that area, which was already in its claws, from 2007. It does whatever it wants. The killing of innocent people proves that Israel has highly developed weapons. It has a back from the powerful countries too. And the whole world has seen this. So, it is a hope that in the near future Israel will not make any weapon, because if it does, then we will require another Lebanon, another Gaza.

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