

Fear and Intimidation

Israeli night raids on Palestinian homes



**Women's Centre
for Legal Aid and Counselling
(WCLAC)**

Since 2014, WCLAC has collected testimonies from women with firsthand experience of Israeli military night raids on their family home. These raids are conducted in a systematic manner throughout the West Bank, but are particularly common in locations close to settlements and roads used by settlers. It is estimated that around 1,350 night raids are currently being conducted each year suggesting that around 65,000 night raids have taken place in the West Bank since martial law was imposed in 1967.

A common theme throughout the testimonies is the sense of fear and terror created by these night raids. Most occur between 2:00 and 4:00 a.m. and commence with aggressive banging at the front door. In some cases the door is simply kicked in or blown off its hinges. Soldiers in full battle gear enter the house and herd family members into one room while the house is searched. During the search the contents of wardrobes are sometimes thrown on the floor and other items damaged. The evidence shows that:

- Stun grenades and tear gas are used excessively;
- Young children are traumatized and wet themselves;
- Furniture is damaged;
- Possessions, such as phones and cash, are sometimes stolen; and
- Threats and violence are commonplace.

In some cases the purpose of the raid is to conduct an arrest. However, in the majority of cases no arrests are made leaving the impression that the purpose of the raid is to instil fear and to intimidate the household. In some cases the purpose of the night raid is to “map” the village; a process whereby every young male above the age of 12 is photographed for future identification. These “mapping” exercises generally occur in villages that dare to organise weekly protests against the Wall or settlements built in violation of international law.

Possibly the most significant finding from the testimonies is that on average night raids occur within 2 kilometres from the nearest Israeli settlement. In many cases the nearest road used by settlers is even closer. This is no coincidence and is directly linked to the presence of approximately 570,000 Israeli civilians living beyond the Green Line in occupied territory in violation of international law. From a military perspective, this situation poses an extraordinary challenge for the Israeli army which has been given the task by successive governments of guaranteeing the protection of the settlers.

The evidence indicates that in order to achieve this task, the Israeli military is essentially compelled to engage in a systematic strategy of intimidation in order to implement the government’s settlement policies. One indicator of this strategy’s success can be measured by the fact that according to the US State Department, no Israeli settlers were killed as a result of the conflict in the West Bank

in 2012. The evidence suggests that repeated night raids on Palestinian communities located in close proximity to a settlement, or a road used by settlers, forms an integral part of this strategy and is a direct consequence of Israeli government policy.

Demand action now

The policies of successive Israeli governments to encourage its civilians to live in settlements beyond the Green Line not only undermines the international legal order but also results inevitably in the daily commission of multiple human rights violations. In order to implement government policy and to guarantee the protection of the settlers, the Israeli military is given little choice but to engage in a strategy of mass intimidation of the Palestinian civilian population which includes engaging in night raids on Palestinian villages.

Please consider contacting your elected representatives and demand an end to night raids conducted by the Israeli military on Palestinian homes in the West Bank and the policies that make them necessary.

“On 1 April 2015, at about 2.00 a.m., we woke up when we heard an unusual sound outside. I looked out of the window and was surprised to see at least 100 Israeli soldiers surrounding our house. A few minutes later there was loud banging on the door to our apartment. The soldiers started yelling in Arabic to open the door. I hurried to open the door and asked them to be quiet because my 3-year-old granddaughter was asleep and I didn’t want her to wake up terrified. About 30 soldiers entered the house and spread out to search. I told the soldiers they had no right to come into our house in this way, but I was pushed aside and told to shut up. Another soldier entered my granddaughter’s bedroom and pointed a bright torch in her face until she woke up. She woke up and was so scared she started to scream.”

*Ibtisam Q. (60 years)
Tura, West Bank
1 April 2015*