



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

### UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict

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#### Submission

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**Date: 28 January 2015**

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*The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) is a Palestinian non-governmental organization established in 1991 and based in Ramallah and East Jerusalem. WCLAC aims to address the causes and consequences of gender-based violence within the community as well as the gender-specific effects of prolonged military occupation.<sup>1</sup>*

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 On 23 July 2014, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution ([A/HRC/RES/S-21/1](#)) in which it decided to establish an independent, international commission of inquiry (Commission of Inquiry) to investigate all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, in the context of the military operations conducted since 13 June 2014 (Gaza conflict), and to report to the Council in March 2015.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.2 Pursuant to this mandate, the Commission of Inquiry has invited individuals, groups and organizations to submit information and documentation related to its mandate, as outlined in the summary above, by 31 January 2015.
- 1.3 In accordance with this invitation, the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) has prepared this submission based on evidence collected by the organization's two fieldworkers in Gaza from women affected by the conflict since 13 June 2014.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Following six-days of armed conflict in June 1967, Israeli forces occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.<sup>3</sup> In November 1967, the Security Council unanimously adopted a legally binding resolution emphasizing the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war and called for the "Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict".<sup>4</sup>
- 2.2 In September 2005, Israel completed its unilateral disengagement plan from Gaza and announced an end to martial law in the territory. However, Israel continues to maintain control over Gaza's sea and airspace, border crossings with Israel and the territory's population registry, and as such, continues to owe all the duties and obligations of an occupying power under international law.<sup>5</sup> Israel's continued status as an occupying power in Gaza was confirmed in 2009 by the Security Council when it adopted a legally binding resolution stressing that "the Gaza Strip constitutes an integral part of the territory occupied in 1967 and will be part of the Palestinian state".<sup>6</sup>
- 2.3 Following the take-over of the Gaza Strip by Hamas in June 2007, Israel imposed a siege on the territory's 1.8 million inhabitants, severely limiting the movement of people and goods in and out of the territory thereby causing, *inter alia*, a severe economic crisis which includes an unemployment rate of 40 per cent.<sup>7</sup>

***“Operation Cast Lead” – 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009***

- 2.4 In December 2008, intense fighting erupted in and around Gaza which included rocket fire from Gaza as well as bombardment by land, sea and air from Israel. This culminated in Israel launching a ground war into Gaza (“Operation Cast Lead”) which concluded on 18 January 2009. During the course of 23 days, 1,391 Palestinians and 9 Israelis were killed, representing a kill ratio of 155:1. According to the Israeli organization B’Tselem, 55 per cent of Palestinian fatalities and 33 per cent of Israeli fatalities were civilians not participating in hostilities.

*Casualties during “Operation Cast Lead” (2008-2009). Source: UN and NGOs<sup>8</sup>*

	Killed			Injured
	Men	Women	Children	
<b>Palestinian</b>	938	109	344	5,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,391</b>			
<b>Israeli</b>	8	1	0	Dozens
<b>Total<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>9</b>			

Further, according to UN data, 3,500 residential properties in Gaza were destroyed and 20,000 Palestinians were left homeless.

- 2.5 Following the conflict international pressure mounted for accountability on all sides for alleged violations of international law. In the months that followed, one Israeli soldier was convicted of stealing a credit card and given a sentence of seven-and-a-half months in prison; two soldiers were convicted of using a Palestinian child as a human shield and given a suspended sentences of three months; and one soldier was convicted of “inappropriate conduct” arising out of the killing of an anonymous person and received a prison sentence of 45 days.<sup>10</sup> As far as WCLAC is aware, no Palestinians have been held legally accountable for alleged violations of international law arising out of the conflict.

***“Operation Pillar of Defense” – November 2012***

- 2.6 On 14 November 2012, Israel launched “Operation Pillar of Defense” in the Gaza Strip which concluded on 21 November 2012. During eight days of intense bombardment, 167 Palestinians and 6 Israelis were killed, representing a kill ratio of 28:1. On the Palestinian side the fatalities included 87 persons not participating in hostilities (52 per cent) including 31 minors.<sup>11</sup> This latest escalation in violence ended with a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas.

**“Operation Protective Edge” – 7 July to 26 August 2014**

- 2.7 In July 2014, intense fighting again erupted in and around Gaza which included rocket fire from Gaza as well as bombardment by land, sea and air from Israel. This culminated in Israel launching a ground war into Gaza (“Operation Protective Edge”) which concluded on 26 August 2014. During the course of 50 days, 2,205 Palestinians and 71 Israelis were killed, representing a kill ration of 31:1. According to the UN, 67 per cent of Palestinian fatalities and 6 per cent of Israeli fatalities were civilians not participating in hostilities.

*Casualties during “Operation Protective Edge” (2014). Source: UN<sup>12</sup>*

	Killed			Injured
	Men	Women	Children	
<b>Palestinian</b>	1,401	283	521	10,224
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,205</b>			
<b>Israeli</b>				
	70	0	1	Dozens
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>			

- 2.8 It is estimated that 10,224 Palestinians, including 3,106 children (30 per cent) and 1,970 women (19 per cent) were injured. Preliminary estimates indicate that up to 1,000 of the children injured will have a permanent disability and up to 1,500 orphaned children will need sustained support from the child protection and welfare sectors.
- 2.9 According to the UN, over 500,000 Palestinians were displaced by the war, representing 28 per cent of the total population of Gaza. It is also estimated that 18,000 homes have been destroyed or severely damaged leaving more than 108,000 people homeless, over half of whom are children.<sup>13</sup>

### **3. Evidence**

- 3.1 As part of WCLAC’s ongoing programme to monitor human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, fieldworkers for the organization systematically document cases involving violations, with a particular focus on women. During the Gaza conflict, WCLAC’s two fieldworkers in Gaza continued to collect statements from women under extremely difficult circumstances. During the conflict and its immediate aftermath, WCLAC documented 36 cases covering a wide range of issues.
- 3.2 The following table provides a brief summary of the cases documented by WCLAC related to the Gaza conflict, including cases involving:

- Fatalities (Annexures N, O, P, AC and AD)
- Terror experienced by the Palestinian civilian population (Annexures A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, K, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y and Z)
- Pregnant women (Annexures A, C, D, E, J, P and Z)
- “Knock on the roof” warning of attack (Annexure P)
- Recorded phone messages left by the Israeli military (Annexures D, E, H, V, X and Y)
- Destruction of ambulances (Annexures O and P)
- Lack of medical care (Annexures G and J)
- Property damage and displacement (Annexures A, C, D, E, I, J, K, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, W, Y and AB)
- Power cuts (Annexure B, C, V, Y and Z)
- Conditions in UN shelters (Annexures D, I, J, Q, R, T and U)
- Intimidation of Palestinian citizens of Israel (Annexure L)
- Unexploded ordinance (Annexure W)
- Destruction of the 14-storey Al Thafer building (Annexure X)
- Medical professionals (Annexures B and AA)
- Buried under rubble (Annexure AB)
- Refugees from Gaza drown at sea (Annexure AE)
- Life for a teenager in Gaza after the war (Annexure AF)
- Lack of freedom of movement (Annexure G and AJ)

*Summary of evidence collected by WCLAC relating to the Gaza conflict (2014)*

#	Name	Age	Date	Details	Annex
1	Amal	40	8 July	Amal describes fleeing her home to escape Israeli air raids and shelling and the effects on her children – “We live in sheer terror”.	<b>A</b>
2	Miriam	46	9 July	Miriam describes the terror of nightly air raids in Gaza and constant power cuts – “We have no future, we never feel safe.”	<b>B</b>
3	Louna	30	9 July	A pregnant woman describes the terror when a bomb exploded near her home – “There is no safe place in all of Gaza, and I have no other place to go to.”	<b>C</b>
4	Fatina	56	10 July	Fatina describes how she received a recorded message from the Israeli military at 3.00 a.m. giving them 15	<b>D</b>

				minutes to leave their apartment before it was destroyed.	
5	Lubna	19	10 July	A pregnant woman describes how she and her husband were forced to flee their home in the middle of the night due to a heavy bombardment.	<b>E</b>
6	Bessan	30	12 July	Bessan describes the terror caused by air raids – “My little daughters are petrified as the loud explosions are now occurring day and night.”	<b>F</b>
7	Safad	23	13 July	Safad describes her desperation as she cannot obtain proper treatment for her 4-year-old daughter who suffers from Leukemia.	<b>G</b>
8	Samar	32	15 July	Samar describes the terror experienced when the Israeli military telephones with recorded messages to leave their homes.	<b>H</b>
9	Suhar	22	15 July	Suhar describes conditions in a refugee shelter after she and her family had to flee their home.	<b>I</b>
10	Rida	19	19 July	Rida describes how her family was forced to flee their home at midnight after it was hit by a tank shell.	<b>J</b>
11	Mariam	80	19 July	Mariam describes how her family was forced to flee their home that they had just rebuilt after it was destroyed by an Israeli bombardment in 2012.	<b>K</b>
12	Khulud	32	19 July	Khulud describes being attacked by a right-wing mob in Haifa during a demonstration against the war – “Death to Arabs”.	<b>L</b>
13	Fida	19	24 July	Fida describes how she was forced to flee her home with her family during a heavy bombardment.	<b>M</b>
14	Ola	23	20 July	Ola describes how the ceiling of her house collapsed during an air raid narrowly missing her two-year-old’s cot.	<b>N</b>
15	Jamileh	40	20 July	Jamileh describes how her husband and 11-year-old daughter were killed	<b>O</b>

				when an ambulance they were near was struck by a missile.	
16	Inam	40	20 July	Inam describes how her 10-year-old son was killed when their house was destroyed in an air-raid.	<b>P</b>
17	Itidal	48	20 July	Itidal describes conditions in a UN shelter for families who were forced to flee their homes due to intense bombardment.	<b>Q</b>
18	Fatima	45	20 July	Fatima describes how she sought shelter in a school following intense bombardment of her neighbourhood.	<b>R</b>
19	Shadia	26	20 July	Shadia describes how she and her family had to flee their home during an intense bombardment – “I feel we Gazans are doomed.”	<b>S</b>
20	Sumaia	24	21 July	Sumaia describes conditions in a UN shelter housing hundreds of families - “Everybody at the shelter was under tremendous stress.”	<b>T</b>
21	Ibtisam	38	21 July	Ibtisam describes how she and her family fled their family home during a heavy bombardment.	<b>U</b>
22	Samar	32	23 July	Samar describes how many residents of Gaza ignore the recorded messages from the Israeli military telling them to leave their homes because they have nowhere to go.	<b>V</b>
23	Narmen	30	23 July	Narmen describes the fear caused by an unexploded bomb in her neighbourhood.	<b>W</b>
24	Dina	38	24 July	Dina describes the demolition of the 14-storey Al Thafer building in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza.	<b>X</b>
25	Suha	46	27 July	Suha describes how she received a recorded message from the Israeli military telling her to evacuate her house. The warning proved to be a false alarm.	<b>Y</b>
26	Bessan	30	3 August	Bessan describes how her pregnant sister refused to get into an ambulance	<b>Z</b>

				from fear it would be targeted in an airstrike.	
27	Dina	53	5 August	Dina describes working as a theatre nurse in the Al Shifa hospital.	<b>AA</b>
28	Rida	25	8 August	Rida describes being buried under rubble after her house was destroyed during an Israeli missile attack.	<b>AB</b>
29	Hana	35	24 August	Hana describes how her 16-year-old son was killed by shrapnel from an Israeli bomb as he was standing on the balcony getting some fresh air.	<b>AC</b>
30	Nisrin	38	24 August	Nisreen describes how an Israeli bombardment kills a 17-year-old boy and severely injures two others.	<b>AD</b>
31	Subhia	45	9 Sept	Subhia describes how a family of five's attempt to escape life in Gaza ends in tragedy at sea.	<b>AE</b>
32	Amal	15	1 Oct	Amal describes what life in Gaza is like after the summer war – “When I graduate from school I want go to college to study journalism. I want to be able to tell the world what life is like in Gaza. I don't think enough people know.”	<b>AF</b>
33	Siham	63	9 Oct	Siham describes how an apartment building damaged during the war in Gaza finally collapses. The building had been home to 21 members of an extended family.	<b>AG</b>
34	Manar	24	20 Oct	Manar describes life in Gaza following last summer's war.	<b>AH</b>
35	Fatima	66	8 Nov	Fatima describes life following the destruction of her family home during the summer war.	<b>AI</b>
36	Rawan	24	8 Dec	Rawan describes the frustration she feels at not being permitted to leave Gaza to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem.	<b>AJ</b>



#### **4. Concluding remarks**

- 4.1 Thanks to the dedication and courage of two fieldworkers in Gaza, WCLAC is in a position to present evidence to the Commission providing glimpses into just some of the stories behind the headlines. Some key points that stand out from the evidence include:
- (i) The sense of terror created by intense bombardment from land, sea and air in a civilian population without effective means of escape or defence;
  - (ii) Civilians sometimes ignore Israeli telephone warnings to leave their houses due to intense bombardment outside, because they do not believe the warnings or because they have nowhere to go. In one case a family apparently received a “knock on the roof” warning but did not hear it due to the intense bombardment outside. This raises questions as to the utility and effectiveness of such warnings; and
  - (iii) In spite of numerous statements made by the Israeli authorities that they were only targeting armed groups, 67 per cent of Palestinian fatalities were civilians including 521 children. It should be noted that for every Israeli who died in the conflict, 31 Palestinians were killed.
- 4.2 On 15 January 2015, 20 diplomats from nine countries visited the Gaza Strip to better understand the current situation in the territory. On the same day, a number of UN agencies issued a statement regarding the visit highlighting a number of pressing issues.<sup>14</sup> “The war left more than 100,000 Palestinians homeless, over half of whom are children. Those living in makeshift shelters or pre-fabricated housing units are particularly vulnerable to the cold and rainy winter weather. Flooding and lack of adequate heating make a difficult situation even more miserable and dangerous.”
- 4.3 The statement also highlighted the role Israel’s blockade on the territory has on the crisis in Gaza. “We also need to look beyond the immediate challenges. The escalation of hostilities may have ceased for now, but the blockade of Gaza continues to impact all aspects of daily Palestinian life and impedes the development of the Gaza Strip. The Gaza crisis did not start this summer. Seven years of blockade and the ongoing conflict have exhausted people’s coping mechanisms and increased aid dependency and food insecurity.” It is clear that without a lasting resolution based on established principles of international law, it is only a matter of time before the cycle of violence illustrated in the chronology above erupts again. And without any genuine accountability for violations of established legal principles, there is no reason to believe that this cycle of violence will cease.<sup>15</sup>

## ANNEXURE A

**Name:** Amal K.  
**Age:** 40  
**Location:** Northern Gaza  
**Date:** 8 July 2014

### **On 8 July 2014, Israeli forces commenced bombarding Gaza from land, sea and air. A woman describes the terror of living in Gaza.**

Amal lives in the north of Gaza with her husband and five children. “At around 7:30 p.m., on 8 July 2014, I was in the kitchen preparing our evening meal when I heard a roaring sound I’d never heard before. I realised it was the sound of an Israeli fighter jet overhead and I knew something very bad was about to happen. A few seconds later I heard a loud explosion nearby. I immediately took to the ground and so did the rest of my family who were sitting around the dining table. My mother-in-law, who is an elderly woman, was with us that evening. I saw her flat on the ground in the corner looking absolutely petrified. I felt deeply sad and terrified at the same time.”

“Then I could smell burning bread that I left in the toaster. I got to my knees and tried to get to the toaster to prevent a fire. My two younger children, Mahmoud who is 10 and Bara’ who is 7, were crying hysterically. My older daughter, who is 20, was in shock and could not speak for days. Her face turned yellow. We both started crying too and wanted to get out of the house but there was no safe place for us to go.”

“My husband then suggested we split up and each go and stay with various relatives in the south of Gaza. He suggested that our older children go to their uncle’s house, me and the little children to our in-laws’ house and he would stay in our house. It was a tough decision to separate from each other but we felt we had little choice. We waved down two cars that happened to be in the area and jumped in quickly. Shortly afterwards the shelling started again. It was getting dark and the whole atmosphere was just so scary. I screamed from fear and shouted at the driver telling him to go faster and to get us out of the area as quickly as possible. We were all crying in the car as if it was the last moment in our lives.”

“We were very lucky to arrive safely. I then started to worry about the rest of my family. I had no news from them for a few hours. I was finally able to call my husband who remained in the house. He told me our house had been damaged. I thanked God I wasn’t there to see it. My husband is now thinking of leaving himself. My daughter-in-law is nine months pregnant and it is a nightmare situation to even think about what to do with her when she is due. This is what my life in Gaza is like: fear and no sense of security. We live in sheer terror.”

**ANNEXURE B**

**Name:** Miriam M.  
**Age:** 46  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 9 July 2014

**On 7 July 2014, Israeli commenced bombarding Gaza from land, sea and air. A woman describes living under these circumstances.**

Miriam lives in Gaza with her husband and her two children. “My husband is a doctor and because of the current situation he spends most of his time at the hospital tending to the injured. This causes my husband and us, the family, a lot of stress. Also because my husband is away from home most of the time I am left alone with the children which makes me more nervous and anxious.”

“During the night the Israeli bombardment increases. I cannot fall asleep and I keep my eye on the news updates all the time. I hear the news on the radio or I use my mobile phone and check the updates on the internet. What makes it worse is when the power cuts off during the night, leaving us without any source of news. I become more terrified when there is no electricity in the house when the only light we see is the flash from Israeli bombs exploding. I am constantly terrified and anxious.”

“Every time my son, Omar, hears the bombings he starts to jump up and down out of fear. My daughter has stopped attending university because of the attacks. During these horrible days everything shuts down and we all stay at home and wait for the attacks to finish. When the attacks began on 7 July, I went to check on my mother. As I was parking the car in front of my mother’s house I saw a missile pass overhead and I couldn’t tell where it was going to land. I panicked and had a nervous breakdown. I was hardly able to move. Eventually I managed to make into my mother’s house. I was not able to feel my legs, and I lay down on the bed, with the help of my mother, and tried to relax a bit.”

“Like most people in Gaza, we can’t afford the fuel to run our electric generators. We sometimes have emergency power for a bulb, but not enough for the fridge and other appliances. Accordingly, we can’t store much food during these difficult and dangerous times.”

“I hope this chaos will be over soon. We have no future and our destiny is heading into the unknown, we never feel safe.”

### ANNEXURE C

**Name:** Louna M.  
**Age:** 30  
**Location:** Central Gaza  
**Date:** 9 July 2014

#### **On 9 July 2014, a woman and mother of two small children in Gaza describes the terror of the nightly bombardment.**

Louna lives in Gaza with her husband and two sons aged 4 and 6. “Our house is located along the coast in the centre of Gaza. I am eight months pregnant with our third child. The past two weeks have been sheer terror for me and my family, especially my two boys.”

“On 9 July 2014, a few days into the latest war in Gaza, I woke up at 3.00 a.m. to the sound of a very loud explosion and breaking glass. I was terrified out of my wits and jumped out of bed. Seconds later I heard the sound of crying children and terrified parents coming from all directions in the building which is home to nearly 30 families. My two boys were crying hysterically and shivering out of fear not comprehending what had happened. I later found out that the police academy not far from where we live was bombed by Israeli fighter jets. Most windows in my house were shattered and the doors were lifted from their hinges. Even the door to the elevator was bent out of place and the elevator stopped working. The elevator was out of use even before the bombing because of frequent power cuts. I live in the fifth floor and it is very hard for me to go up and down the stairs especially now that I am eight months pregnant.”

“When I jumped out of bed I badly injured my back and couldn’t move. All the other families rushed downstairs but I decided to stay at home. My back was aching and I felt extremely vulnerable. I tried to calm the boys down but to no avail. I tried to assure them that nothing bad will happen. I washed their faces with some water. They stayed in the bathroom for a while and refused to come out. I was worried that I might deliver because the shock and fear I felt was unbelievable. Shortly afterwards our neighbours came to check on us. They thought we were hurt because they didn’t see us downstairs.”

“There is no safe place in all of Gaza, and I have no other place to go to. It is hard to explain to the boys what is going on. They keep asking me about the loud explosions and I don’t know what to say. I don’t want them to be scared. I finally decided to leave the house and go to the storage room downstairs. The house was badly damaged. Most of the windows are smashed and the front door does not shut. My husband and I are still paying loans for the house. Now we have to pay a lot of money to fix the damage to the windows and the doors which we won’t be able to do until this war ends. The whole situation is unbearable.”

## ANNEXURE D

**Name:** Fatina K.  
**Age:** 56  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 10 July 2014

**On 10 July 2014, an extended family of 50 receive a recorded phone message from the Israeli military at 3.00 a.m. giving them 15 minutes to leave their apartment building before it is destroyed.**

Fatina lives with her extended family in a five storey apartment building near the northern border in Gaza. In total around 50 people live in the apartment building. “My family works in agriculture,” says Fatina. “We own some land and we grow cucumber, tomato, onions and potato. We also have three wells on the land to irrigate the crops.”

“On 10 July, our area came under an intense Israeli bombardment. At around 3.00 a.m. we received a phone call from the Israeli army warning us to leave the building in 15 minutes because they were about to bomb it. All 50 members of my extended family left the house in five minutes, including three pregnant women. We all started to run from the building. Every few meters we would stop to make sure that we hadn’t lost any of our children.”

“We were terrified and very scared. Other people were filling the streets, and they also looked lost and terrified; desperate to find a safe place. There was a sense of impending disaster; no lights, no safety and terrified people running through the streets. Somehow we managed to reach Gaza City and we slept in the street for the rest of the night. Later that morning we headed towards our relative’s house. Our relative’s house was packed so we ended up splitting into groups and going to different schools that had been opened as shelters. Once inside the shelters we only received two mattresses, so our men would sleep on the floor and the women and children would use the mattresses.”

“During this attack we lost our house and our crops. We also lost 200 tons of tomatoes that we had refrigerated. On top of all this we also lost 20 sheep.”

## ANNEXURE E

**Name:** Lubna  
**Age:** 19  
**Location:** Beit Lahiya, Gaza  
**Date:** 10 July 2014

### **On 10 July 2014, a pregnant woman and her husband are forced to flee their home in the north of Gaza to escape heavy Israeli bombardment.**

Nineteen-year-old Lubna lives in Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip. She is married and expecting her first baby. “On 10 July, Israeli bombardment in the area increased significantly and we began to receive messages from the Israelis to evacuate the area. My husband and I left our house in a hurry and joined the terrified crowds in the street who were running from the area. I remember that it was late at night and we kept running as far away as we could. At first I didn’t feel tired, as all I could think about was to get as far away from the area as possible and worrying about where we could go. I expected to be caught up in an explosion at any moment.”

“We eventually arrived in Gaza City at around 3.00 a.m. We could still hear the sound of bombing and explosions. It was then that I started feel tired and experienced labor pains. I fainted and fell on the ground. When I woke up I found that my husband had carried me to somebody’s house. Although I was still in pain, it was far too dangerous to leave the house and go to the hospital. However, then I started to experience pain in my kidneys and I couldn’t handle it anymore so my husband took the risk and we went to the hospital. When we arrived at the hospital I was diagnosed with renal colic.”

“I was given some medication and we then sought shelter in a school. Two days later, we were still staying at the school, I started to feel pain again but this time it was worse. The doctors now say that I may lose the baby. I constantly feel death is near and I feel helpless as everything around us has been destroyed.”

## ANNEXURE F

**Name:** Bessan Q.  
**Age:** 30  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 12 July 2014

### **On 12 July 2014, a mother describes life in Gaza under constant Israeli bombardment by land, sea and air.**

Bessan lives in Gaza with her husband and two daughters, Salma (4 years) and Elia (1 year). “Although this is not the first time we have gone through an Israeli aerial bombardment, this is definitely the worst I have experienced,” says Bessan. “Each time there is an air raid it feels like an earthquake, and then we hear the explosion moments later. My little daughters are petrified as the loud explosions are now occurring day and night. There is no break. My youngest daughter Elia is scared to even go near a window, as she believes that’s where the sounds are coming from. She constantly screams ‘I’m scared, I’m scared’. I try to calm her down but it doesn’t always work because I am also terrified and there is no place for us to take shelter.”

“On the night of 9 July, there was heavy shelling. My daughter Salma woke up terrified. She came to my bedroom with her fingers in her ears because she could no longer stand it. At around 3.00 a.m. the shelling lessened and I told Salma to try to go back to sleep. She looked at me as if I was insane and said “why sleep when I will wake up again”. I didn’t know what to say to this logic. I definitely could not guarantee that no more shelling would happen that night and that she wouldn’t wake up terrified.”

“I have been staying at my parents’ house because my husband is travelling. Two days ago I went back to my house to get some clothes and some other things for my daughters. There was such heavy bombardment nearby that I didn’t feel safe walking in the street. I took a back street through the cemetery. I thought to myself it was highly unlikely that the cemetery would be hit. I was scared of getting killed and thought of my daughters and their future. It is the hardest thing to be a parent in war time. I have become stressed and jumpy. The slightest sound scares me out of my wits, even if it is someone moving a chair in the kitchen.”

“Life gets worse every day in Gaza and there is no hope of a ceasefire anytime soon. Life is unpredictable and the future looks dark. Anything could happen and my life would be turned upside down. All I can do is wait and hope that my family and I stay safe. I let the day go by one minute at a time.”

## ANNEXURE G

**Name:** Safad  
**Age:** 23  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 13 July 2014

**On 13 July 2014, a young mother in Gaza describes her desperation as she cannot obtain proper treatment for her 4-year-old daughter who suffers from Leukemia.**

Twenty-three-year old Safad lives in the Al Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood of Gaza. Safad is married and has two daughters: Ri'al (2 years) and Rimas (4 years). "Three months ago we discovered that Rimas has Leukemia. We managed to get a medical permit so that she could pass the Israeli controlled Erez checkpoint for hospital treatment in the West Bank city of Nablus. However, the Israeli authorities refused to give me a permit to leave Gaza so that I could accompany my daughter to the hospital, even though I had two security check interviews. Instead my mother was given a permit to accompany my daughter during the first stage of her treatment before they returned to Gaza."

"Rimas needs to go back to the hospital in Nablus to resume her treatment, but with the war on there is no way in or out of Gaza. We are running out of Rimas's medication and it is not available in Gaza, and there is no way for us to get more medication here. We can't even provide Rimas with her special food because my husband cannot go to the Bank to get money. Everything that moves in Gaza is a possible target so we are confined to our house."

"I can't sleep at night because I am so worried about Rimas. Her immune system is very low after she started her chemotherapy treatment, so she is vulnerable and fragile. I try to make her cover her nose and mouth with a piece of cloth so she won't breathe in all the dust from the explosions. Rimas becomes terrified when she hears explosions. We as adults get scared; I can't imagine how our children can cope with this unsafe and disturbing situation."

"Now Rimas is in a very critical stage and she needs to resume her chemotherapy treatment in Nablus. I don't know what to do especially that we are running out of her medication. Sometimes I take Rimas to the local hospital at 11:00 p.m. to get her anything that can help or replace her medication. The situation in Gaza now is unbearable. I feel that we are being killed slowly. We can't stop thinking and worrying about the family getting killed."



## ANNEXURE H

**Name:** Samar  
**Age:** 32  
**Location:** Gaza City  
**Date:** 15 July 2014

**On 15 July 2014, a woman in Gaza describes the terror experienced by the civilian population when the Israeli military telephones with recorded messages to leave their homes.**

Samar lives in the centre of Gaza City with her husband and two children aged 6 and 2. “We have been living in terror over the past week with non-stop aerial bombardment. But last night was the worst by far,” says Samar. “At around 11.45 p.m. our telephone rang and my husband answered. I saw his face turn pale as he listened and didn’t say a word. He hung up and told me it was a recorded message from the Israeli military telling us to leave our house and go somewhere else. I collapsed when he told me this. A few minutes later my mother-in-law, who lives in the apartment below us, received the same message. I didn’t want the boys to know about the message because it would terrify them.”

“My husband and I decided to ignore the message because we could hear explosions all around us outside and thought it would be much more dangerous to go out. Also, where are we supposed to go? Nowhere in Gaza is safe anymore. Our neighbours told us the house of a tailor not far from where we live was the target. I stayed wide awake all night. I opened all the glass windows and pulled the curtains. I thought this would at least protect us from flying glass if a bomb exploded nearby. I kept going back and forth to the bathroom. I was terrified not knowing what to expect. Our neighbourhood, like the rest of Gaza, is very crowded. Only a few meters separate one house from another. No words can describe the fear I felt. It was the longest night in my life.”

“At around 5.30 a.m. the telephone rang once again. Again, it was a recorded message from the Israeli military telling us to leave. I don’t know whether this is a form of psychological warfare or what. I don’t know whether to believe them or not. So far our neighbourhood hasn’t been hit. Whether it stays this way remains to be seen. There is nowhere safe in Gaza. I called my mother and cried. I told her I keep checking on the boys to make sure they are safe. I follow them from one place to another. We haven’t left the house for a week now and they are going crazy. I have lost control of myself. I lose my temper for no reason and let it out on my husband. The sound of drones and helicopters hovering all day long is driving me crazy. I am terrified of what might come next. There is no end in sight for us.”

## ANNEXURE I

**Name:** Suhar T.  
**Age:** 32  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 15 July 2014

### **On 15 July 2014, a family is forced to flee from their home due to heavy Israeli bombardment and to seek shelter in an overcrowded school.**

Suha lives in Gaza with her husband and children. “On 15 July, at about 10.00 p.m., the Israeli bombardment grew in intensity and so we quickly left the house in order to seek shelter elsewhere. I was carrying a child and the others ran next to me. After running for about 2 km an ambulance stopped and gave us a lift to Gaza City. From there we travelled to my sister’s house in Jabalya, which is located about 4 km north of Gaza City.”

“We stayed at my sister’s house for two days until they started to bomb Jabalya. Then we had to flee again to the Al Jadedah School that was opened as a shelter for people trying to escape from the bombing. The class room that I stayed in with my children had another 35 refugees; about 25 of them were children and the rest were women. There was no food, medicine or hygienic bathrooms. A lot of children got sick; some children got stomach aches and diarrhea, some had rash, some got lice and some children started to wet their beds involuntary.”

“During Ramadan people were providing us with food, such as milk and bread. But now we don’t have much. The individual ration is two pieces of bread a day and the occasional donation of canned food. When I want to take a shower I go to a friend’s house who lives in a different area, but now I cannot go because I ran out of money. My mother, who is 75-years-old, suffers from cartilage problems and she is not able to resume her medical examination until the war ends, according to the Swedish Health Centre told us. My mother refuses to sleep on the mattress and lets her grandchildren use it. When my mother becomes overwhelmed she goes outside to “take a breath in” as she likes to put it.”

“During one of the ceasefires I went back to our house to check on it along with two of my children. Samed, who is 9, brought back his pillow to the school where we are staying; he now hugs it all night. Bessan on the other hand, who is 3, murmurs while she is sleeping at night saying words like “blood” and ‘will we die?’ The children keep asking to go back home to play and to use clean bathrooms.”

**ANNEXURE J**

**Name:** Rida  
**Age:** 19  
**Location:** Ash Shuja'iyeh, Gaza  
**Date:** 19 July 2014

**On 19 July 2014, an extended family from the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood were forced to flee their home to escape the intensive Israeli bombardment.**

Rida got married three months ago and lives with her husband in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood in Gaza. Rida is now pregnant. "On 19 July, at about 12.00 a.m., my home was hit by an Israeli tank shell. We ran outside and walked for about 2 km until we reached my father's house, where we stayed for the rest of the night. At around 6.00 a.m. the Israeli bombardment intensified and so we all fled again looking for alternative shelter. We kept walking until we reached my aunt's house. There were now 14 of us and we stayed in my aunt's garage, which is about 3x6 metres. Whenever we needed the bathroom we would go inside my aunt's house."

"After some time my husband and his family moved to stay at one of the schools which was being used as a shelter for those trying to escape the bombing. My father wanted me to stay at my aunt's house with them because he feared for my health if I went to one of the crowded shelters. Many people are now moving to the schools to seek shelter, but they are not really designed to cope with such large numbers or to meet their needs under these circumstances. But they are the only shelters we have."

"My 11-year-old brother also suffers from Down syndrome and needs constant attention and special care. We now don't have enough money to provide him with the care he needs. I am also having problems with my pregnancy and I fear I may lose my child."

**Note:** At this point in the interview Rida broke down and was unable to continue.

### ANNEXURE K

**Name:** Mariam N.  
**Age:** 80  
**Location:** Beit Hanoun, Gaza  
**Date:** 19 July 2014

**On 19 July 2014, an 80-year-old woman and her family are forced to flee the house they rebuilt after it was destroyed in an Israeli air raid in 2012 which also killed her grandchild.**

Mariam lives in Beit Hanoun with her son, his wife and their four children. “In 2012 the Israelis bombed our house to the ground. We were pulled from the rubble but one of my grandchildren was killed in the attack. After that war ended we rebuilt our house and moved back in.”

“Our lives were just getting settled when this war started. Israeli bombing was hitting many places all over Gaza including our neighbourhood. It was our worst nightmare and we were in denial. We didn’t want to re-live our agony all over again. On 19 July, the Israeli bombing intensified and we had to evacuate our house in a hurry. It was around 4.00 a.m. and we were trying to run away as fast as possible from the bombardment, fearing someone else in our family would be killed.”

“My grandson Ahmad, who is 9, started to scream that he didn’t want his room to be destroyed again. My daughter-in-law was crying and mumbling: ‘let them destroy our house, but I want my children to be safe, I can’t bear losing any of them again’. Because of my age and health condition I am too weak to walk, my son and my grandson made me sit on a chair and carried me all the way, every few meters they would stop for a second and then carry me again. We walked about 3 km until we reached a place where we were able to take a taxi and go to my sister’s house. My sister’s house is only 50 square metres, very small, but its located in a somewhat safe area.”

“In this world I only wish to see my children and their children to be safe and not to see them hurt. I witnessed many tragedies in my life, starting in 1948, but I never witnessed such a brutal war as this. Enough shedding of blood, we need to have a real solution to gain peace in this land.”

## ANNEXURE L

**Name:** Khulud K.  
**Age:** 32  
**Location:** Haifa, Israel  
**Date:** 19 July 2014

**On 19 July 2014, a Palestinian citizen of Israel attends a protest against the war in Gaza in Haifa. The protest was met by 2,000 extreme right-wing protestors shouting “death to Arabs”.**

“On Saturday evening, 19 July 2014, some dozen Haifa feminist activists gathered in the Haifa Women’s Coalition house to prepare signs for the protest march scheduled to take place at 9:30 p.m. The atmosphere was positive, there was a sense that we are doing something, raising our voice, refusing to be silenced. We took photographs of ourselves with the signs and with the word ENOUGH written on our palms in Arabic (خلص), Hebrew (אָד), and English. At around 9:00 p.m. we headed towards Carmel Center, to join the march, organized by the Hadash Arab-Jewish party.”

“As soon as we arrived, we were completely taken aback by the scene. At least 2,000 extreme right-wing protestors were gathered at the point from which our march was to begin. We were moved to a different nearby location. We were few. Some accounts say we were several hundreds, but I don’t think there was more than 250 of us. Maybe even 200. We could not march. The extreme right-wing protestors kept coming in, and were spread over on the other side of the main street, mainly chanting “death to Arabs” and “death to leftists.” I felt fear rise in my throat. I began taking pictures. At one point, I realized that when the protest is over, it will be very dangerous to disperse. I searched for our international intern and made sure that she doesn’t leave alone. Then I asked three of my friends – separately – if I can join them in their car and if they can drive me home. Three, because I wanted to make sure that if I lose sight of any of them, I have alternatives.”

“The protest came to an end when the last of the protestors who came out of Haifa got on the bus and left. Or so we thought. This was just the beginning. At this point, we remained about 50 protestors – mainly from Haifa, who came on foot or by car. Our intention was to disperse and go home. The police began dispersing as well. But the extreme right-wing protestors didn’t show any signs of dispersing. On the contrary, they just kept multiplying. Not only that, we soon realized that they were spread in groups in all the alleys surrounding us, behind bushes at the entrances to buildings, everywhere. Ambushing protestors trying to leave. My friends and I (at this point we were 6 or 7) tried to leave through the back yard of one of the buildings, and soon were chased back by angry protestors who were ambushing us with the aim of attacking us physically.”

“Back with the group of 50 protestors, we found ourselves moving slowly down the street, with no clear plan. At one point, my five friends somehow succeeded to break away and leave. Later I learned that two of them were beaten, one ended up in the hospital with concussion. I remained with

the last 50 protestors, and we came to a corner and stopped there. The scene in front of us was terrifying. In my estimation, there were about 1,500 of them. Surrounding us, approaching us, chanting “death to Arabs”. I looked at the street, and saw maybe 15 regular, unarmed policemen where 30 minutes earlier hundreds of policemen, some on horseback, had been.”

“We shrank back. A young teenage girl began crying behind me. An older woman said let’s go into one of the apartments. I screamed at one of the policemen: get us a bus! Then at one of the organizers the same thing. It was so easy at this point to just call a bus and get the hell out of there. We found ourselves posting statuses on Facebook that we are surrounded, we began dialing 100 (police hotline). At this point, stones began flying at us. Large. One of them hit my friend in the side of her head. We were now crouching, our hands over our heads. I could smell the fear among us. To me, this seemed to go on forever. It went on maybe for an hour. Later I learned that from my friends who saw our calls for help on Facebook that many of them dialed 100. The police, realizing it’s getting worse, at this point brought in the water cannon and armed police. Still, the water cannon didn’t help disperse the angry crowd.”

“Finally, after what seemed an eternity, the police decided to start moving us alongside the sidewalk. We begin walking, chased by the angry mob. As we walk, they pop up from everywhere: from alleys, entrances to houses. Stones keep flying in our direction. We keep moving through the alleyways. I have a feeling the police have no plan, no idea of what to do with us. We walk for about one kilometre. We stop at a roundabout. Now the police officers are arguing about what to do with us. I try again: “bring us a bus!” About 15-20 minutes later, a bus drives past, one of the night lines. The police stop the bus, gets the passengers off, and we get on. We start moving. To me, it seemed we were driving in circles, as the angry mob was still chasing us in their cars. To me, it seemed that the ride was taking forever. We didn’t know where the bus was taking us. Finally, we arrive at Maxim restaurant by the beach. The place is full of police, and the water cannon. We get off the bus, and there seems to be no extremists in sight. It seems that everything is behind us. We get on another bus that’s waiting there. We have no idea where this bus will take us. Yet there’s a feeling of relief. We all get on the bus, and the bus starts pulling away. All of a sudden, and out of nowhere, rocks fly at the bus. Moments of terror. The side windows are broken and there is glass everywhere. We scream at the driver to keep driving, as the police have finally left us and we are on our own.”

“The bus arrives at the German Colony, an Arab neighbourhood. We disembark. At last, a feeling of some sort of safety. Still, I find myself looking around me. Some of us, who live nearby, disperse. The rest, about 25 or so, head to the headquarters of the Hadash party. I’m shaking. Three of my friends come and pick me up in their car. During all this, about 10 women friends of mine stayed close to their phones and Facebook, calling, sending messages, asking what can we do, how can we help, calling the police. They wanted to come and pick us up, but there was no way. There were literally thousands of these extremists spread out all over the Carmel Center.”

“My friends drive me home, and during the drive, we keep watching cars passing us by, making sure we are not followed. When we reach my neighbourhood, a Jewish one, we stay in the car for several minutes to make sure nobody is around. Then, my friend walks me home. In the safety of my home, suddenly, I felt exposed, unsafe. The cat causes me to jump. An hour later, a friend calls to bring me something. I walk outside to meet her, and she puts her finger to her mouth, indicating we should not speak in Arabic. We stand in the street, speaking Hebrew.”

“I sit at my computer and write a short description of my experience, and as I write, I realize that what went on there was a pogrom. I realize that it could have ended not with people injured, but with people dead. I shiver as I recall the eyes full of murder. People who actually wanted me dead. For being an Arab. Not for any other reason. This is my personal account of what happened on Saturday night. I’ve heard similar experiences from other activists who were with us. For me, it is becoming scary just to walk down the street or ride the bus. I have explicitly told my daughter not to speak in Arabic in public spaces. I myself am afraid to answer calls from Arab friends while on the bus for fear of being attacked.”

“This is Haifa, Israel in 2014.”

### ANNEXURE M

**Name:** Fida  
**Age:** 24  
**Location:** Ash Shuja'iyeh, Gaza  
**Date:** 19 July 2014

**On 19 July 2014, a woman is forced to flee her home with her family during a heavy bombardment.**

Fida lives in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood of Gaza with her husband and three children. "On 19 July, at about 7:00 a.m., Israeli forces started to bomb our neighborhood. We had to flee the house as fast as we could. I didn't even have time to put my shoes on. My youngest child was only four days old and I was still bleeding. My mother-in-law and husband carried our other children. We kept running for about 1 km until we reached my aunt's house in a nearby neighborhood."

"Within a very short time, my aunt's neighbourhood came under bombardment, so we moved again and went to the Al Zeitoun UNRWA school, which was being used as an emergency shelter for refugees. Once inside the school I remained setting down, I was not able to talk. I was still bleeding and I felt drained and very tired. I then fell unconscious and my family took me to a hospital. When I woke up I had been treated and the bleeding was stopped, so I went back to the school."

"During the bombardment a suffocating gas filled the air. I am worried that the gas will affect my children, especially the youngest whose face turned blue and who couldn't breathe properly. We took him to the hospital where he remained until 5 August. I am worried about my son, I don't know if my child was really ok or if the gases he inhaled will affect his system later on. No one is telling me the truth; I don't know if my house was bombed and destroyed or not, I only know that this school was where I will be for a while."



ANNEXURE N

**Name:** Ola  
**Age:** 23  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 20 July 2014

**On 20 July 2014, a woman in Gaza describes how the house next door was destroyed in an air-raid causing the ceiling of her house to collapse around her 2-year-old son.**

Ola lives in the centre of Gaza City with her husband and three young children, Riyadh (5 years), Bessan (3 years) and Abed (2 years). “On 20 July, at around 8.30 a.m. my older children, Bessan and Riyadh, went outside the house to play whilst I was in the kitchen. My youngest child, Abedm, was still in his cot in my bedroom. All of a sudden an Israeli aircraft bombed our neighbourhood without prior warning. At first I didn’t know which building was hit, but later found out it was our neighbour’s house, about 4 meters away from our house. The bomb caused severe damage to our house too.”

“Moments after the explosion rubble and dust started to fall from the sky and I was very worried about my children. I hurried outside and saw Riyadh hiding under a wooden chair and Bessan standing by the front door with her hands on her head. They were unhurt. I then saw my husband’s niece who is 4, lying on the ground with blood coming from a head wound. My children were watching in shock as she bled. I started to scream and shout until someone came with a car and took the child to the hospital. Then I started to look for Abed. I could hear his voice but I couldn’t see him. He was crying.”

“My husband and my brother-in-law came and we started to remove the rubble with our hands, making way for us to get to the bedroom where Abed was sleeping. We finally found him in his bed by the wall which did not collapse. The roof of the bedroom was hanging from one corner because two walls had collapsed. Luckily Abed’s cot was in the corner which did not collapse. He was unhurt. I held him up and hugged him tightly and checked to make sure he wasn’t injured. It is a miracle that he survived, I still cannot believe it.”

“Our neighbour, who is 53-years-old, whose house was the target was killed together with her son who was 19 years old. My house was badly damaged but we still live in it because there is no other place for us to go. Most importantly, we all survived. This is what really matters to me.”

## ANNEXURE O

**Name:** Jamileh J.  
**Age:** 40  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 20 July 2014

**On 20 July 2014, a woman and her family are forced to flee their home in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood due to an intensive Israeli bombardment. Once outside, her husband and daughter were killed as they approached a nearby ambulance that was struck by a missile.**

Jamileh lives in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood with her husband and children. "On 20 July, I was home with my family and my other married daughter and her son were visiting us. Suddenly there was an intensive Israeli bombardment and our house was hit. We all ran outside and I saw my husband run back inside to get some money for us. My husband managed to get in and out fast without getting harmed, so we continued running until we reached a relative's apartment. When we calmed down and got settled I commented to my husband that it was not very wise of him to go back into the house to get money, as he could have been killed. But my husband said it was important so now we can afford to rent a house somewhere else in Gaza that might be safe."

"Just as my husband finished his sentence the third floor of the building we were staying in was hit by missile, so for the second time we ran outside to escape the destruction. Once outside we started to run. We saw an ambulance close by on the street corner. My husband and our daughter, Marah, who is 11, ran towards the ambulance. I was running behind them with my other children when I heard the sound of a missile which hit the ambulance. The ambulance, the medics, my husband and my daughter were all blown up in front of my eyes. My daughter Marah flew up in the air and hit the wall. We were not able to get any closer to them, things were exploding around them and fire surrounded the place. People were screaming everywhere, everyone was terrified but I had to continue running with the rest of my children until we reached the hospital. At 5:00 p.m. buses came to the hospital and we were transported to one of the UNRWA schools, which was opened as a shelter for those who left their houses and ran away because of the Israeli bombardment."

"Four days later the locals brought me my husband and daughter's remains. My husband's body had no hands or legs. He had also been decapitated. My sons started to look for the rest of their father's body parts in a bag that contained the remains of several bodies found after the bombing. My daughter had injuries to her head and body."

"I am getting treated in the Al-Quds hospital as I was hit by shrapnel in my hands and in my side. I find it hard to breath; it feels like my chest is on fire. I saw my daughter killed in front of my very eyes. I couldn't do anything to save her, why did she and my husband leave me."

**ANNEXURE P**

**Name:** Inam J.  
**Age:** 40  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 20 July 2014

**On 20 July 2014, a family is forced to flee their house in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood of Gaza before their house was destroyed. In the commotion their 10-year-old son goes missing.**

Inam lives with her husband and children in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood in Gaza. She is nine months pregnant. "On the night of 20 July, at about 4:15 a.m., we were all home, which is a three storey building when suddenly we heard people yelling outside warning that the whole neighborhood was being bombed by the Israeli military. Apparently our house was hit with warning shots but we didn't hear them because of the sound of the explosions outside. When we heard the commotion outside we immediately ran out of the house, towards our friend's house, about 20 minutes away. Shortly after we arrived at our friend's house, their neighbour's house was destroyed by an Israeli missile. It was about 5:10 a.m."

"No sooner had we arrived at our friend's house we had to leave and find shelter elsewhere. We ran as fast as we could, and I was trying to keep my children in sight when suddenly I realized that my son Hussein, who is 10, was missing. I started to scream. My husband turned around to look for Hussein whilst the rest of us continued on. There was intense Israeli bombing at the time that created a lot of dust preventing us from seeing clearly. There were explosions and fires everywhere and I saw an ambulance being hit by a rocket, I also saw people flying through the air from the explosions."

"My husband went back looking for Hussein while I continued running with the rest of my children until we got out of that neighborhood. We rested for a bit but then the bombing started again. My husband had not returned but I had to start running again with my children. I was getting really tired and started to have pain and I feared I might lose the baby or go into labor. Somehow we managed to reach the hospital, which was 4 km away from our neighborhood. My son Ahmad, who is 15 years, was yelling for the medics to come and help me. No one answered; the medics were under tremendous pressure trying to take care of that huge number of injured people, many had critical injuries. Dead bodies and blood was all over the place. I had no choice but to take my children and sit outside in the hospital's garden until my husband came."

"Sometime later my husband returned but without Hussein. I nearly lost my mind but my husband calmed me down. We contacted a radio station to help us locate Hussein. We then took the rest of the family to one of the shelters inside a school. It was over packed with people, many were injured. Later on we found out that our house was totally destroyed in the bombing."

“Four days later Hussein’s body was found under the rubble. My husband identified his body and he was buried before I had the chance to see him. I gave birth to a boy that same day and named him Hussein in memory of his brother.”

## ANNEXURE Q

**Name:** Itidal A.  
**Age:** 48  
**Location:** Ash Shuja'iyeh, Gaza  
**Date:** 20 July 2014

**On 20 July 2014, a family is forced to flee their home in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood to escape intense Israeli bombardment and to seek shelter in a school.**

Itidal lives in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood of Gaza with her children and grandchildren. "On Sunday, 20 July, at about 6:30 a.m., there was intensive Israeli bombing in our neighbourhood and everyone in our street fled their homes. My family and I ran about 1 km before we were lucky enough to be picked up by an ambulance. Many of the schools in Gaza have opened their doors as emergency shelters for those of us who had to flee their homes. The ambulance took us to the Al Zeitoun school, located in the Tel Al Hawa neighbourhood."

"Once inside the school, the men would sleep in the hallways, whilst the women and children would sleep in the classrooms. The school was very crowded with the sick and injured. The school was not hygienic and it was not designed to accommodate so many people in these circumstances. I stayed in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class where there were about 62 women and children sharing that one classroom. The UN (UNRWA) gave one mattress to every 10 individuals so we let our children sleep on the mattress and we sleep on the floor."

"Everybody in the shelter was scared and stressed. We all got our menstrual periods on the same day but there were no pads or showers available. It was very unhygienic. I went to a shop nearby and the owner gave me some pads for free as I did not have any money. When I want to take a shower I visit my daughter, who is with her baby in the Al-Naser hospital, and I take a shower there. And when I want to clean up before my prayers during the day I go to another hospital where my cousin is getting treated after for an injury."

"The situation is tragic and I feel devastated. Recently I returned to my home, holding the keys to the front door in my hand, only to find it partially destroyed and burnt. There wasn't even a front door for the key. In spite of what is happening in Gaza now one day we will rebuild our house and regain our lives."

**ANNEXURE R**

**Name:** Fatima Z.  
**Age:** 45  
**Location:** Ash Shuja'iyeh, Gaza  
**Date:** 20 July 2014

**On 20 July 2014, a woman describes how she and her family had to flee their home in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood of Gaza to escape an intense Israeli bombardment.**

Fatima lives with her husband and children in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood of Gaza. "On 20 July, at about 6:30 a.m., Israeli forces started to bomb our neighborhood. I and the rest of my family started to flee out of the house as fast as we could. I looked back for a second and I found one of my sons, who is 22-years-old, was simply refusing to leave the house. I started pushing him with all my strength towards the door. I begged him to leave the house immediately before it was destroyed around him. I was eventually able to convince him to leave the house."

"We walked for a very long time. My feet became swollen that I couldn't feel them anymore. But before reaching one of the adjacent neighbourhoods I lost track of three of my children. I freaked out and started to cry and yell out loud calling their names. There were a lot of people running in the streets trying to escape the bombing; I remained searching for them until I found my children safe after about two hours."

"We went to my brother-in-law's house, but it was already over-crowded with other family members, who had escaped the bombing. Then we went to one of the schools that were used as a shelter for those who lost their house during the bombing. The school was very crowded, but we managed to stay there. Now we live in a class room with another 41 people. The situation is getting more worse and worse. People are still arriving at the schools to be sheltered and many are sick or injured."

ANNEXURE S

**Name:** Shadia S.  
**Age:** 26  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 20 July 2014

**On 20 July 2014, a family flees their home at 4.00 a.m. to escape and intensive Israeli bombardment that damages their house beyond repair.**

“On 20 July, I was at home with my father and siblings and my nephews, the youngest who is three months old. The Israeli bombardment was rapidly intensifying so we all went to the ground floor hoping that we would be safer. We could hear missiles passing overhead and explosions all around.”

“At about 4:00 a.m. the bombing became unbearable so we left the house immediately without even gathering our identification cards. We ran as fast as we could to get away. We ran for about 3 km. The streets were very crowded with terrified people; everyone was trying to escape anywhere and looking for a safe spot to shelter. It was very hard for us to suddenly be homeless and dependent on other families for help and support. We don’t even have the money to buy supplies for the baby. I cried when I heard that our house had been severely damaged and is no longer habitable.”

“This seems to be our destiny that we can’t escape from. We just want to live with freedom and dignity. We are no different from Israelis who want a descent life and security. We have no border crossing, no port and the Sea has become so polluted we can’t swim or fish. I feel we Gazans are doomed.”

## ANNEXURE T

**Name:** Sumaia A.  
**Age:** 24  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 21 July 2014

### **On 21 July 2014, a woman in Gaza flees heavy bombardment in the Al Shuja'ia neighbourhood with her husband and children and describes living conditions in a UN school.**

“I live in Gaza in the Al Shuja'ia neighbourhood with my husband and two sons, Obaid who is 8, and Zein who is 3. On 21 July, at around 6:30 a.m. we fled from our home on foot. There were no cars on the streets and it was very dangerous. The bombing and shelling throughout the night was unbearable. We could not sleep and could not leave the house because it was too dark and too dangerous. When morning broke, my husband and I decided to leave. He carried Obaida and I carried Zein and we ran as fast as we could. I could hardly catch my breath. We joined hundreds of other people from our neighbourhood. I was sure we were going to be killed that day. We left the house with hardly anything.”

“I managed to call my mother. She told me she had left her house too and was sheltering at the UN school in Gaza City. My husband and I decided to join her. When we got to the main street we saw a UN bus. We got on the bus which took us to the school, only to find out that our suffering had only just begun. Living conditions in the school are appalling. Hundreds of other families share bathrooms with hardly enough water. I tried to hold myself from going to the toilet as long as possible to avoid having to use the bathroom. Men and women use the same bathrooms. Most men, including my husband, slept outdoors to make room in the classrooms for the women and children. The heat is unbearable.”

“Soon my children got diarrhea. They both had stomach problems and vomited a lot. I don't know if it was the stress or a virus. They kept asking me who the other people were and cried pleading to go home. When night fell things got much worse. We ate tinned food, some corned beef, bread and juice, but it was not enough. I didn't have enough diapers for Zein especially because of the diarrhea.”

“Everybody at the school was under tremendous stress. Most of us had lost our homes, others had lost loved ones. We were all stretched beyond our limits. Mothers had no tolerance for their cranky children and fathers had no tolerance for anyone. There is nothing to do all day long and no end in sight. I am dreading the time when I have to go back and see my destroyed home.”



## ANNEXURE U

**Name:** Ibtisam B.  
**Age:** 38  
**Location:** Ash Shuja'iyeh, Gaza  
**Date:** 21 July 2014

### **On 21 July 2014, a family flees their home in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood to escape an intensive Israeli bombardment that destroys their home.**

Ibtisam lives with her husband and children in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood in Gaza. At around 5.00 a.m. on 21 July there was an intensive Israeli bombardment of our neighbourhood with bombs falling randomly all over the place. Due to the bombardment we fled our home barefoot. We ran through the streets in panic, along with many other people from the neighbourhood.”

“At around 7:00 a.m. we reached a safer area, but we did not know where we were until an ambulance driver stopped and gave us directions. Later on a car stopped and gave us a lift to a UN school that had been opened as a shelter for displaced persons who had fled the bombing. We took shelter in a classroom with around 70 other people. The place was so crowded and unhygienic. Many people were ill. The bathrooms were very dirty and my daughters refused to eat or drink so that they would not have to use them. When we did need the bathroom we would walk to a nearby hospital rather than use the toilets at the school.”

“Two days later we managed to get a tent and we pitched it in the school playground. Three days after that the Israelis bombed a mosque next door to the school causing some masonry and shrapnel to fall on our tent. During one of the short ceasefire periods we returned to our house to find that it had been destroyed. My daughter Iman, who is 15, became so emotional at the sight of our destroyed home that she fainted. My other daughter, Shahed, who is 11, cries every night wanting to go home. We have also all become sick because of the unhealthy living conditions.”

At the conclusion of the interview Iman handed WCLAC's fieldworker a piece of paper in which she thanked God that her family was safe and hoping that they could find a small, clean house to stay in whilst they re-build their home in Ash Shuja'iyeh.

### ANNEXURE V

**Name:** Samar  
**Age:** 32  
**Location:** Ash Shuja'iyeh, Gaza  
**Date:** 23 July 2014

#### **On 23 July 2014, a woman in Gaza describes the terror experienced by the civilian population in Gaza under severe bombardment.**

“It is becoming unbearable for me and my family”, says Samar, “and yet we have suffered nothing compared to thousands of other families in Gaza. Everything around me is scary. I haven’t been able to sleep properly for more than two weeks and my body cannot take it anymore. I am physically and mentally unable to cope. The bombing doesn’t stop and horror stories from people around me are unbelievable.”

“When the ground offensive started last week thousands of people from Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood flooded the streets in central Gaza where I live. I couldn’t bear to look out the window. I myself was frightened to see such desperate people who have lost everything and are in a state of utter shock. Two days ago a family tried to break into the house of our neighbours who are in the US but they did not succeed. Yesterday the same thing happened except this time they succeeded. I was told a family is taking shelter there. I don’t know what I will do if a family seeks shelter at my house. We can barely manage ourselves. I was told some people sought shelter at the church, others in a garage and others in a stairwell. I have moved to the ground floor to be with my husband’s family. We feel safer here. All day today I have been hearing the sound of ambulances around. I think a mosque not far from where I live has been targeted. I have never been so scared in my life. I am stressed and in panic 24 hours a day.”

“We still receive recorded phone calls from the Israeli army telling us to leave. Following the first two calls we received on 15 July we received three more calls with the same message in the following two days. Once at noon, again at 6:00 p.m., and finally at 8:00 p.m. Someone told me people in the West Bank, far away from the war in Gaza, have also received similar phone calls telling them to leave. My neighbours and friend tell me this is part of the psychological war. The Israeli army wants to send a message to the world that they warn people to leave before they bomb. But many people don’t leave because they have nowhere to go. The Israeli authorities then rely on this as evidence that Hamas are using civilians as human shields. Just the sound of the phone ringing now scares me. I don’t know whether to take them seriously or not. I cannot think of anything in my neighbourhood that might be a target; there is nothing here but families, plus there is nowhere for me to go.”

“We are currently receiving four hours of electricity a day. We are lucky because we have our own generator which we turn on for a few hours. We turn it on scarcely because we are not sure we will be able to buy more fuel when we run out. There is no fresh food in the shops anymore and whatever was there is now spoiled because of power cuts. I spend my entire day worrying about tomorrow. In short, we are living in hell.”

ANNEXURE W

**Name:** Narmen  
**Age:** 30  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 23 July 2014

**On 23 July 2014, a family received a phone call from the Red Crescent informing them to evacuate their apartment as the Israelis were about to bomb a nearby building.**

Narmen lives in Gaza with her husband and two daughters, Maria (4 years) and Salma (18 months). “We have not forgotten the previous war in Gaza in 2012,” says Narmen. “Now we are in another war we are reliving the horror of the bombardments, explosions and destruction. My daughters become very scared when they hear explosions. I try to keep them busy doing other things but when the bombing is close it is impossible to distract them.”

“On 23 July, at about 1:30 a.m., we received a phone call from the Red Crescent warning us that a building in our neighbourhood was about to be bombed by the Israeli air force, and that we must evacuate our third floor apartment and move to the first floor. That night most of our neighbors received a similar phone call. At the time my daughters were sleeping, so my husband and I quickly woke them up and we rushed to the first floor with a small mattress. My daughters were crying and terrified, as we all were. Shortly afterwards two missiles hit that building, but one of the missiles didn’t explode. This made us more nervous; as time passed we expected the missile to explode at any minute. Three hours later my daughters fell asleep and the missile still hadn’t exploded. At 7:00 a.m. a demolition team came and made the missile safe.”

“Waiting for the missile to explode was the most terrifying experience and really frayed our nerves. When we returned to our apartment we did not have any electricity or water and the whole place was covered in black dust from the bombardment. During the bombardments there was also some sort of gas about which caused me to have a minor seizure and gave me a headache.”

“I wish to live in peace and have electricity 24 hours a day. I also want our borders to be opened so we can travel and visit our families who live outside Gaza.”

**ANNEXURE X**

**Name:** Dina S.  
**Age:** 38  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 23 July 2014

**On 23 July 2014, a woman describes the demolition of the 14-storey Al Thafer building in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza.**

Dina lives in Gaza with her husband and two children, aged 13 and 16. “On 23 July, at about 7:00 p.m. an Israeli drone was flying around a 14 storey building (the Al Thafer building) located near our house. A small warning missile (no explosive) was fired at the building and then the whole neighbourhood started to receive recorded phone messages from the Israeli army telling us to evacuate because they were going to bomb the Al Thafer building in 10 minutes. We looked out of the window and saw people rushing out of the Al Thafer building terrified. No one had time to collect their possessions and some people did not even have time to put on their shoes. There were children screaming not knowing where to go. What made things worse was that there was no electricity and so the elevator in the building was not working. Elderly residents of the building were carried down on chairs.”

“We watched all of this from our house and were horrified. We also needed to evacuate because our house is close to the Al Thafer building. My sister-in-law wanted to remain on the second floor, my uncle, who is elderly, wanted to stay in bed, and the rest of our family went to the first floor. Within a few minutes the bombardments started. We could hear loud explosions. Even the ground was shaking. The glass in our windows shattered, the power was cut off and we had no place to go.”

“After the bombing was over, my sister-in-law came down to the first floor crying hysterically. We couldn’t believe that we were still alive. We found my uncle on the floor but he was not hurt. We thought that the Israeli forces were going to strike one apartment in the Al Thafer building; instead the demolished all 14 floors turning the whole building into rubble.”

## ANNEXURE Y

**Name:** Suha  
**Age:** 46  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 27 July 2014

### **On 27 July 2014, a family in Gaza move house for the third time in an attempt to escape the Israeli bombardment.**

Suha lives in Gaza with her husband and 21-year-old daughter. “On 8 July, we evacuated our house by the Sea fearing that it would be hit during an Israeli naval and air bombardment or the neighbourhood. We moved to a third floor apartment we own that is located in the middle of Gaza City as we thought this would be safer. There was no electricity or furniture in the apartment and all we had were mattresses on the floor. My husband had to venture out each day looking for food as we had no refrigerator. Every time my husband left the house to get us some food I would get very nervous and scared until he came back and I was sure he was not injured.”

“Even after we moved to Gaza City we could still hear the sounds of explosions. It was so bad that we removed the glass from the windows so that they would not shatter if a bomb exploded nearby. We were informed by a neighbour at our other house that the window there had been blown out. We couldn’t go back and check on our house because it was just too dangerous.”

“On the night of 15 July, we received a recorded message on our phone from the Israeli army telling us to evacuate at once. We got very scared and confused, also the sound of explosions was getting louder, and I was jumping from fear. We asked around about what was really going on and our neighbours told us that our area was not targeted and that the bombing was located in another neighborhood. So apparently the warning was a false alarm. Our building was not hit that night, but to be safe we moved to the first floor of the building and stayed in another apartment owned by my inlaws.”

“During the attacks the Israeli forces used some sort of gas on us. My husband and I had an allergic reaction making it hard to breathe and I developed a red rash all over my body.”

“On 27 July, we moved again to another relative’s house which we thought was in a safer area. But no matter where we went and what we did we were never safe. My daughter says that she wants to leave this country, she is a scared young woman who wants to live peacefully and to feel safe.”

**ANNEXURE Z**

**Name:** Bessan Q.  
**Age:** 30  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 3 August 2014

**On 3 August 2014, a woman in Gaza describes how her sister went into labour but was too terrified to get into an ambulance because of reports that they have been targeted by the Israeli military.**

“Today is day 28 of the war in Gaza and still no sign of a ceasefire. Reports on the devastation caused by Israeli heavy bombardment of densely populated areas have been coming out but very little has been said about the interruption to normal life. Even those who were not directly hit are suffering tremendously. The other day my 1-year old daughter had high fever and I ran out of medicine. I had to walk in the dead of night while Israeli fighter jets were bombing Gaza in order to get to the only pharmacy that was still open. I made it back safely but was shivering of fear that I might be killed.”

“Yesterday, my 21-year-old sister went into labour at around 10:00 a.m. We called the doctor who lives in our building and he confirmed that indeed she was about to give birth and needed to get to a hospital as quickly as possible. He called an ambulance for her but when the ambulance arrived my sister refused to get in because of the news that ambulances have been targeted by Israel artillery. There was no way on earth any of us could convince her. The last couple of weeks were very stressful. My sister constantly worried that she might not be able to make it to the hospital in time. Her husband called a taxi. When the taxi arrived we noticed that the driver had covered it with “TV” signs in large capital letters. He explained to us this was the only way he was willing to drive around the city.”

“My sister and I made it safely to a hospital in the centre of Gaza city. At around noon she gave birth to a healthy baby girl. It wasn’t easy for my sister especially with repeated power cuts. The air conditioning was turned off to save fuel and it was unbearably hot. In spite of all this everything went as normal as possible with my sister, no complications. The doctor wanted my sister and the baby to spend at least one night in the hospital but my sister refused. In fact she went hysterical and kept saying she could hear shelling in the vicinity and wanted to go home as quickly as possible. By 2:00 p.m. she was back at home feeling tired but very happy.”

“The sweet little girl brought such joy to all of us at this time when we are surrounded by death, fear and destruction. I held the baby in disbelief. I am a very proud aunt. My sister keeps praying that her new-born child will have better times than ours.”

**ANNEXURE AA**

**Name:** Dina Khoury-Nasser  
**Age:** 53  
**Location:** Al Shifa Hospital, Gaza  
**Date:** 5 August 2014

**On 5 August 2014, a London trained Palestinian theatre nurse describes the scene in Al Shifa Hospital, Gaza.**

“Today was day four in Gaza. The first two days were like limbo. We felt we were in Gaza but not yet feeling what was happening around. We live in the hospital compound: eat in the compound, work in the compound, sleep in the compound. We see the injured, hear the ambulances, see the bodies and people strewn around everywhere - still it does not sink in. Yesterday evening things started to get real when I saw a child sleeping with his father in the open air on a piece of cardboard. He was there in the morning, there in the evening, and again this morning and this evening. I wonder where is his mother, where is his family? The stories one hears about entire families being annihilated, completely erased from the national registers of citizenship makes your hair stand on end! But still, it does not sink in. Perhaps because I am in the operation room and used to seeing people injured.”

“Then reality hits when the shelling in Jabalia starts. At ten in the evening we receive a lady in her sixties. She is full of dust, full of earth and full of holes throughout her body. Head lacerated, thighs lacerated, leg crushed. I think of where she could have been sitting, what were her thoughts when the shell hit...I thought of mom, I thought of all the older women I know.”

“When the bombing started this morning, it was children. Our first patient was a little boy around six years old. He had massive lacerations to his groin, abdomen, face and head. He had burns all over his body as well. We were able to manage him in the theatre. I wait to see how he is doing. Then comes Haneen. She is an eight year old; my colleague from the emergency room, Dr. Haytham informed me that a child is coming up with her hand hanging on her side. I went up to Haneen who was waiting calmly in the holding bay. Her eyes were closed. She had a bandage across her head; her eyes were closed because of the swelling from the oedema and the burns to her face. I approached her and held her, and greeted her, and informed her of my name. I held her little hand on the injured side. I told her that I will be with her - she held my fingers. She informed me that her hand hurts. I told her that it was injured and that we will try and fix it. She then asked me about her father and two sisters. I told her that her father was waiting for her. I could not tell her that her sister had died. I still could not tell her that later that evening, her other sister was brought in dead from under the rubble...they were both less than four years old.”

“I saw Haneen in the ICU later. She was awake and extubated. I greeted her and told her that I was



Dina. One eye was now open. She asked me if I had a daughter, I said yes. She asked me what is her name. I said Haya. She said that is a pretty name.”

“It was a tough day that ended with hopeful news. The plane up above, called zanana (drone) keeps buzzing all around. My colleagues from Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem arrived today with supplies. I felt proud to greet them. The Hospital had done an excellent job sending supplies and individual packs to each of us. They were greeted and their support appreciated. Being there is all that matters. On a personal level, I feel responsible for a big group now. It is very nice to have Dr. Haytham here; he is a wonderful professional colleague. My other colleagues are in Nasser Hospital in Rafah (South of Gaza), treating the injured and witnessing the toll. One other colleague is at Al Aqsa Hospital working in surgery.”

“The smell of blood and death is around the young and the old. Each day we are greeted with the car coming to take the dead. Our room is close to the mortuary. You look at the faces of people here - they are all stunned. A nurse on duty looks deeply sad - her son comes with her to work. My friend Bassam from Gaza came to visit me and brought me a lot of goodies to eat. I distributed them among our team and colleagues. I was worried when I looked into his eyes and saw how red they were. The strain on his face was apparent. His son had a close call, and his nephew has been injured. They are children. They were playing in the street and had just stepped into the house....”

“The nursing director here had to take a deep breath as he recalled all the children that he had seen. We will need time to heal she said, the pain will take time. The stories are overwhelming and the loss has not yet stopped.”

**ANNEXURE AB**

**Name:** Rida Z.  
**Age:** 25  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 8 August 2014

**On 8 August 2014, a woman is buried alive when her house receives a direct hit from an Israeli missile.**

Rida lives in the Al Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza. “It was 2:30 p.m. and I was putting on my prayer clothes when my house was hit by an Israeli missile. My sister later told me that when the rescue team arrived all that was left of the house was a pile of rubble. My sister told the medics that I was in the house when it was hit, so they kept searching through the rubble until they found me. The medics started to remove the sand and rubble that were covering me up until they were able to check my heart rate. They gave me with first aid and saved my life. I took a breath in and out like I never breathed before.”

“My sister started to jump and scream; she couldn’t believe that I was still alive, especially since the missile hit my bedroom. I will never forget how it felt to be buried alive.”

Rida provided this statement to WCLAC’s fieldwork whilst still recovering in hospital.

ANNEXURE AC

**Name:** Hana K.  
**Age:** 35  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 24 August 2014

**On 24 August 2014, a mother describes how her 16-year-old son is killed by shrapnel from an Israeli bomb as he was standing on the balcony getting some fresh air.**

“It was 10:45 a.m. and I was home with my children. I wouldn’t allow them to go outside because it was too dangerous with all the Israeli bombing. My 16-year-old son, Mohammad, told me he was going to the balcony to get some fresh air. Moments later I heard a big explosion. I jumped up to see if Mohammad was alright. My other son went out to the balcony to check on Mohammad and started to scream. I ran to the balcony and found Mohammad covered in a pool of blood. He wasn’t breathing.”

“My husband and brother-in-law brought Mohammad’s body into the house and put him on a bed. His body was covered with shrapnel that had passed through his chest and exited out of his back. Then they took his body to the hospital. After an hour they returned with Mohammad so that I could see him one more time before he was buried.”

“I don’t know why my son died. He was home and had nothing to do with this war. Mohammad used to tell me that he wanted to leave Gaza and live somewhere peaceful. But now he is gone.”

**ANNEXURE AD**

**Name:** Nisrin  
**Age:** 38  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 24 August 2014

**On 24 August 2014, an Israeli bombardment kills a 17-year-old boy and severely injures two others.**

Nisrin lives in Gaza with her husband and children. “For the first two days of the war in Gaza we managed to stay in our house as the neighbourhood was calm. Then on 10 July, at about 9:00 a.m., a bomb exploded about 20 metres from our house, so we left and went to stay with my sister for one day. On 11 July, we moved into an empty apartment that is owned by some friends of ours. The apartment was located on the seventh floor and I could see my house from it. We stayed in this apartment for the most of the month of Ramadan. On the holiday of Ramadan we moved out again to another apartment that my brother rented and stayed there for one day. Then we decided to go back to our house because we were fed up moving around and feeling insecure.”

“On 24 August, the Israeli bombardment became so intense it became unsafe for us to remain in our house. So this time we moved to my parents’ house, located in the Al Mashtal area. I still did not feel secure because the Al Mashtal area was also being bombarded, but at least we were all together. There were now 16 individuals, including 10 children staying with my parents.”

“Very early the next morning as my husband and son, Bader, who was 17-years-old, were preparing to go to the mosque, there was a very loud explosion outside the house. My son was already outside at the time but my husband had forgotten something and was inside the house. My husband and daughter ran outside to check on Bader, who was lying on the ground with his legs twisted. He was still alive and murmuring, but my daughter could not understand what he was saying. Bader was covered in a pool of blood. He was hit by shrapnel in his chest. After about 20 minutes Bader was taken to hospital in an ambulance. Half-an-hour later another ambulance arrived and took the rest of us to my sister’s house in the Ash Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood.”

“I didn’t cope well with what happened to my son. Later on I found out that my son was taken to the Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza, along with his cousin who was hit during the same bombardment. My brother then received a phone call from the hospital saying that Bader was going to be operated on and his cousin would need to have his leg amputated. At about 6:00 a.m. I was watching the news reports when I heard the reporter announcing Bader as a victim who was killed during the bombardment. At about 7:40 a.m. Bader’s body was brought home and the whole family gathered.”

“It was time to say goodbye to my son. His face was very cold. I sat next to Bader’s body and started to talk to him. I only had about 10 minutes with Bader before he was taken by the men of my family and buried at Ash Sheikh Radwan cemetery. We also buried the leg of my nephew in the same tomb with my son’s body.”

“The other night my 10-year-old son, Mahmoud, came to me and told me that he had had a dream about Bader who was laughing and seemed happy. One of my daughters, Ayat, who is nine-years-old, has a fever all the time and can’t sleep at night. She keeps saying that she doesn’t want to sleep under the ground. she is even too scared to go to the bathroom.”

“I will never forget how Bader used to come to me while I used to prepare food in the kitchen and joke around. He used to help me to set up the table for dinner. Sometimes I call Bader’s name unconsciously. This is our life in Gaza; a life that is full of destruction, fear, sickness and death.”

## ANNEXURE AE

**Name:** Subhia A.  
**Age:** 45  
**Location:** Mediterranean Sea  
**Date:** 9 September 2014

### **On 9 September 2014, a family of five's attempt to escape life in Gaza by sea ends in tragedy.**

Subhia lives with her family in Khan Yunis, Gaza. "During the recent war in Gaza we had to move around a lot to avoid the Israeli bombardment. For most of the war we stayed at my cousin's house. Because of the terrible situation in Gaza; the war; few economic opportunities; the blockade; and lack of electricity, many people decided to try and leave. My son Mohammad, who is 28 and has three children, was one of those who wanted to find a safer place for his family."

"Mohammed's only choice to get out of Gaza was to coordinate with a people smuggler, named Foad Al Jamal, who is a Syrian national living in Egypt. Foad wanted US\$1,200 per person. On 27 August 2014, at around 6:00 a.m., Mohammad and his wife and children legally crossed from Gaza into Egypt. On 6 September, at around 10:40 p.m., I received a phone call from Mohammad telling me that his boat would leave Egypt shortly and they would be transferred to a larger boat in international waters. He asked for my blessing and then the line went dead."

"Four days later my other son called Foad, the people smuggler, to ask about Mohammed and he was told that they never made contact with the larger ship but not to worry. We then started to see notices appearing on Facebook saying that the boat that had left Egypt on 6 September had sunk. When we called Foad he told us that Mohammad's boat had successfully reached Italy."

"As the days passed we received more and more reports that the boat had sunk. Then we heard that three Palestinians and two Syrians had survived and were being treated in Greece. Through Facebook I was able to make contact with the Syrian woman but all she could tell me was that as far as she knew she and her daughter were the only survivors. I managed to contact another survivor who confirmed that Mohammad was on the same boat."

"This survivor, who was a Palestinian called Shukri, gave me the following account: "We were about 400 people aboard that ship. Mohammad and I were sitting in front of our wives. We enjoyed our trip, it was not horrible as it has been described by rumors. On the fifth day Mohamed and his family put on their life jackets. I asked him why and he said that with one more day to go they wanted to be extra cautious. Then the people smugglers had a fight and wanted to transfer us to a smaller boat, but all the passengers refused because there would not be enough space. About two hours later another boat came along side. There were seven people onboard speaking with Egyptian accents. The second boat then hit our boat three times until it capsized. Meanwhile, the seven men were laughing. By

sunset I looked around and saw Mohammad floating nearby. I told Mohammad I had lost my family and he said he also had lost his family. We remained together for four days floating in the sea without food or water. At times when I got tired Mohammad would hold me close, he still had his lifejacket on, and pray. I was amazed by his faith and strength. On the fifth day I lost consciousness. When I woke up I was in hospital in Crete. I was later told that a merchant ship picked me up 550 km off Crete. At the time I was alone, there was no Mohammad.”

“My other son called the Palestinian embassies in Greece, Malta, and Italy and they all said that no bodies had been recovered. Last week we began official mourning for Mohammad and his family. My heart aches for my son and his family. As long as I live I will never go near the sea.”

## ANNEXURE AF

**Name:** Amal S.  
**Age:** 15  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 1 October 2014

**On 1 October 2014, a 15-year-old girl from Gaza tells WCLAC what life in Gaza is like after the war during the summer.**

Amal lives with her mother and siblings in the Al-Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza. “Our neighbourhood was hit by Israeli air strikes during the recent war,” says Amal. “When the bombing became too heavy my mother decided to take us to a safer area in Gaza. We only came back to our house after the ceasefire.”

“A few weeks ago schools started after a very hard summer. I am in 10th grade at the Khalil Noubani government school. Many houses near our school were targeted and many people were killed and injured including my classmate’s sister and her family. Safa’s sister, who was 26, was killed together with her husband and two young children. Yesterday we organised a special event in memory of Safa’s family. We had a photograph of the family and placed some flowers around it. I cried when I saw Safa’ with tears in her eyes. I could feel her pain. I was reminded of the death of my father and young brother in the previous war in 2009. It reminded me how much I had missed my father and brother. When the short ceremony was over I went back to class but I couldn’t focus on what the teacher was saying. I had an English language class which I usually enjoy but I found it very hard to focus. I was busy trying to hold back my tears but it was very hard.”

“When I graduate from school I want go to college to study journalism. I want to be able to tell the world what life is like in Gaza. I don’t think enough people know. I want to tell my own personal story when I was injured during the previous war. I was buried under the rubble for three days with severe injuries to my head and without food or water until the rescue teams came. I was in the middle of a puddle of blood and I lost consciousness. Twenty-eight of my relatives and neighbours were killed in that incident and only I and six others survived. I still have shrapnel in my head which causes me severe headaches, but I am so lucky to have survived.”

“My father was a farmer, but after his death we were left without any income. My mother can hardly provide the basics. I would love to buy new clothes for Eid but I am not going to ask my mother for anything because I know she won’t be able to provide it. It will only make her sad. I like my school and my friends who sometimes help me forget. I don’t like all the topics at school, especially mathematics, but I have to keep working hard because I am determined to become a journalist, and a good one.”



**ANNEXURE AG**

**Name:** Siham W.  
**Age:** 63  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 9 October 2014

**On 9 October 2014, an apartment building damaged during the war in Gaza finally collapses. The building had been home to 21 members of an extended family.**

Siham lives in the Ash Shuja'iyeh neighbourhood in Gaza with her husband and married children. Twenty-one members of the extended family live on six floors of an apartment building. "I graduated from Beirut University and then I moved to Kuwait with my husband where we worked. When the Palestinian Authority came to power we moved to Gaza."

"With the money we saved over the years we built a six storey building for our extended family. The first floor was inhabited by my son and his wife. The second floor by my father-in-law and his daughter. The third floor by me, my husband and our daughter. The fourth floor by my other son, his wife and three children. The fifth floor by my third son and his wife and two children. The sixth floor was inhabited by my fourth son and his wife and three children."

"On 20 August 2014, we started receiving recorded messages from the Israeli military on our mobile phones and landlines telling us to leave the area. At first we didn't take the threats seriously and we stayed home. At around 3:00 a.m. the following morning we started to hear explosions all around us. People started to fill the streets leaving their homes and running away from the bombardment. My family decided to leave our apartment at 5:00 a.m because the bombardment was now only 500 metres away. The streets were full of people running away. We ran about one kilometer before being separated. I was with my husband, daughter and one of my sons and his family. We went to my brother's house. My other son and his family went to his aunt's house. My third son and his family went to his wife's family."

"This is how things remained until 26 August when the ceasefire was declared. Then all the family gathered in one house that we rented because our apartment had been so damaged it was no longer safe to live in. In mid-September an engineer examined our apartment and said we could return temporarily but that within a year it would be unsafe to live in. We weren't convinced and rented separate accommodation. I had lived in our apartment for nearly 30 years. It holds so many memories for me. Now the walls are collapsing and we have lost everything in a blink of an eye."

### ANNEXURE AH

**Name:** Manar  
**Age:** 24  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 20 October 2014

#### **On 20 October 2014, a woman describes life in Gaza following last summer's war.**

Manar lives with her extended family in Gaza. There are 17 people living in the one house. "I am a single woman and I work with the organisation 'Candles of Hope'. The organisation provides social and psychiatric help to women and children. I also used to work in a different centre taking night shifts but that center was bombed and destroyed during the war, so I lost that job."

"Since the night of 20 July 2014, me and my family have become homeless. Our house was damaged during an Israeli bombardment during the last war. We left our house at dawn and walked barefoot. We had to be careful not to step on the corpses in the street. The bodies of many of my neighbours lay all about. This experience really traumatized me. My father had a stroke and was not able to walk properly. Some men helped and carried him while we continued to walk until we reached the UNRWA school shelter in the Al-Daraj neighborhood. These UN schools were opened up to provide shelter to people who had lost their homes or were fleeing the bombardment."

"On 26 August we moved to another UNRWA shelter. The second shelter housed 7,500 families, which meant that we had to share one room with seven other families. Women and children slept on carpets on the floor and we all shared the same bathroom. All the families agreed on one corner of the room to become our showering spot, so that we could have a little privacy. My father was also sleeping on a carpet because he was sick; other men were sleeping outside in the hallways. My mother is also diabetic and has high blood pressure and needs special care and medication."

"Despite all our circumstances I continued to work. I go to the Centre and help the people there. Although it is very hard for me to stay focused at times during my shifts at work as I am still traumatised from the war. Many people come with various illnesses mostly due to the stress and trauma caused by the war. For me personally I have now developed a digestive disorder which will need surgery. I keep thinking of my family and how we can manage our needs. I keep thinking of how I used to help people with various things to meet their needs, and I look at where I am now seeing how much I and my family need help and I don't have even a blanket to use."

"Last week it rained so much that the shelter we are staying in started to leak and fill with water. Many people got very sick and developed allergies. Sickness spreads fast because the place is not hygienic and is very crowded. My nephew, who is three years old, cries all the time. He keeps asking his mother to buy him chocolate, but she can't afford it. I can see the stress and frustration on my

sister's face because she can't provide even simple things to her son. I have no idea how we are going to survive the winter under the current living conditions.”

**ANNEXURE AI**

**Name:** Fatima Q.  
**Age:** 66  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 8 November 2014

**On 8 November 2014, a woman in Gaza describes life following the destruction of her family home during the summer war.**

Fatima lives in Gaza with her husband and their married son and his family. “Our house was located next to the Al-Huda mosque which was bombed by Israeli forces during the war last summer,” says Fatima. “Our house was located near to the border with Israel and the surrounding area was subjected to heavy bombardment. On day 15 of the war we evacuated our home. We took a few personal things with us along with our ID cards and some baby food and nappies for my grandchild. I personally took my medicine with me as I suffer from high blood pressure and diabetes.”

“We left our home hoping that after the war we would come back to it, thinking that we will be leaving only for few days. We went to a hospital for shelter along with so many other people. I slept underneath a tree outside the hospital while my son and his wife stayed inside the hospital because their child became sick. The child had a very high fever and needed medical attention. Later on we moved to another shelter at the Al-Hayat school because there wasn’t enough water for us at the first shelter. We remained at Al-Hayat until the ceasefire.”

“When we went to check on our two-storey house we found it completely destroyed. Some charity organisations gave us a shipping container to live in with other families. During the hot weather it gets too hot inside these shipping containers and when it rains they leak. Thankfully my son managed to rent a house so we could move out of the shipping container.”

“The house we rented has no furniture at all, not even kitchen utensils. We managed to bring a few pieces of furniture but still the house is half empty. Every time we sit to eat I can’t stop my tears. I keep thinking what happened and I am worried how we will manage to live decently.”

ANNEUXRE AJ

**Name:** Rawan A.  
**Age:** 24  
**Location:** Gaza  
**Date:** 8 December 2014

**On 8 December 2014, a young woman from Gaza describes the frustration she feels at not being permitted to leave Gaza to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem.**

Rawan lives in Gaza with her husband and three-year-old child. “Because of the Israeli blockade I have not been able to leave Gaza for many years. I miss not being able to travel to Bethlehem to celebrate Christmas,” says Rawan. “The last time I visited Bethlehem was in 2008 with my parents. The Israeli authorities generally deny permission to anyone between the ages of 16 and 35. I really feel down not being able to pray at the Nativity Church in Bethlehem. Especially now that am married I would love to visit the holy places with my husband and child.”

“This year my parents were permitted to visit Bethlehem because of Christmas, but my sister, who just turned 16, and my brother, who is 26, were both denied permits. Christmas time is now a sad occasion for us as only some of our family will be permitted to travel. I feel suffocated and very frustrated and I don’t know how to express my anger towards such regulations and laws that the Israeli authorities apply to us, the Palestinians. I have to wait another 10 years before I can obtain an Israeli permit to leave Gaza.”

“I wish the blockade on Gaza would end so that we can leave in peace and be free.”

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<sup>1</sup> WCLAC is a Palestinian, feminist, non-governmental organisation that works to protect and promote women's human rights within the framework of international human rights mechanisms and standards. This is to be undertaken through monitoring, documentation and advocacy at the local and international levels; providing social and legal services to women victims of violence and those whose human rights have been violated; undertaking awareness, advocacy, training and legal reform programmes that ensure gender equality; developing the capacity of grassroots organisations and volunteer groups, all within the framework of an effective organisation that works in a complementary way through the various programme and administrative units and regional offices whose specialised and highly-qualified staff are committed to the vision and mission of the Centre. WCLAC's vision is to see empowered women living in a just and equal Palestinian society where women enjoy all of their human rights.

WCLAC's core programmes are:

- Legal and social services, including advice in emergencies, professional court representation, family mediation, and social work, publication of self-help manuals on women's rights and how to claim them. WCLAC runs a unique emergency protection shelter for women victims of domestic violence , a life-saving service available around the clock to women in need.

- Gender-sensitive legal and policy reform, focusing on the Criminal Law (to appropriately penalize perpetrators of the so-called honour killings), the Personal Status Law (which governs issues such as marriage, divorce and child custody rights) and the Law on Family Protection from Violence (which would help defend women from domestic violence);

- International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law programme which monitors and documents Israel's violations of human rights and its impact on women. WCLAC documents women's testimonies using a framework of international law and human rights and within a feminist vision of equality and social justice. This is used to advocate for Palestinian women, highlighting rights violations and working towards accountability for those responsible;

- Capacity building to service providers and grassroots organizations to create sustainable improvement in services for women and enable provision in underserved communities. Five teams of WCLAC volunteers have been mobilized and are supported in strategic locations across the West Bank to hold public advocacy and awareness-raising events. Volunteers introduce hundreds of men and women every year to gender issues and provide information and referrals to help women claim rights.

WCLAC is a member of a range of national and international coalitions. Since 2005 it has participated as a founder and /or coordinator in: Personal Status Law Coalition regional and national (Founder & Coordinator), Criminal Law Coalition (Founder Member), Family Protection from Violence Law Coalition regional and national (Founder& Coordinator), Coalition against Violence Against Women (Al-Muntada) (Coordinator), Media Forum to support women's rights (OMQ) (Founder & Coordinator). It participated simply as a member in the following: Coalition for monitoring human rights violations under the current conditions, Coalition against capital punishment, Palestinian forum for safe abortion, Palestinian forum to combat violence against children. The Centre is also a member of PNGO and The Council for Palestinian Human Rights Organizations. It has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) . WCLAC is also active in international and regional networks like Salma and Aisha and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network.

<sup>2</sup> The Human Rights Council appointed Mary McGowan Davis, Doudou Diène and William Schabas as members of the Commission of Inquiry.

<sup>3</sup> Israeli forces also occupied Syrian territory in the Golan Heights.

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<sup>4</sup> UN Security Council resolution 242 of 1967.

<sup>5</sup> Israel continues to maintain “effective control” over the Gaza Strip thereby satisfying the legal test as an occupying power. Some of the duties of an occupying power include: To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the occupying power must ensure sufficient hygiene and public health standards, as well as the provision of food and medical care to the population under occupation; there is a prohibition on collective punishment; the destruction or seizure of enemy property is prohibited, unless absolutely required by military necessity during the conduct of hostilities; and occupation is only a temporary situation, and the rights of the occupant are limited to the extent of that period. For a more comprehensive list see ICRC at <http://is.gd/W8kV6r>

<sup>6</sup> UN Security Council resolution 1860 of 2009.

<sup>7</sup> B’Tselem, background on the Gaza Strip. Available at: <http://is.gd/veuGjz>

<sup>8</sup> Report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (2009); and B’Tselem.

<sup>9</sup> Israeli fatalities included 6 soldiers and 3 civilians. A further 4 soldiers were killed by “friendly” fire. Source: B’Tselem.

<sup>10</sup> Source: B’Tselem.

<sup>11</sup> Source: B’Tselem.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Gaza Crisis. Available at: <http://is.gd/fGqx4G>

<sup>13</sup> UN statement, 15 January 2015. Available at: <http://is.gd/qWTjou>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> On 2 January 2015, the State of Palestine acceded to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and accepted jurisdiction of the court over crimes committed on its territory since 13 June 2014. On 16 January 2015, the Prosecutor of the ICC opened a “preliminary examination of the situation in Palestine. According to media reports, both Israel and the US condemned Palestine’s attempt to enforce its legitimate legal rights in a court of law.