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**Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, "Briefing on the current human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the use of excessive force by Israeli security forces, and the need for accountability."**

Mr. Chairman: Colleagues, good morning. Distinguished colleagues, representatives of the civil society, ladies and gentlemen, let me first welcome you all to this meeting, and thank you for your presence here. At the outset let me just state that this will be the open briefing by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Al-Haq. For those members of the Working Group, we'll be having a closed meeting later, later on during the week.

As you may know, the Working Group of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People considers the research, analysis, and advocacy by Civil Society Organizations as valuable assets to its diplomatic efforts, and, therefore, regularly seeks to convene briefings with Civil Society with a view to providing a forum for fruitful discussions which shall inform policy making.

In the statement by the President of the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians, the Council recalled the importance of ensuring compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law, ending impunity for violations, and ensuring accountability. In this context the purpose of the meeting is to focus on a few major issues about which leading international local human rights organizations have recently expressed concern. We are indeed most grateful to Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Al-Haq for their participation in this session.

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome Omar Shakir from Human Rights Watch, Watch's Israel and Palestine's Country Director, who will provide a brief introduction about the overall situation with a focus on the organization's most recent work in settlement businesses and how they impact Palestinian rights. Let me recall the initiative by Human Rights – by the Human Rights Council, its compiled database of businesses which profits from settlements.

I wish to further welcome Jacob Burns, member of the Israel-Palestine Team with Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London where he has worked on unlawful killings and accountability. He will share with us via video conference the findings, concerns, and recommendations set out in a recent memorandum entitled "Lethal Force and Accountability for Unlawful Killings by Israeli Forces in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories".

Our committee unequivocally condemns attacks against all civilians. At the same time, the report stresses that in responding to the situation Israeli security forces are bound by Israel's obligations under international law and the need to ensure accountability for unlawful killings.

Finally, I warmly welcome Legal and Advocacy Officers Marya Farah and Aseil Abu-Baker, who have come all the way from Ramallah representing Al-Haq, one of the oldest Palestinian human rights NGOs and a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and International Federation for Human Rights. It has also consultative status with ECOSOC that will provide a local perspective on specific incidents, with a focus on the use of measures that amounts to collective punishment as prohibited by international law.

Ladies and gentlemen, ensuring accountability and ending impunity for violations of applicable international humanitarian law and international human rights law is not only a matter of justice but also part of a comprehensive approach to seeking sustainable peace, truth, and reconciliation.

In this spirit, let me thank you all for your participation, in particular our distinguished experts from civil society.

I now give the floor to Mr. Omar Shakir from Human Rights Watch.

Omar Shakir, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH: Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor to have this opportunity to be before you today. At Human Rights Watch we work with many of your countries, 90 countries across the world, to protect human rights. And I thank the Working Group for the Committee of the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for this opportunity to speak to you today on an issue that has concerned our organization for many years, the situation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

My objective is to present a general overview of the human rights situation in the occupied territories and leave it to my colleagues on the panel to delve into a few of these issues in greater detail. In particular, during my brief time I hope to surface several issues.

First, the continued escalation in the use of force by Israeli security forces. The last year, since October 2015, has seen a concerning uptick in violence, including a wave of stabbings and attempted stabbings by Palestinians, mostly with no affiliation to armed groups; and excessive force by Israeli forces, including increasingly using live ammunition in response to demonstrations in the West Bank and on the Gaza border and against suspected attackers. Some of these incidents may arise to extrajudicial executions.

In terms of numbers: so far in 2016 through September 19th, Israeli forces have killed at least 89 Palestinians and injured at least 2,949 in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel; and Palestinians have killed at least 10 Israelis, including two security officers and injured 131. I will leave it to my co-panelists to delve further into these concerning developments.

Second, the continued increase in settlement activities and set of accompanying discriminatory policies against Palestinians. Israel continues to provide security, administrative services, housing, education, and medical care for around 560,000 settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In the first half of 2016 alone Israel authorized construction work to begin on over 1,000 housing units in the West Bank, marking a 17% increase over the same period in 2015 according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics. By contrast, building permits for Palestinians are nearly impossible to obtain in East Jerusalem and in Area C, which compromises roughly 60% of the West Bank under exclusive Israeli control. Palestinians face the constant risk of demolition, land confiscation, and limited or more costly access to water, electricity, schools, and other state services than Jewish settlers in the same area.

So far in 2016 through September 19th there have been 820 Israeli home demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and 1,120 people displaced, acts that violate international humanitarian law and also amount to forcible transfer.

In January, Human Rights Watch released a new report, Occupation, Inc., documenting how Israeli international businesses contribute to entrenching and benefit from the occupation and associated policies that violate international law and have severe consequences for the Palestinian people. They do so in four ways. The first is taking advantage of a two-tiered system of law, movement, and land, water, and resource allocation that benefits Jewish settlers and prejudices Palestinians. This manifests itself in benefits such as financial and regulatory incentives, and favorable permitting by the Israeli Civil Administration.

The second way is through land confiscation and restrictions. Settlement businesses not only depend on confiscations, but they actually further Palestinian displacement such as when banks offer mortgages or when real estate agencies sell or buy land in settlements.

Third is through infrastructure. Settlement businesses provide services, employment, and tax revenues that sustain and further entrench the occupation. And over 50% of settlers or 42% of the settler work force work in private or public companies.

And fourth, labor abuse. While Israeli civil law applies to settlers, it is Jordanian law that applies to Palestinians that work on the very same land. While the Israeli Supreme Court found this policy discriminatory, it’s had little effect in practice.

Some of the abuses we and Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations have documented including – include a report by Kav LaOved which found that nearly half settlement businesses pay Palestinian workers below the minimum wage and do not provide basic benefits like vacation and sick leave. These policies collectively pose significant challenges under international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Rome Statute, under the Hague Resolutions of 1907 concerning confiscation of land and natural resources, and under international human rights law and under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Based on Human Rights Watch's findings in this report, we call for a full cessation of business activity in settlements, and for all states to review trade with Israel to ensure it's not facilitating the operation of settlement businesses and that it withholds funding to the Israeli government in an amount equal to the expenditures on settlements.

Third, Israel continues to maintain onerous restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinians in the West Bank, including through checkpoints and through the security barrier, which as is familiar to those in this room, is a combination of a wall and security fences, 85% of which falls within the West Bank as opposed to the Green Line, isolating 11,000 Palestinians on the west side of the barrier, not able to travel to Israel and forced to cross barriers in many cases to access their own land, property, and services in the West Bank.

Fourth, Israel continues to hold Palestinians in administrative detention without a charge or trial, including protestors and children. And those protestors include those engaged in non-violent protest and children accused – suspected of criminal offenses, usually stone throwing. In holding children, Israel authorities often question without lawyers or family present, coerce children into signing confessions in Hebrew, a language many don't understand, and often detain them alongside adults.

As of April of 2016, Israel holds 692 Palestinians in administrative detention without a charge or trial based on secret evidence. These individuals are held inside Israel, violating international humanitarian law and restricting the ability of family members to visit. And we've seen many examples of Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike to protest their condition.

Of course I'd be remiss by talking about the human rights situation without mentioning the situation in Gaza where Israel continues to maintain a closure and severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods, which have severe consequences for the civilian population: separating families, restricting access to medical care and educational economic opportunities, and perpetuating unemployment and poverty. Seventy percent of Gaza's 1.9 million people rely on humanitarian assistance.

And the Erez Crossing, Israel's main bridge to the West Bank in Gaza is limited – has been limited to exceptional humanitarian cases. So while about 500 people on average crossed each day in the first half of 2016, that's compared to 24,000 that crossed each day in September of 2000.

And truckloads of goods operating for the first eight months of 2016 are operating at just 15% of the level they operated prior to the June 2007 tightening of the closure. And these restrictions have also meant restriction on the delivery of construction materials and a lack of funding which has impeded the reconstruction of homes destroyed in the 2014 war.

In addition, so far in 2016 the Israeli defense forces have conducted 50 military incursions in Gaza, and that's according to UN figures; and eight have been killed in demonstrations along the border fence. Israel continues to fire on civilians in the no-go zone and the north and east Gaza borders and fishermen venturing beyond six nautical miles of the Gaza border.

Of course Israel is not the only actor violating human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Palestinian Authority continues to arrest activists and journalists in violation of its obligations and under international treaties. And the International Commission for Human Rights, a statutory Palestinian body, has reported 70 complaints of torture and ill treatment in the first five months of 2016.

In addition, Hamas and armed Palestinian groups have fired 16 rockets in 2016 as of August 21st, which the UN Commission of Inquiry last year found to be a serious violation of the laws of war. In addition, the International Commission for Human Rights has reported that 100 people have alleged torture and ill treatment of prisoners, and there have been a rise in executions as well as the issuance of death sentences.

And finally, all these human rights abuses are underlined by a lack of accountability by serious abuses by all actors on the ground. On the Israeli side, Israeli authorities have failed to take adequate action against Israeli settlers who injured Palestinians and destroyed or damaged Palestinian mosques, schools, or property. In 2016, through September 19th, the UN reported 25 attacks in which settlers injured Palestinians and 55 in which property was damaged.

Of course, with regards to the 2014 Israel-Gaza war, where UN figures indicate 1,462 Palestinian civilians were killed, including 551 children, Israel's Military Advocate General has received over 600 complaints in regards to 300 instances. But criminal charges to date have been filed only against three soldiers; and those were for theft.

In addition, Hamas authorities have failed to prosecute alleged serious crimes that they were involved in. And that's where the role of international community, and this body in particular, is so critical. Progress on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories requires a sustained commitment to a human rights-based framework and concrete action. I urge you in the coming days to act.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I thank Mr. Shakir for that important and very informative presentation. I now give the floor to Mr. Jacob Burns from Amnesty International who's joining us via video conference.

Mr. Burns, the floor is yours.

Jacob Burns, amnesty international: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for inviting me to be with you today, and thank you for being here today. I'm sorry that I couldn't join you in New York.

My name is Jacob Burns, and I work for Amnesty International with Israel and Palestine Team at the International Secretariat. I'm here to share with you some findings from Amnesty International's research on unlawful killings carried out by Israeli forces in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, and accountability for those killings.

Over the past year, Amnesty International has continued its work to promote human rights in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories against the background of the sharp increase in the levels of violence. As an impartial organization committed to human rights for all, we have been vocal and active in condemning attacks by Palestinian armed groups and individuals against Israeli citizens. Civilians; excuse me. Such attacks can never be justified, and Amnesty International has been consistent and clear on this matter.

In the face of such attacks, however, the conduct of Israeli forces is bound by Israel's obligation under international law, in particular as regard upholding the right to life and security of person. Especially relevant are international standards on the use of force by law enforcement officials where evidence exists that lethal force has been used unnecessarily or disproportionately and that, therefore, the resulting death is an unlawful killing, the Israeli authorities are required by international human rights standards to conduct prompt, independent, impartial, thorough, effective, and transparent investigations.

Unfortunately, over this period Amnesty International has documented a series of unlawful killings, many of which appear to have been extrajudicial executions carried out by the Israeli army, border police, police, and private security contractors. These unlawful killings included cases where Israeli forces used intentional lethal force against Palestinians who were not or were no longer posing an imminent threat to the lives of Israeli soldiers, police, or civilians, including the shooting of injured Palestinians. In other cases Israeli forces killed Palestinians during the policing of protests in which stones and occasionally fire bombs were thrown, but these incidents do not appear to have threatened the lives of Israeli forces, making the killings unlawful.

Despite the often overwhelming evidence of wrongdoing, however, the Israeli authorities are failing to meet their obligations to conduct investigations that meet the criteria of international standards. It is important to note that Israel on paper has a complex and professional system for investigating evidence of wrongdoing by its forces. The Israel authorities often point to this as evidence that they meet their obligations under international law. However, over a period of many years Amnesty International has consistently found that in practice these systems fail to deliver justice. Indeed, although the last year has seen an increase in frequency, the patterns of unlawful killings and impunity are not new.

In Trigger-happy, an Amnesty International report on excessive force and impunity published in 2014, we examined 19 cases in which Palestinians killed by Israeli forces did not appear to have been posing an imminent threat to life. In three cases, there was evidence that they were victims of willful killings, which are war crimes. In only one of these cases to date has there been an indictment of a member of the Israeli forces on a minor charge of a reckless and negligent act using a firearm.

In the memorandum that we just published, which covered the period of 22nd September 2015 to 6th September 2016, we provided details of 20 evidently unlawful killings, including 15 possible extrajudicial executions. Again, however, in only one case has there been an indictment. While we note the military's prompt investigation and indictment of the soldier charged with the manslaughter of Abed al-Fatah al-Sharif on 23rd March in Hebron, this appears to be an exception. In so many other cases similarly compelling evidence of unlawful killings by Israeli forces has either gone unpunished or has not been investigated.

It is also important to note that these patterns cut across jurisdictions and investigatory bodies. Whether the killings took place in the occupied Palestinian territories and in East Jerusalem, a sublet of the oPt 22:25 but where Israel applies its own laws as it's illegally annexed, or inside Israel itself, whether the investigatory body's the military Advocate General, the police Internal Investigations Department known as Machash, or the Judea and Samaria police, we have seen similar patterns of unlawful killings and a failure to deliver the justice.

I would like to quickly to discuss two examples. Hadeel al-Hashlamon, 18, was killed on 22nd of September 2015 in Hebron. Hadeel was shot at Checkpoint 56 by Israeli soldiers. She was holding a knife, but was separated from the soldiers by a metal barrier, and at no point did she pose a sufficient threat to the soldiers to make their use of deliberate lethal force permissible. The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported that the Israeli army's Judea Brigade commander have concluded in an initial review of the incident that Hadeel could have been detained by the soldiers and not killed, yet Amnesty International is not aware of the existence of any criminal investigation into her death. Her killing should be investigated as a possible extrajudicial execution.

Fadi Alloun, 19, was killed on 4th of October 2015, in West Jerusalem. Israeli police said that he tried to stab a 16-year-old Israeli boy who was slightly injured, and had a knife in his hand when he was shot. But the video of the incident shows him being chased up a Jerusalem street by a group of Israeli civilians before an Israeli police patrol arrives, after which a policeman shoots Fadi in the upper body from some meters away without attempting to arrest him. The killing of Fadi Alloun, therefore, appears to have been an extrajudicial execution. A letter sent by Machash to Fadi Alloun's legal representative at the NGO Adalah on 7 April 2016 stated that the investigation into his killing had been closed. Adalah have still not received the case materials from Machash explaining this decision, and cannot appeal the decision to the state prosecutor until it does.

In both these cases, compelling evidence of wrongdoing exists. In one of the cases, the army even said it could have arrested the deceased instead of killing her, yet no criminal accountability has been forthcoming. This situation has to change, as impunity for past wrongs fuels further violations.

The Israeli authorities should be automatically opening independent, impartial criminal investigations into all killings by Israeli forces, wherever they occur and whichever force carries them out. Israeli personnel responsible for extrajudicial executions or other unlawful killings should be prosecuted in fair trials on charges reflecting the gravity of the offense.

As a first step towards bringing Israel's flawed accountability mechanisms closer to international standards, the Israeli authorities should fully implement all the recommendations of the government- appointed Turkel Commission which examined Israel's mechanisms for investigating alleged violations of international humanitarian law, and in its February 2013 report proposed changes to them.

We are urging governments to highlight these concerns during this week's open debate and to press the Israeli authorities to take these actions and implement the full recommendations detailed in our memorandum. Israel's investigations mechanisms have long served effectively to shield Israeli personnel responsible for extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings from prosecution. Outside pressure is critical to ending the climate of impunity that has allowed the serious violations, including crimes under international law, by Israeli forces to continue and escalate over the past year.

We are also calling on all states to suspend transfers to Israel of all arms and munitions, including crowd control weapons, training, and military assistance which pose a substantial risk of being used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Such transfers should not resume until substantive steps have been taken by Israel to achieve accountability for previous violations and effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that they will not be used to commit further violations. This suspension should include all indirect exports via other countries, the transfer of military components and technologies, and any brokering, financial, or logistical activities that would facilitate such transfers.

In addition, all states should support the International Criminal Court's preliminary examination of the situation in Palestine and press the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to cooperate with the Office of the Prosecutor. States must also condemn the continuing threats, harassment, and surveillance of Palestinian human rights defenders and NGOs, some of them based in Europe, cooperating with the court, and work to protect them, including by investigating threats against human rights defenders based in their jurisdictions and bringing those responsible to justice.

Finally, all states can and should exercise universal jurisdiction to conduct criminal investigations into war crimes or other crimes under international law committed in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Where there is sufficient admissible evidence, states should seek to arrest alleged perpetrators and bring them to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards.

Thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Chairman: I thank Mr. Burns for that presentation. And I now hand over the floor to Ms. Aseil Abu-Baker from Al-Haq. The floor is yours.

Aseil Abu-Baker, al-haq: Good morning. Thank you all for inviting Al-Haq to discuss the reality on the ground, and thank you all for being here.

While my colleagues at Amnesty have highlighted cases of excessive use of force where allegations surrounding the killings may be claimed by Israel to be unclear, there are cases where these circumstances are clear but impunity prevails.

As my colleague at Human Rights Watch mentioned, there have been 291 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces since October 1 of 2015. These are numbers updated as of October 11, 2016. Many of these cases constitute unlawful killings, and some may amount to extrajudicial executions, as you just heard from Amnesty International.

Since the beginning of this year, 94 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces. Al-Haq has been closely documenting several of these cases, which reflect the continuation of Israel's shoot-to-kill policy. This policy has continued as a result of the impunity enjoyed by Israeli forces due to a complete lack of accountability.

Al-Haq's recent documentation has shown that Israeli impunity has reached new heights where Israeli forces do not hesitate to make immediate claims which justify the use of force, and similarly do not fear accountability or punishment when they retract such claims after evidence of truth emerges.

Israel has document – Al-Haq has documented at least two killings where the Israeli forces have alleged that the deceased was armed or attempting to commit a terrorist attack, justifying the use of force, and then retracted such statements claiming that the killing of these individuals was a mistake. I'm going to share two of these cases with you now.

On September 5 Mustafa Nimir, 27-year-old from Shuafat refugee camp in occupied East Jerusalem was shot dead by Israeli forces while he was riding in the passenger seat of his cousin Ali Nimir's car. The pair was returning to Shuafat refugee camp from neighboring Anata a little before 2:00 a.m. Mustafa's brother, [Muhammad], was riding in the car behind them with two others. Both cars were traveling at a normal speed down a narrow, unlit road.

And according to testimony from [Muhammad] there were no other cars or people visible on the road. [Muhammad] testified that as they were driving they heard heavy firing and noticed that the shots were directed at the car that his brother Mustafa was riding in. [Muhammad] then watched as the car spun twice and came to a stop as it hit a parked car. [Muhammad] jumped out of the car and was met with six to seven Israeli forces who were dressed in black, wearing face masks, and carrying machine guns. They shot at his feet and yelled for him to return. [Muhammad] was forced to obey, and after several failed attempts to reach his brother on his mobile phone an individual picked up the phone and informed [Muhammad] that the two individuals in the car were sent to the hospital; one was killed and one was severely injured.

An eyewitness to the scene told Al-Haq’s field researcher that neither Mustafa nor Ali were provided with medical attention for at least 30 minutes after the shooting. [Muhammad] and his family waited at the hospital for approximately four hours before an Israeli officer approached and informed them of Mustafa's death. The officer claimed that Mustafa and Ali were shot at because they failed to heed warnings by the Israeli forces to stop, claiming that the Israeli forces had shined lights and fired rubber bullets in their direction.

Al-Haq investigation has confirmed that the Israeli forces provided no warnings before opening fire at Mustafa and Ali's car, and also confirmed that most of the shots that were fired at Ali and Mustafa's car entered through the front windshield, suggesting the intent to kill or severely injure the driver and the passenger. The Israeli forces made no attempt to stop the car and contain the alleged suspects therein prior to firing the deadly shots.

After the killing Israeli police released a statement that the young men were shot at because their car was traveling at a high speed and attempted to run over the Israeli forces in the area. The following day on September 6 the police retracted their claim, stating that the killing of Mustafa was a mistake, and the car posed no threat to the forces. At around that time, video evidence emerged that suggested that Ali and Mustafa posed no threat to the forces.

On September 7th, the Israeli police shifted the blame for Mustafa's death to his cousin, Ali, who was initially being investigated on charges of traffic violations. On September 15, Ali was indicted on charges of criminally negligent homicide for the death of his cousin, who was shot and killed by the Israeli occupation forces.

Ten days earlier, on August 26th, Iyad Hamed, a 38-year-old father of two who suffered from a mental disorder, was shot dead by the Israeli forces in his village of Silwad. The Israeli forces alleged that Iyad was armed with a gun and was attempting an attack. Al-Haq investigation confirmed that Iyad was not armed and was not holding anything in his hands leading up to the killing. An initial Israeli investigation resulted in a retraction of the force's allegations of attempted attack and admission that Iyad was not armed and posed no threat at the time of his killing. His killing was also deemed a mistake.

And despite initial investigation into involuntary manslaughter charges, no one is being prosecuted for Iyad's death. In fact, several days after he was shot Israeli Defense Minister Lieberman mentioned the incident among others stating, and I quote, "soldiers cannot go out on mission accompanied by a lawyer." Such statements by Israeli officials undermine any meaningful investigation into the killings of Palestinians.

The significant alterations in the stories provided by the Israeli forces in the murders of both Mustafa and Iyad raise serious questions regarding Israel's claims of necessary use of force in several other cases as discussed by my colleague at Amnesty International. And despite these admissions by Israeli forces that the killings of these Palestinians were not justified, no prosecutions have been initiated against the forces responsible. This lack of accountability is the perfect breeding ground for continued impunity.

And as discussed by my colleague at Amnesty International, the existing investigation mechanism is incapable of conducting professional investigations and the military law enforcement system has so far been a failure. The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem has stated that since 1987 no Israeli soldier or commander has been convicted of willfully causing the death of a Palestinian in the occupied Palestinian territory.

And in the very limited and exceptional cases where soldiers are prosecuted for the death of a Palestinian, like in the case of Elor Azaria who was charged with the killing of Sharif al-Qasrawi in Hebron earlier this year, on manslaughter charges; so not willful killing. And Sharif al-Qasrawi was shot at while he was incapacitated and lying on the ground.

Once again, Israeli government officials undermine the prosecutions and encourage – and protect the culture of immunity with statements such as this one, also by the Minister Lieberman. He has stated the following in support of Elor Azaria: These Israeli soldiers in uniform who protect Israel are the messengers of Israel and should not be attacked by politicians. We should support them even if they make a mistake. These "mistakes" result in the unlawful killing of Palestinians in violation of their right to life.

Israel's excessive use of force and violations of Palestinian's right to life are just one aspect of the reality on the ground.

I will now turn it to my colleague, Marya, who will discuss other violations by Israeli forces.

Marya Farah, al-haq: Thank you all for attending. As has been highlighted during the panel, there is near total impunity for Israeli violations of the Palestinian right to life. Conversely, Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territory have neither carried out nor have been accused of carrying out criminal activities, have suffered from Israel's broad collective punishment measures.

In certain cases, these impacts are felt at a very intimate and familial level. As of last week, Israel continued to hold the bodies of 18 Palestinians allegedly involved in attacks. Although not a new practice, Israel has increasingly withheld bodies since October 2015. Israel then places conditions for return of the bodies to the families, including limitations on funeral attendees and prohibiting autopsies.

Since the beginning of the year, 19 homes have been punitively demolished, resulting in the displacement of 104 individuals. In 14 of the 19 cases, or for the overwhelming majority, the alleged attacker has already been killed. As with the withholding of bodies, the only individuals that are impacted by the demolitions are the remaining innocent family members of the accused, who are then left homeless.

In addition to families, we continue to see entire Palestinian villages and cities targeted by closures and raids, which also mounts a collective punishment. For example, since the beginning of September 2016, Israel has targeted Zabouba village, east of Jenin. The village has been raided on several occasions, and checkpoints in areas surround the village have been set up.

To highlight incidents in the past week alone, on the 11th of October, two Israeli jeeps closed the southern and only entrance to the village. The village is encircled on the other sides by the annexation wall. The pretext for the closing was that youths had thrown stones at the annexation wall, and the closure lasted for most of the day.

The following day, on October 12th, four military jeeps entered the village at 7:00 p.m., sparking clashes. Many residents suffered from severe tear gas inhalation. Once the four jeeps left the center of the village, another jeep came and established a flying checkpoint at the entrance of the village, closing it off until the middle of the night.

The following morning, on October 13, the Israeli military established another flying checkpoint at the entrance that lasted nearly four hours. This happened again on the 15th. During the week numerous youths from the village were arrested.

Alongside Zabouba, Al-Haq has documented numerous other cases of areas that are repeatedly targeted through the use of closures and raids. For example, at 1:00 a.m. on October 6th, al-Fawwar refugee camp near Tubas was raided by the Israeli military. Clashes erupted during the raid after the Israeli military employed tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, live ammunition, and sound guns. Two Palestinians suffered from severe tear gas inhalation and had to be transferred to a hospital while one 21-year-old Palestinian man was arrested.

The following day at 5:00 a.m., October 7th, the Israeli military again raided the camp and searched several homes. As clashes began to erupt, soldiers stopped a bus carrying 14 Palestinian workers. The soldiers then stood behind the business and began shooting at the Palestinian youth. The youth then responded, throwing rocks and homemade bombs back. The driver of the bus was interviewed by an Al-Haq field researcher and emphasized the fear felt by himself and the other passengers. While he kept requesting that he be allowed to drive away and flee the scene, his requests were denied, and he stated he was used as a human shield by the soldiers. Once the soldiers left their position behind the bus, the passengers all fled by foot. Numerous Palestinians were injured with live fire that day.

The cases mentioned today are but a few of the countless other human rights violations by the Israeli occupation. Al-Haq urges Member States to take immediate action to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and ensure the protection of the occupied Palestinian population.

Mr. Chairman: I wish to thank Ms. Abu-Baker and Ms. Farah for their presentation. We've heard the last presentation from our speakers. We have some more time left, so the floor is now open for any questions or comments. Would be grateful if you could identify yourselves when taking the floor, please. The floor is open.

Ambassador Mansour, please.

Ambassador Riyad H. Mansour, “State of Palestine”: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like at the beginning to express the gratitude of the “State of Palestine” to the Working Group, to the division, of course to the Committee, to the presenters, and the three organizations that are present with us here today: Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Al-Haq.

We are very grateful for organizing this event. And it comes on the heels of a special meeting of the Security Council under the Arria-formula in which three other experts, including one from B'Tselem, were able to present to the international community, to the Security Council, as you are also doing, presenting to the international community details of the crimes committed against the Palestinian people in the occupied territory.

And we thank you very much for all the information, for your work, and for your commitment for justice and for fighting impunity as it is demonstrated by the occupying power, Israel, against the Palestinian people in the occupied territory, including in East Jerusalem and also in the besieged Gaza Strip. We believe that such activities and introducing to the international community the facts on the ground would be very helpful in the struggle of the Palestinian people to put an end to the occupation and to attain the independence of the “State of Palestine.”

Of course, as I said, you come after the very important meeting in the – of the Arria-formula and the Security Council. And tomorrow there will be an open meeting, open debate, in the Security Council in which the subjects that you raised and other subjects related to the plight of the Palestinian people will be discussed thoroughly by all members of the Security Council, certainly by the “State of Palestine,” and dozens more of countries who will express the views of their countries and the group of countries in the Security Council.

And we sincerely hope that with the effort of the Arab troika, the Arab Council of Ambassadors at the United Nations, in which we are very engaging the members of the Security Council with a view that the Security Council to shoulder this responsibility, particularly with regard to settlement activities and to adopt a new resolution.

So your effort helped very much in the continuous education of the international community with regard to these crimes, and with regard to international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. And also with the view that the international community should shoulder its responsibility, particularly the Security Council, through adopting practical steps, action in the form of a Security Council, so that justice can be served to the Palestinian people and the impunity could be resisted and fought against by all of us, including you, who are in the forefront in the fields who are bringing all these details to the international community.

Again, allow me on behalf of our delegation and the “State of Palestine” to thank you very much for your presence and for your presentations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Distinguished Permanent Observer of the “State of Palestine,” and I'd like to see if there are any further questions or comments from the floor. If not, then this concludes today's session.

At tomorrow's open Security Council open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, I thank you all very much for your participation. In particular, I'd like to thank the speakers from civil society organizations for their enlightening briefings.

Our committee believes that accountability is crucial in deter – to deterring violations, promoting reconciliation, and providing justice to the victims. With this meeting, we hope to contribute to raising the Council's awareness of the need to ensure accountability from lawful killings in the occupied Palestinian territory as a prerequisite for promoting peace.

I wish to thank you. And the meeting's adjourned.