

**The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group  
Annual Narrative Report  
2007**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **About PHRMG:**

The PHRMG was founded in December 1996 in response to the deteriorating state of and human rights during the post-Oslo agreement era. Since then, the PHRMG has struggled to create and enhance its reputation for politically neutral assessment of fundamental internationally accepted human rights principles. The achievements of the PHRMG's fight are evident in its relationship with the international community, and more substantially with the Palestinian people.

### **Mission Statement:**

Palestinian human rights violations, committed by both the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority, have continued into the post-Oslo era. While most Palestinian human rights organizations limit their attention to Israel, the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group examines all human rights violations regardless of what party is responsible. The members of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group (PHRMG) believe that the strength of democracy and civil society in Palestine will be determined by the Palestinian People, through their defense or neglect of human rights.

### **Aim:**

Establish a pluralistic and democratic society in Palestine in which human rights are respected.

### **Goals:**

1. To monitor, register and publicize all human rights violations in Palestine, regardless of the perpetrator.
2. To increase Palestinian awareness about violations taking place in their homeland.
3. To provide legal assistance to victims of human rights violations.
4. To participate in the building of Palestinian democratic institutions.

The 2007 annual report will continue to focus on last year's theme of "getting to know the PHRMG." The root of our organizational success is the high quality of our work as a leading human rights organization. In addition, the PHRMG relies on an outstanding staff that believes in the value and importance of Human Rights. The PHRMG utilizes a national network to monitor human rights violations throughout the Palestinian Occupied Territories. PHRMG personnel are highly skilled, experienced, carefully selected, and closely monitored to ensure accuracy. In addition to an emphasis on diversification and consistent results, our esteemed national publications remain a primary focus within this report.

### **PHRMG at a Glance:**

This report serves as a thorough summarization of PHRMG's work over the course of 2007.

The Annual Report includes:

- Analysis of the statistical information collected by the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group.

- Primary projects of the PHRMG during the year 2007.

The PHRMG sustains strong ties with international human rights organizations in addition to other actors devoted to peace, human rights, and democracy. PHRMG donor support and cooperation has been fundamental to enlarging PHRMG’s outreach capacity and to guaranteeing the organization’s financial stability.

The PHMRG’s success is manifested in the growing trust, respect and cooperation it receives at the community level. PHRMG field monitoring activities depend substantially on the information and cooperation of local organizations. These include media organizations, service providers, local authorities, victims and witnesses from whom the PHRMG field researchers take testimonies regarding human rights violations. Maintaining these linkages necessitates a high degree of sensitivity to the community’s needs.

The PHRMG publications, specifically The Monitor, are widely read and highly regarded, both domestically and internationally. The PHRMG’s activities address the Palestinian desire for political independence as well as effective documentation and broadcasting of human rights abuses throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

## II. 2007 Statistical Overview Compiled by the PHRMG Monitoring Unit

### A. General Intifada Statistics

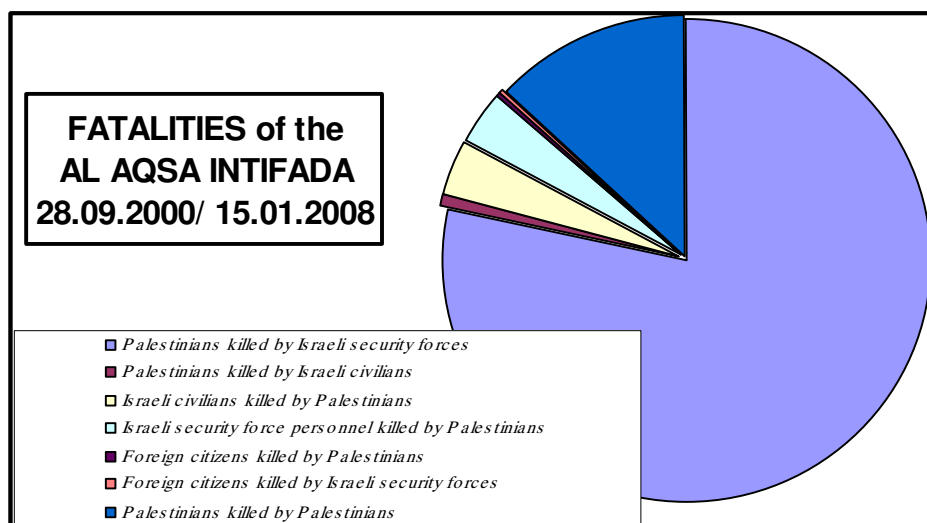
The peaking of internal clashes between Fatah and Hamas and Hamas’ subsequent seizure of the Gaza Strip remain the pivotal issues of 2007. The horrific explosion of inter-factional violence (between June 7th and June 14<sup>th</sup>) followed fifteen months of mounting tension and conflict. 346 Palestinian fatalities resulted from the internal fighting, 47.9 percent of the total number of Palestinian fatalities in 2007. In terms of Palestinian bloodshed, 2007 was the most brutal year since 2004. In addition, in 2007, the third largest number of Palestinians were killed since the beginning of the Intifada.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Palestinians killed by Palestinians</b>	39	65	11	32	15	55	346
<b>Palestinians killed by the IDF</b>	453	989	573	819	190	657	377
<b>Total</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>1054</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>723</b>

**A PHRMG’s Report from Nablus:**

The Akoba’s building, consisting of four floors and inhabited by 50 persons, was not the only building destroyed by Israeli forces invading Nablus last Thursday. The PHRMG’s field researcher, who conducted an inquiry in Abu Obaidah Street, reported that Israeli actions left 20 families homeless after their houses – which were beside the Akoba’s building – had been destroyed by an intense blast. Abed al-Kareem Akoba – the owner of the building – described events: “At about 5:00 AM we were awakened by the dread pings. Then the Israeli soldiers ordered us through loudspeakers to come out of the building. When we reached the building’s gate, the soldiers swooped down on us, insulted and handcuffed us. Then they took us into opposite stores, checked our identity cards, and asked us about a wanted person. I answered them, ‘we do not know this person – he does not live in our building!’” “But they insisted,” added Abed al-Kareem, “ that this individual was hiding in the building. When the field researcher of the PHRMG asked Abed al-Kareem about the confinement conditions in the stores, he said, “The Israeli soldiers mistreated us; they didn’t allow the children to drink water and they didn’t let the mothers go to their flats to bring warm clothes for the shivering youngsters. They kept us in confinement; at about 4:00 PM an officer told me that ‘they are going to blow up the building.’ I tried to convince them that there was no need for such an action; and even suggested that my sons and I would walk in front of them as human shields while they combed the building. They rejected my idea. Although their dogs did not find anyone in the building, they blew it up.”

<b>FATALITIES of the AL AQSA INTIFADA 28.09.2000- 1.01.2008</b>	<b>Occupied Territories</b>	<b>Israel</b>
<b>Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces</b>	<b>4628</b>	66
Palestinians killed by Israeli civilians	37	
Israeli civilians killed by Palestinians	223	444
<b>Israeli security force personnel killed by Palestinians</b>	<b>216</b>	86
Foreign citizens killed by Palestinians	17	36
Foreign citizens killed by Israeli security forces	10	
<b>Palestinians killed by Palestinians</b>	<b>769</b>	



*While the number of Palestinian victims of the Israeli Defense Force has diminished from the previous year, the number of Palestinian gunfire fatalities has dramatically increased.*

<b>PALESTINIANS KILLED by AREA and by MONTH - YEAR 2007</b>									
	<b>Ramallah</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Nablus</b>	<b>Jenin</b>	<b>Gaza</b>	<b>Tolkarem</b>	<b>Betlehem</b>	<b>Hebron</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	11	7	18	33	262	4	4	4	343
<b>Jan-07</b>	4	1	1						6
<b>Feb-07</b>	1	2	4	4	2	1			14
<b>Mar-07</b>	1	1	2	2	1				9
<b>Apr-07</b>	2		2	5	10			1	20
<b>May-07</b>	1	3		4	60				68
<b>Jun-07</b>			2	8	34			2	46
<b>Jul-07</b>				1	13		1	1	16
<b>Aug-07</b>				3	24	2	1		30
<b>Sep-07</b>	1		3	1	28				33
<b>Oct-07</b>			4	3	30				37
<b>Nov-07</b>					29	1			30
<b>Dec-07</b>	1			2	55		2		60

**PHRMG PRESS RELEASE (October 2007)**  
**Continued Human Rights Abuses in Gaza**

Various human rights abuses have continued by Hamas Security Forces in the Gaza Strip. In October, police continued raids on Fatah offices and are suspected of using excessive force against Fatah supporters. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, during a funeral procession for two killed Hamas militants, followers raided a nearby welcome tent for a recently released Fatah prisoner. Police security forces participated in the raid of the tent and a house, injuring one woman and destroying property. Four individuals were detained in a security compound in Gaza City. One claimed that he was tortured during the

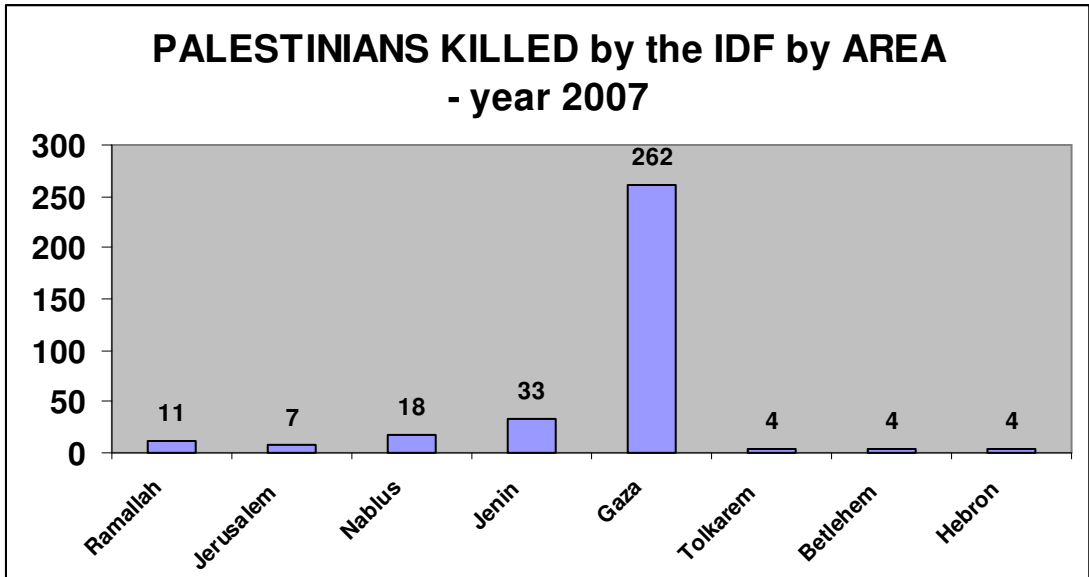
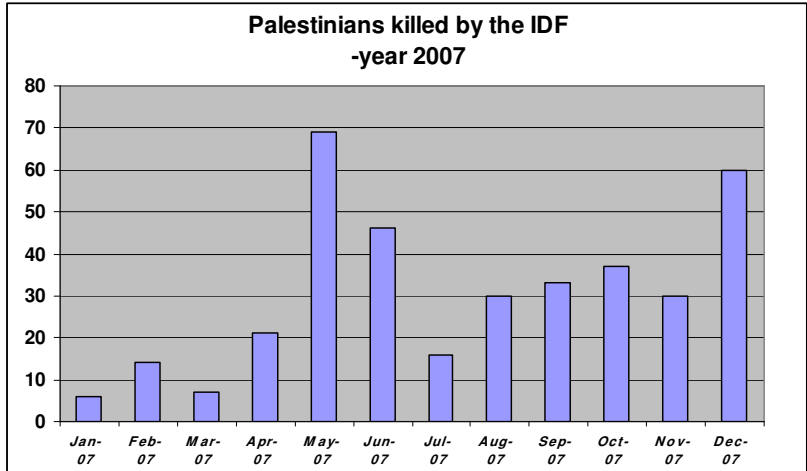
interrogation. Additionally, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, security forces surrounded Fatah's Leadership Office in Western Gaza City and asked employees to leave the building. Hamas has not yet relinquished control over the facility. In addition, later that evening, Adel Abed M'doukh (35), a Fatah leader from Naser Quarter in Gaza was found behind El-Durra Hospital in Gaza City with gun shot wounds and signs of torture. The victim's father claims that M'doukh was abducted earlier that night.

The PHRMG strongly condemns the continued attacks against Fatah supporters throughout Gaza and the excessive force used by security officers during detainment and interrogation. The PHRMG urges Hamas leadership to halt clashing with Fatah supporters and prosecute security officers for the use of torture on detainees.



**Palestinian deaths due to IDF action**

Despite a decrease in the number of Palestinian civilians killed during IDF military actions (from 326 in 2006 to 132 in 2007), the figure still remains high. The killing of citizens who did not participate in illegal hostilities constitutes a severe violation of international humanitarian law. Additionally, many Palestinians killed during IDF military actions have been bystanders. These individuals are innocent victims of targeted assassinations. Due to the frequent refusal of the IDF to admit responsibility for the death of innocent Palestinians, the exact number of civilian Palestinian fatalities is unknown.



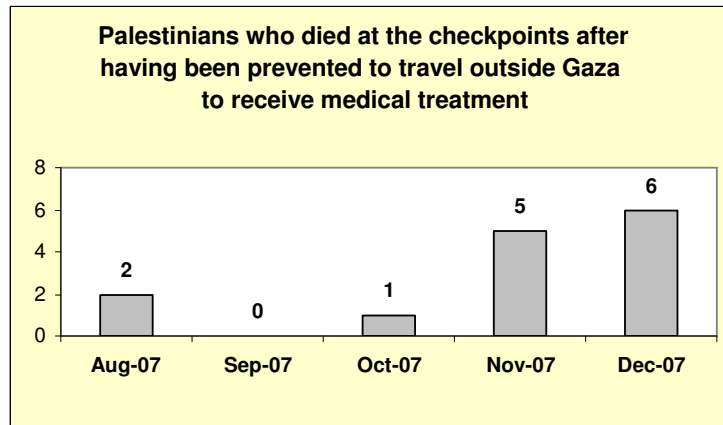
## B. CHECKPOINTS

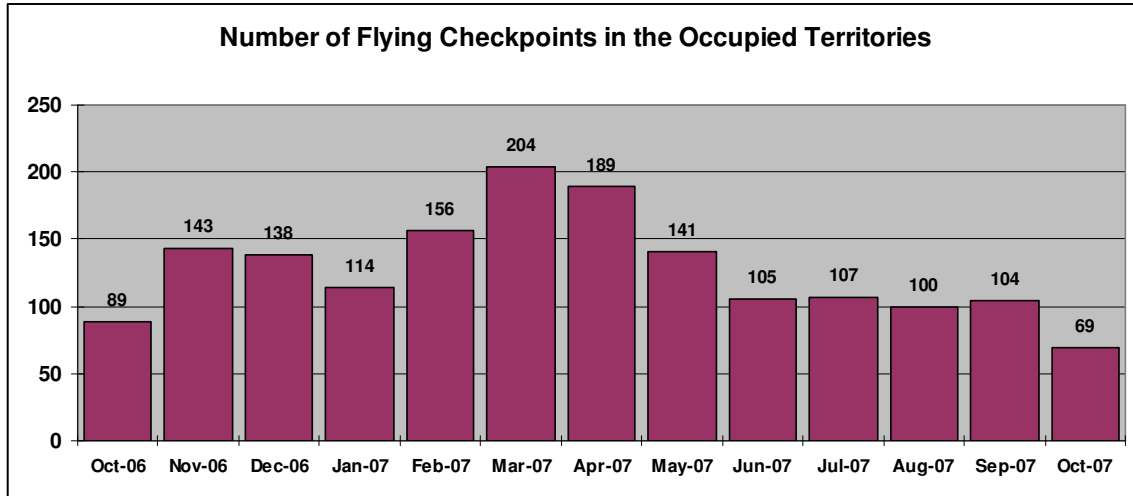
*“... I felt the pain in my chest and legs, but more importantly, I felt the humiliation and insult within me. Finally, they told me to run away within one minute, or else, they would kill me. I couldn’t run fast, because of the pain I had in my bones.”*

- Ahmad Hamdan Abdel-Qader Rashid, 23 years, Hebron

Checkpoints should be reduced and eventually abolished for two reasons. First, they deny Palestinians the right to family life as outlined by international law. It is a right that Israelis, as occupiers of the land, are required to uphold. Checkpoints destroy the most vital component of Palestinian life, the family.

Israel's policy is based on the assumption that every Palestinian is a security threat. This policy justifies their restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement. As of December 2007, the IDF had 63 permanent checkpoints inside the West Bank, *not* along the Green Line, 16 of which were in Hebron. Forty-seven checkpoints are regularly staffed. Some are staffed 24 hours a day. Other checkpoints are open only during daytime hours, and others only a few hours a day. Another dreadful phenomenon in direct connection with Israeli checkpoint policies is the frequent shortage of fundamental supplies such as food and fuel in the Palestinian Territories. These shortages are particularly frequent following crossing closures in Gaza. The lack of fuel results in the frequent blackouts in the metropolitan areas of the Gaza Strip, where most of the territory’s schools and hospitals are located. By October 2007, despite the IDF’s cut in the number of temporary checkpoints at a rate of between 69 and 104 checkpoints per week, the number of closures in the Occupied Territories amounted to 561.

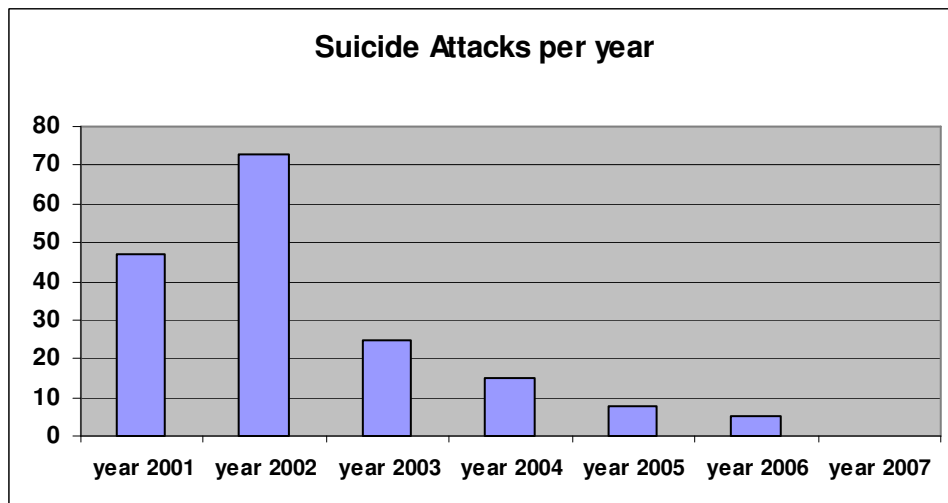




*"Checkpoints create frustrations for people. While they create a sense of security for Israelis, they create massive frustration for the Palestinians"*  
 - George W. Bush, January the 10<sup>th</sup> 2008.

### C. SUICIDE ATTACKS

The PHRMG has worked very hard to end the merciless practice of suicide bombing attacks. The 2007 annual report addresses different issues connected to suicide bombing in Palestinian society including various cultural and religious factors, and the popular support of both religious and secular society.

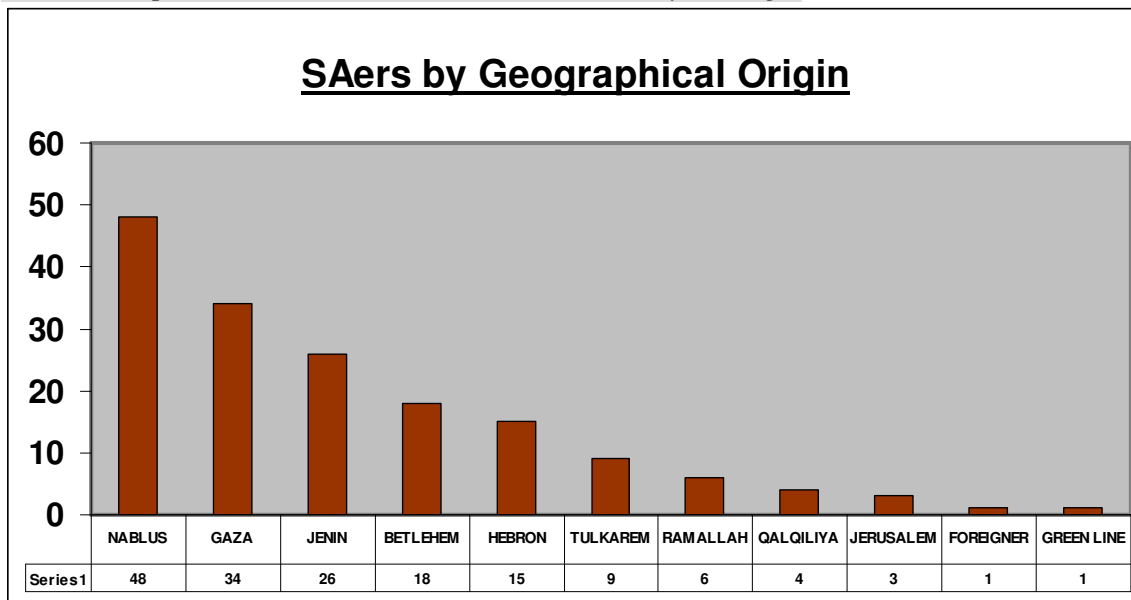


In spite of increasing support for suicide bombing attacks in Israel, the number of attacks has dramatically decreased over the course of the last three years. In the year 2007, no suicide bombing attacks were successfully executed in Israel. The enhanced capabilities of the IDF and the erection of the separation barrier have made it more difficult for Palestinians to carry out attacks.

**PHRMG PRESS RELEASE, September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007

The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group's (PHRMG) mission is to end human rights (HR) violations against Palestinians, regardless of who is responsible. Given the absence and/or ineffectiveness of democratic mechanisms of accountability in Palestine, PHRMG's main strategy, since it's founding in 1996, is to hold the HR violator accountable before the Palestinian public – and the international community at large.



Our methods are a simple and effective recipe of on-the-ground field research and HR education. With these activities providing a solid foundation, PHRMG also implements special projects with tangible HR impacts. The practice of S.A.'s is a violation of international law, and the Palestinian government must be held responsible for upholding the principles of human rights. According to international humanitarian law (IHL), the guidelines are salient – the killing of civilians is illegal. However, the situation gains complexity when trying to decide what actually constitutes a "civilian". The presence of Israel as a military state further obfuscates this theoretical simplicity.

“... and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction...”

- Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqara,[2:195]

*“Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model, the Qur’an its Constitution, Jihad its path and death for the case of Allah its most sublime belief.”*

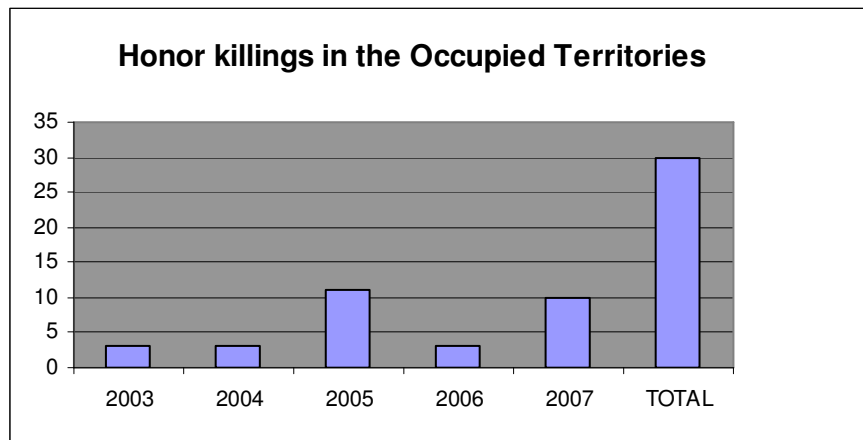
*- The Slogan of Hamas, Hamas Charter 1988, Article 7*

*“Even today I am willing to volunteer to do the dirty work for Israel, to kill as many Arabs as necessary, to deport them, to expel and burn them, to have everyone hate us, to pull the rug from underneath the feet of the Diaspora Jews, so that they will be forced to run to us crying. Even if it means blowing up one or two synagogues here and there, I don't care.”*

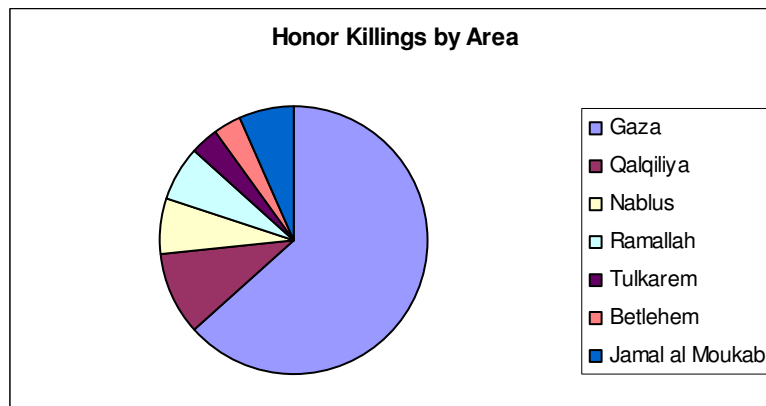
*- Ariel Sharon*

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#### D. HONOR KILLING STATISTICS



#### HONOR KILLINGS IN 2007



### **III. PHRMG RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION**

#### **A. OVERVIEW**

Primary research and documentation form the cornerstone of most of our activities. The PHRMG's field researchers have been working continuously to collect first-hand testimonies in response to urgent human rights situations, thereby maintaining a long-term research and monitoring presence in Palestine. Their work has served as the basis for many of PHRMG's publications during this year.

The PHRMG's reports, statistics, articles, and press releases are available via its website: [www.phrmg.org](http://www.phrmg.org).

The most rewarding indicator of progress towards PHRMG's aims is the coverage of human rights issues critical to the Palestinian Authority in local media.

#### **The Palestinian Human Rights Monitor:**

The Palestinian Human Rights Monitor is generally distributed throughout the Palestinian Territories as an insert in national newspapers. The PHRMG also provides easy access to the Monitor's reports and researches by placing feature length material on its website.

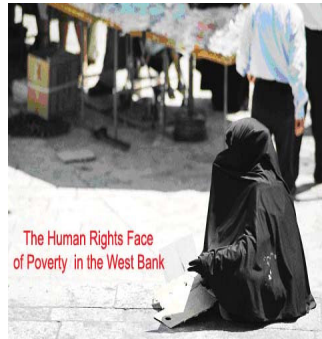
*The Monitor subjects are selected carefully. Subjects reflect the events, persons, or situations regarding human rights that are particularly relevant every month.*

#### ***The major target groups of the Monitor are as follows:***

- The non-academic Palestinian reader. The Monitor is written in an accessible manner. An effort is made to avoid inherently political and juridical perspectives.
- The international community. The English edition of the Monitor is widely distributed among regional and international NGOs. The support of diplomats and international organizations is fundamental to the survival of human rights activities in Palestine.
- The parties committing the human rights violations. Generally, a copy of the report is sent to the responsible party along with a request for their response before the report is published. If such a reply is received, it is published alongside the report, thereby facilitating initial dialogue about the violation(s).

#### **B. MONITOR RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS IN 2007 ADDRESSED THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:**

## ***1. The Human Rights Face of Poverty in the West Bank***



Over the first six months of 2007, the humanitarian and economic situation has gravely deteriorated in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), primarily as a result of the intensification of Israeli security measures, the withholding of tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority (PA) by Israel, and the freeze of direct budget assistance to the PA by international donors. The adoption of the *Quartet Temporary Mechanism* to deliver assistance by bypassing the PA has not alleviated the suffering of the Palestinian people. In this context, poverty among has risen sharply.

## ***2. Palestinian Families and Checkpoints***

Because of the checkpoints imposed by the Israeli government throughout the West Bank, Palestinians have continued to experience dramatic changes in their society and economy.



While a large number of reports dealing with the direct impact of checkpoints on Palestine are available, the less obvious, psychological damages these checkpoints have on Palestinian civilians have not been thoroughly explored. This report details the dramatic effects Israeli checkpoints have on Palestinian families, including their effect on the traditional roles of each family member.

## ***3. SUICIDE ATTACKS: A Case for an End to an Egregious Means...***

The act of using one's own body as part and parcel of their strategic weapon against an intended population may be referred to as a suicide attack.



From an Islamic perspective – the taxonomy becomes more complex. They are often times referred to as *isshtahad* (i.e. *martyrdom operation*). And the suicide attacker is named a *shahid* (pl. *shuhada*, literally ‘witness’ and usually translated as ‘martyr’). The term denotes one who has died in order to testify his faith in Allah – e.g. those who die while waging *jihād bis saif*. This term is applied by the Palestinian Authority as well as others, to suicide attackers, in part to surmount the Islamic constraints against suicide. Healthy, bright young people are strapping bombs around their bodies at an escalating pace. The practice of these suicide attacks as a form of resistance to Israeli occupation is gaining increasing popularity in Palestinian society, and is a cause of great concern to the human rights community.

#### **4. *Framing the West Bank Barrier: Examining Israeli Newspaper Perspectives on the Barrier's Construction.***

Over the last several years, the PHRMG has monitored the Israeli media's depiction of IDF action and human rights issues within West Bank and Gaza's borders, particularly in regards to the separation barrier.



Continuous surveys of Israeli public opinion have demonstrated that there is a deep mistrust for the Arab collective. These attitudes are demonstrated in the overwhelming Jewish Israeli support for the construction of the barrier. Strong Jewish Israeli support for the barrier diminishes the likelihood that the restrictions on Palestinian movement will be lifted in the future. Ultimately, these attitudes aggravate the peace process by providing

politicians with sufficient public support to build a barrier that is situated primarily with the West Bank, not along the Green Line.

### **C. Evaluation of Publications**

The work of the organization is also subject to members' monthly and annual evaluation, assuring that the PHRMG's continual efforts align with its initial goals.

The PHRMG's activities addressing human rights issues in the region have received widespread positive feedback.

The evaluation process includes:

- The annual report.
- The external financial audit report.
- Monthly and annual meetings of the board of directors.
- Projects and proposal progress.
- The amount of publications distributed.
- Website hits, counting visitors and information requested through e-mailing system.

### **D. Conclusion**

From a statistical perspective, the year 2007 appears to have calmed in terms of clashes between the IDF and Palestinian militants. Fatalities among Israeli soldiers have declined, in addition to the number of Palestinian civilians and combatants killed during Israeli military action. However, fatalities as a result of inter-Palestinian clashes have risen dramatically. Human rights violations committed by Hamas and Fatah as a result of their ongoing power struggle over the Occupied Territories has resulted in extremely high numbers of Palestinian casualties. The PHRMG has also recorded an increase in the number of honor killings throughout the Palestinian Territories in 2007.

In 2007, Palestinian society has suffered from a dramatic upsurge of violence within its own people. Violence has increased both within and between internal political and social factions. A general increase in violence was coupled with heightened levels of Palestinian gunfire killings and domestic violence. Due to the sharp spread of honor killings, the PHRMG focused its efforts on developing a proposal to conduct a comprehensive study of honor killings through the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As PHRMG's research projects are entirely dependent on external partnerships and funding organizations, further research conducted by the PHRMG on this horrific practice has not yet commenced.

## **IV. PHRMG PROGRAMS AND PROPOSALS**

### **A. OVERVIEW**

*PHRMG promotes and implements programs concerning a number of different issues and matters such as:*

- Peace Building Education.
- Peace Building Cooperation.
- Peace Building and Conflict Resolution.
- Freedom of Expression and Media Center
- Democracy Education for Youth.
- Reforms to the Judicial System.
- Center for Democracy.
- Outreach.

## **B. OUTREACH PROGRAM**

Human rights violations have continued both by Israel and the main Palestinian political factions throughout the last seven years, since the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada. Most Palestinian human rights organizations focus their attentions on Israel as the sole party accountable for human rights violations. In contrast, the PHRMG focuses on human rights abuses throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories regardless of who is responsible. Consequently, the PHRMG devotes much of its efforts to the Palestinian Authority and other primarily Palestinian political actors. The members of the PHRMG believe that the propulsive strength of democracy and civil society in Palestine will be implemented and determined by the Palestinian people, through their defense or their neglect of Human Rights.

This proposal seeks support for the PHRMG's Outreach Unit, charged with documenting and publicizing all times of human rights issues throughout the Palestinian Occupied Territories. The PHRMG's publications are distributed to the Palestinian Public, Palestinian organizations, and to the international community.

Palestinians have long suffered from human rights violations committed by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Numerous Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations have extensively covered violations committed by Israel towards the Palestinian people. Frequent violations include: death in custody,, land confiscations, house demolitions, torture, and restrictions on movement. While not as many efforts have focused on Palestinian violations, various Palestinian parties are responsible for numerous human rights abuses. Especially following Hamas's victory of the 2006 elections, internal clashes between Fatah and Hamas have resulted in the death penalty, illegal arrests, and torture during detention. Freedom of expression and the media are also commonly violated through the Occupied Territories. Past PHRMG investigations have revealed that such abuses are embedded within Palestinian politics..

Prior to the Oslo Era and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, human rights advocacy was part of the struggle against the Israeli occupation. During the first Intifada (1987 – 1993), the PLO proudly wore the banner of human rights defense, issuing and

distributing material published by international organizations. As a result of PLO support and engagement in human rights advocacy, the Palestinian People are well aware of their rights with respect to Israel. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority represented a watershed event for the Palestinian human rights movement; the early euphoria tasted by activists turned to an introspective re-examination of their role within the newly constructed reality. The groups, including media organizations, that did not embrace nationalistic views and maintained a critical stand on human right violations committed by the PA were directly censored or threatened into self-censorship. As a result, the PHRMG has been the subject of attempts at sabotage and harassment. However, the PHRMG's struggle for survival has been victorious, largely due to the generous support of support of international foundations and organizations.

The PHRMG's human rights reports have gained international recognition and respect. Additionally, our monitoring and documentation practices have led to a growing level of trust and cooperation at the community level. The PHRMG accomplishments are attributable to its application of internationally accepted and politically neutral standards of human rights. The PHRMG is the only traditional human rights organization in Palestine; one that holds the authorities democratically accountable through public exposure of human rights abuses, regardless of who is responsible. Since 1996, the PHRMG's reputation and presence are raising awareness, reducing violations and contributing to the long-term strengthening of Palestinian democracy.

### **C. REFORMS TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

The legal system in Palestine is complex. The Occupied Territories was ruled during the last century by the Ottoman Empire, British Mandate authority, Jordan, Egypt, the Israeli military occupation authority, and the Palestinian Authority. Multiple layers of sometimes contradictory laws show various past and present attempts to regulate and organize the Palestinian Territories. These political and administrative authorities have frequently undermined the Palestinian Judiciary.

The Palestinian Judiciary was deprived of essential support due to the regimes' belief that the existence of an independent and impartial Palestinian judiciary contravenes their political goals and interests in the Palestinian Territories. Both the Israeli occupying authority and the PNA have relied on them in many presidential decrees. It is very important to examine and systematize these laws in order to determine the extent to which they should be relied upon and by which regime governs the Palestinian territory. Due to contradicting laws and a lack of support, the Palestinian Judiciary cannot assume its rightful position in the Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories constitutes a direct impediment to Palestinian jurisdiction. The negative and drastic impact that the Israeli occupation has had over Palestinian jurisdiction is reflected in the measures and regulations it has taken in countering the Palestinian judicial system during its occupation. Among these measures was the cancellation of the Court of Cassation, the revival of the mandatory

emergency laws, the mandate over more than one thousand and five hundred military orders which ultimately resulted in the revocation of numerous laws which had been enforced in the Palestinian Territories.

The Palestinian Judiciary system, already weakened by years of Israeli occupation, is further undermined and abused by the PA. State Security Courts often ignore legal due process and civil courts take years to reach a decision. Corruption, a lack of accountability, and disregard for the rule of law is destroying the credibility of the Judiciary in the eyes of its own public. Palestinians are denied their basic right to a fair and just society. The rule of law is almost non-existent in the Palestinian Autonomous Areas. The judiciary and security forces serve the particular interests of their political masters rather than the Palestinian public interests. The PA president, ministers, and the police and security forces have systematically disempowered and undermined the authority and independence of the judiciary and legal systems. The separation of powers, a foundation of the rule of law, is not respected. PA officials have not shown the political will to give sufficient authority, respect, and financial, or other, resources to the Judiciary and the Legislature. Palestinian Authority executive officials have perpetrated serious human rights abuses, including torture, unlawful killings, and prolonged arbitrary detention.

The judiciary is not strong enough to hold the executive accountable. This has created a situation in which ordinary Palestinians have neither the means to redress injustice, nor any protection against their abusers. The pressures of the Intifada have magnified these problems. Three Ministers of Justice have been assigned especially to the reform of the judicial system. Unfortunately they have failed in that mission due to their lack of interest and time, and the constant interference of the executive authority in the judiciary affairs. The newly appointed Prime Minister Mr. Abu Mazen states his great interest in reforming and rehabilitating the Palestinian Judiciary.

The Palestinian Judiciary desperately needs a new and rehabilitated system, including court buildings, a national Judicial training institution, and resources to develop knowledge and capacity of technical court staff such as clerks, researchers, and court managers. Looking closely and examining the major impediments facing the Palestinian Judiciary system within the Palestinian Authority helps shed light on the extreme need for reforms to strengthen and affirm the importance of the Judicial Authority to build a strong civil society in harmony with human rights principles.

Consequently, the main objective of the PHRMG's judiciary reform proposal is to identify the need for reforming and strengthening the Judiciary, based on the direct relationship and communication with judges. The PHRMG aims to organize joint activities with regional and international centers with similar interests aiming to conduct monitoring and work towards reforms in the judicial system.

#### **D. EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY AMONG PALESTINIAN YOUTH**

The Palestinian national curriculum has been extensively reformed since the creation of the Palestinian Ministry of Education in 1994. The new curriculum includes discussion of government, democracy, and the importance of non-governmental organizations. However, the concept of democracy presented in Palestinian civic education often conflicts with some core democratic values. Tolerance appears to have a very narrow connotation within the confines of the Palestinian curriculum. As relayed in National Education: Grade 6, "values determine acceptable behavior in a society and are binding on the individual. Whoever digresses from these values will be rebuked and isolated from society." This rigid perception of tolerance challenges the traditional claim that democracy is founded on an individual's right to formulate and pursue her or his own values. Further: the concepts of freedom and equality are only conveyed in terms of the whole Palestinian population's struggle for independence against a foreign occupying power. Though this shared struggle lies at the foundation of Palestinian identity and remains a large focus of the nationalized curriculum, it dominates the entire discourse of 'freedom,' ignoring the freedom of the individual. As a result, the curriculum does not promote the toleration of various political orientations or focus on social inequalities. Within the Palestinian education system, only the inequality of the Palestinian people as a unified group under Israeli occupation is examined.

The PHMRG proposes to implement a program that educates about the history of democracy, the history of Palestinian government and leadership, and the ideas and themes that drive democratic governments, with a focus on democracy's key ideas: legitimate leadership, limited government power, civil rights, equality before the law, and social justice. Participating students will explore democracy from a historical and philosophical approach, and will be discouraged from accepting one particular application of democracy as the paradigm. They will be asked to think critically about their own governmental system and how a democracy can be implemented within the unique political and social culture of the Palestinian people.

The institution of an intimate democratic education program in a Palestinian metropolitan center could have tremendous effects on the participating children and the communities from which they come. Ultimately, the program serves to foster an appreciation of democratic principles and peace, an appreciation that could be brought back to friends and families throughout the West Bank. In a society with such a fragile political, security, and education system, a democratic after school program would serve as a critical method for instituting change in the next generation of Palestinian leaders.

*In order to address the faltering state of democracy in the Palestinian education system, the PHMRG proposes to pursue the following three objectives:*

- Improve the participating students' knowledge of civics and democracy
- Increase student participation in school student councils or community democracy and/or social action oriented groups
- Increase the public profile of democracy throughout the Palestinian Occupied Territories

## **E. PEACE BUILDING DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND CONFLICT**

## **RESOLUTION; COMMUNICATION, COOPERATION, AND TRAINING**

The primary goals of the PHRMG's peace building development proposal are to foster human rights education, conflict resolution, and the understanding of cultural differences. This project aims at strengthening communication and co-operation among institutions and non-governmental organizations in Israel and in the Palestinian self-ruled areas working in the field of human rights.

### **Objectives:**

- To promote the communication and co-ordination of Israeli and Palestinian organizations.
- To encourage Palestinians and Israelis from different organizations to work and interact together on a regional basis.
- To promote the exchange of information, experience, and strategies between Israeli and Palestinian representatives of organizations and institutions working in the field of human rights.
- To promote the dissemination of information from local and international sources regarding the best practices and methods on development and enforcement of human rights.
- To foster innovative approaches to promoting mutual understanding in the Middle East.
- To educate Palestinians and Israelis on peace building, conflict resolution, non-violence, etc.
- To create awareness towards the cultural differences between Palestinians and Israelis, and help bring understanding and acceptance towards each other.
- To instill the spirit of team building, to show its significance in achieving a stronger structure for communication and improvement of the Palestinian/Israeli relationship.

### **Targets:**

- Quantitative and qualitative intensification of efforts in awareness building on human rights issues in Israel and in the Palestinian self-ruled areas.
- Tightening the dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli NGOs and state structures.
- Establishment of a human rights monitoring system.
- Developing methods of human rights education in the school system.
- Preparation of legislative proposals meant to improve legislation on human rights issues.
- Encourage sensitivity of mass media in regards to human rights issues.

The PHRMG's extensive discussions with various Israeli and Palestinian human rights non-governmental and governmental organizations revealed that there is a strong interest in sustaining an exchange of information, experience, and strategies among Middle Eastern human rights organizations as well as in raising awareness of human rights issues

among the media and public institutions. This has prompted the PHRMG to design a project in co-operation with the Yakar Center, an Israeli academic institution, focusing on the development of a Palestinian/Israeli network of organizations and institutions working in the field of human rights, for the purpose of peace building, conflict resolution and understanding cultural differences. Thus the target groups for the project have been selected as follows: Representatives of NGO's and public institutions working in the field of human rights, journalists and media workers, lawyers, teachers and public administrators.

## **F. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, MEDIA, AND DEMOCRACY CENTER**

The weaknesses of the Palestinian media sector and widespread curtailment of freedom of expression of Palestinians – which has been highlighted by this current crisis – is a serious impediment to Palestinian democratic development. Due to their grassroots orientation and monitoring function, human rights organizations are aware of the challenges inhibiting development of a free and independent Palestinian media. In light of this current crisis, which is unlikely to abate in the near future, there is a need and opportunity for better coordination and cooperation between the media sector and civil society. Human rights organizations, through their experience in battling self-censorship and in working to provide credible and honest information to the constituents, can disseminate information and serve as a resource for journalists. In fulfilling this role, human rights organizations help to strengthen the foundation for democratic development.

The main objectives of the Freedom of Expression and Media Center are to:

- To curb the threat of self-censorship.
- To empower Palestinian journalists, through information and networking opportunities, to play a more effective role in providing objective and meaningful reporting;
- To widen the narrow range of perspectives on human rights issues that are currently available to the Palestinian public by engaging and educating journalists.

Primary Accomplishments:

- Equipped library
- Computerized and searchable Arabic/English language archive of Arabic and local English human rights related press
- Bulletin board for information exchange
- Outreach materials
- Training workshop series.