



Assess the Democidal acts of Violence
Conducted by the
Israeli Defence Forces
During the Great March of Return



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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Access restricted Areas – ARA

Defense for Children International Palestine – DCIP

Israeli Security Forces – ISF

Israeli Defence Forces – IDF

Great March of Return – GMR

Human Rights Watch - HRW

New York Times – NYT

Non-Governmental Organisation - NGO

Committee to Protect Journalists – CPJ

United Nations – UN

United Nations Human Rights Council – UNHRC

Keywords: Children. Democide. Gaza. Great March of Return. Hamas. Israel Defence Force. Journalists. Paramedics. Operation Protective Edge. Separation fence.

Abstract

After examining an extensive collection of primary and secondary Israeli, Palestinian and international sources from organisations and institutions such as Al-Mezan, B'Tselem, the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, this paper propagates the notion that throughout the Great March of Return, the Israeli military had indiscriminately killed innocent Palestinian men, women, paramedics, journalists and children with intent. Thus, this study argues that the excessive force specifically exerted by the highly-skilled Israeli snipers stationed by the separation fence near Gaza, constitutes as an act of democide.

Introduction

“I think it only makes sense to seek out and identify structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life, and to challenge them; unless a justification for them can be given, they are illegitimate, and should be dismantled, to increase the scope of human freedom.”

Noam Chomsky.¹

The Great March of Return (GMR) began on March 30th 2018. On this day, the residents in Gaza congregated alongside the 1949 armistice line which separates the Zionist state from this coastal enclave. Collectively, thousands of Palestinians protested against the humanitarian conditions caused by Israel’s internationally condemned military blockade, whilst also demanding the right to return to their ancestral homelands.

Within a year alone, over one hundred and fifty unarmed Palestinians, including “journalists and health workers....children, women and persons with disabilities,” had been fatally shot by highly-skilled Israeli snipers stationed alongside the fence that separates Gaza from the state of Israel.^{2, 3} The disproportionate level of violence exerted by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) throughout the GMR constitutes as an act of democide, a concept defined by Rudolph Rummel as the “intentional killing of an unarmed or disarmed person by government agents acting in their authoritative capacity and pursuant to government policy or high command.”⁴

This research project presents a nuanced argument propagating the notion that the Israeli military had indiscriminately killed unarmed Palestinians throughout the GMR. By analysing over one hundred and twenty primary and secondary, qualitative and quantitative sources, this study addresses the gap within the pre-existing literature that ultimately fails to discuss

¹ Kevin Doyle. ‘Noam Chomsky on Anarchism, Marxism & Hope for the Future - Interview.’ Workers Solidarity Movement. 1996. Accessed on September 1st 2020. <https://www.wsm.ie/c/noam-chomsky-anarchism-marxism-future-interview>.

² Noa Landau. ‘UN Council: Israel Intentionally Shot Children and Journalists in Gaza.’ *Defend Democracy Press*. February 28th 2019. Accessed on September 15th 2020.

<https://www.defenddemocracy.press/un-council-israel-intentionally-shot-children-and-journalists-in-gaza/>.

³ United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. OHCHR. March 18th 2019. p. 199. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session40/Documents/A_HRC_40_74_CRP2.pdf.

⁴ Nils P. Gleditsch. *R.J. Rummel: An Assessment of His Many Contributions*. Basingstoke: Springer. January 2017. p. 112.

the exact form of political violence exerted by the IDF, specifically against the residents of Gaza.

Ultimately, by using a contemporary case study such as the GMR, this research paper illuminates the democidal characteristics that are prevalent within the IDF's military policies that regulate the lives of Palestinians residing in the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the significance of this research project lies in its ability to revitalise our understanding regarding Rudolph Rummel's work on democide, by tying a recent case study to a twentieth century theoretical concept.

This paper begins with a review analysing the pre-existing literature available on the theoretical concept of democide. This is followed by a discussion on the scholarly work produced by the leading academics that have analysed Israel's military policies towards Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. By doing so, this chapter will expose an evident gap within the existing literature, highlighting how the written publications available fails to address the specific form of political violence exerted by the Israeli military against the inhabitants of Gaza.

Chapter two provides a broad overview on the socio-economic and political conditions within the Gaza Strip since 2005. It begins by assessing the impact of Israel's military blockade upon the region and explores how it restricts the inhabitant's freedom of movement. Next, this chapter examines the panoply of military campaigns conducted by the IDF since the democratic election of Hamas, which consequently exacerbated the humanitarian and ecological crisis that continues to mutate in the region. With the intent to contextualise the emergence of the GMR, this chapter informs the reader how the IDF, via the imposition of a military siege which regulates the movement of people on the land, in the air and by the sea surrounding the Strip, had committed an act of democide.

Chapter three analyses the formation of the GMR, in order to understand the character/nature of the protest. In addition, this section discusses Israel's rules and methods of physical engagement, whilst also documenting the IDF's armed response on both March 30th and May 14th, 2018, two significant dates that illuminated the democidal characteristics embedded within the Israeli military's response. This chapter ends with a general examination,

analysing the legitimacy of the IDF's armed reaction, followed by a discussion assessing the acts of democide committed throughout this civil protest.

Chapter four is broken into three sub-chapters, with each section assessing an individual act of democide committed by the Israeli military during the GMR. It begins with the case study of Yaser Abd Al-Rahman Murtaja, a thirty-year-old journalist who was fatally shot in his abdomen by an Israeli sniper on April 6th 2018, despite wearing a protective vest with the words "PRESS" emblazed in bold. This study will then move onto discussing the death of Razan Ashraf Abdul Qadir al-Najjar, a twenty-one-year-old paramedic who was killed by a bullet which had pierced her aorta artery despite wearing a white medical uniform, on June 1st 2018. And lastly, this section addresses the killing of Ahmad Misabah Abu Tyour, a sixteen-year-old boy who was struck by a bullet on September 7th 2018 which ultimately paved a trajectory towards his femoral artery, after waving his hands towards an Israeli sniper.

While cross-referencing to Operation Protective Edge (2014), this chapter exposes the acts of democide committed by the IDF over the years, specifically against medical officials, media correspondents and Palestinians under the age of eighteen. The final section of this paper highlights the study's conclusions, its limitations and lastly its importance.

Methods and Methodology:

This study incorporates an inductive framework, coupled with a mixed-method approach. The former "involves the search for patterns from observation and the development of explanations" within the existing literature in order to find a relevant theory applicable to this case study.^{5, 6} The latter refers to the "systematic integration...of quantitative and qualitative data within a single investigation or sustained program of inquiry."⁷ Therefore, this project

⁵ Shona McCombes. 'How to Write Methodology. A Step-by-Step Guide'. Scribbr. February 25th 2019. Accessed on Monday 28th December 2020. <https://www.scribbr.co.uk/thesis-dissertation/methodology/>

⁶ Harvey R. Bernard and Altamira Rowman. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham: AltaMira Press; Fourth Edition. January 3rd 2006. p. 7.

⁷ Jennifer Wisdom, and John W. Creswell. 'Mixed Methods: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis While Studying Patient-Centered Medical Home Models.' PCMH Resource Center. March 2013. Accessed on December 28th 2020. <https://pcmh.ahrq.gov/page/mixed-methods-integrating-quantitative-and-qualitative-data-collection-and-analysis-while#:~:text=The%20term%20E2%80%9Cmixed%20methods%20refers,or%20sustained%20program%20of%20inquiry.&text=Integrating%20the%20data%20during%20data%20collection%2C%20analysis%2C%20or%20discussi on.>

will be “weaving back and forth between data and theory,” adopting an iterative approach, a strategy that consequently sharpens both the level of integrity and credibility of this study.⁸

In terms of gathering information, the researcher interacted with a set of different online academic databases and search engines, such as The Journal of Palestine Studies and Google Scholar. Additional data was collected from Palestinian, Israeli and international organisations and institutions such as B’Tselem, Al Jazeera, the United Nations (UN) and the International Criminal Court.

As a result of this approach, one limitation of this thesis lies within the restrictions imposed by the researcher when gathering data. By solely relying on the information published by academic databases and online search engines essentially limits the researcher’s ability to collect evidence which ultimately varies in its origin and presentation. However, due to the current set of circumstances, such as the restrictions faced by social researchers that prohibits them from entering the Gaza Strip, an inductive framework paired with a mixed method design is the most effective and efficient approach to assess the democidal acts of violence conducted by the Israeli military during the GMR.

This study will now move onto the first chapter, reviewing the pre-existing literature that discusses Rudolph Rummel’s theory on democide. Firstly, the intention here is to increase the readers understanding behind this theoretical concept. Secondly, this section will highlight how democide is a relevant tool that provides the researcher with the framework necessary to question and address the specific form of political violence exerted by the IDF in Gaza, following Hamas’ democratic victory in 2006.

⁸ Alan Bryman. *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press March 21st 2012. p. 26.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Democide:

Coined in 1994 by the late political scientist Rudolph Rummel, democide refers to the “intentional killing of an unarmed or disarmed person by government agents acting in their authoritative capacity and pursuant to government policy or high command.”^{9, 10} Rummel excluded the following categories from the concept of democide: capital punishment, military actions taken against armed civilians and lastly, the subsequent death of a civilian during a violent skirmish where the primary target was a military combatant.¹¹

Additionally, an act of violence can also be interpreted as democide if the government representative that was responsible for the death of an unarmed individual held a wanton disregard for the human life at cost. In other words, if a government agent had recklessly carried out a destructive act of violence, despite already knowing the risks involved and the potential damage that this one action may cause.¹²

Democide can occur in a domestic context. In Rummel’s book titled *Death by Government* (1994) the author draws the reader’s attention to the Gulag agency, a government led program established under the communist leader of Soviet Russia, Vladimir Lenin, which translated into a network of forced labour camps that “likely chewed up almost 40 million lives.”¹³ Additionally, Rummel also highlighted how democidal acts of violence can also occur in a foreign context, via the indiscriminate artillery bombardment of a city, or the imposition of a military siege that results in a humanitarian disaster, famine or mass starvation.^{14, 15}

⁹ Gleditsch. *R.J. Rummel: An Assessment of His Many Contributions*. p. 112.

¹⁰ Rudolph J. Rummel. *Death by Government: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900*. London: Routledge. February 1994. p. 37

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 4.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 42.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 9.

¹⁴ Rudolph Rummel. *Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder*. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. March 1st 1995. p. 3-4. doi:10.1177/0022002795039001001.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 18.

Praised within the academic community for embarking upon a “quest to document genocides, politicides and mass murder,” Rummel explored the symbiotic relationship between violence and power in society.¹⁶ Specifically, the tight connection between democide and total power, which refers to a state or government withholding extreme and in some cases disproportionate power, determination and skill.

This relationship between power and violence was explored in *Never Again: Ending War, Democide, and Famine Through Democratic Freedom* (2005), whereby Rummel claimed that “the more power a government has to impose the beliefs of an ideological or religious elite,” inevitably increases the likelihood of domestic and foreign acts of democide to occur.¹⁷ In the chapters below, this study highlights how the state of Israel holds a significant degree of power, directly affecting the lives of those residing in the Gaza Strip and how this power provides a framework that essentially welcomes democidal acts of violence to arise.

Before discussing the critiques of Rummel’s work, I would like to briefly define the following two concepts: genocide and politicide, with the ultimate aim to distinguish the similarities and differences between these forms of political violence.

Genocide, Politicide and Democide:

Genocide entails “a case of extreme violence targeted at the elimination of a specific group” of individuals that may be racially, ethnically, linguistically or religiously different, with a notable example being the Rwandan genocide in 1994, whereby one million Tutsi’s were killed over the period of one hundred days.^{18, 19, 20} Similar to genocide in its definition, politicide refers to the “killing or extermination of a particular group because of its political

¹⁶ Barbara Harff, and Ted R. Gurr. *Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides: Identification and Measurement of Cases Since 1945*. International Studies Quarterly 1988. p. 118. doi:10.2307/2600447.

¹⁷ Rudolph J Rummel. *Never Again: Ending War, Democide, & Famine Through Democratic Freedom*. Aeon Publishing Inc, 2005. p. 194

¹⁸ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. ‘What is Genocide?’ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed December 13, 2020. <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/learn-about-genocide-and-other-mass-atrocities/what-is-genocide>.

¹⁹ Peter Uvin. *Reading the Rwandan Genocide*. International Studies Review. 2001. p. 75. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3186243>.

²⁰ Gary Uzonyi. *Unpacking the effects of genocide and politicide on forced migration*. Conflict Management and Peace Science. November 15th 2013. p. 228. doi:10.1177/0738894213508694.

or ideological beliefs,” with the 1982 Sabra and Shatila Massacre being a relevant example.

21, 22

According to Gary Uzonyi’s article titled, *Unpacking the Effects of genocide and politicide on forced migration* (2014) “politicides, and other such crimes against humanity, share characteristics with genocide, such as an extreme nature” of violence which may include the deportation, sterilization, torture or murder of an individual.^{23, 24} At the very same time, politicides “do not target specific national, ethnic, racial or religious groups for extermination.”²⁵ Instead, this form of political violence more generally entails the removal of a specific group or individual whom the government regards as a threat to its stability, on the basis of their political affiliations.²⁶

Therefore, academics interpreted democide as an umbrella concept, a form of political violence that deeply shares the characteristics of both genocide and politicide, understanding Rummel’s theory as the intentional “murder of any person or people by a government, including genocide, politicide and mass murder.”²⁷

Criticism on Rudolph Rummel’s Work:

Over the years, a handful of academics have criticised the work produced by Rummel, specifically the methodological approach used to reinforce the concept of democide. Barbara Harff, a professor of Political Science Emerita at the U.S. Naval Academy in Maryland vehemently discredited the integrity of the work produced by Rummel. Harff highlighted how “he [Rummel] chooses numbers of death that almost are skewed in the direction of the highest guesses,” in order to support his theoretical concept.²⁸

This approach is problematic, given that the author at times provides questionable statements to reinforce his claims. For instance, when discussing the democidal nature of the twentieth

²¹ Oxford English Dictionary. "Politicide." Lexico Dictionaries. Accessed December 31, 2020. <https://www.lexico.com/definition/politicide>.

²² Harff, Gurr. *Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides*. p.366

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Uzonyi. *Unpacking the effects of genocide and politicide on forced migration*. p. 228.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Gleditsch. *An Assessment of His Many Contributions*. p. 116

²⁸ *Ibid.* p.10

century, Rummel claimed that “governments murdered... 174 million men, women, and children. It could be over 340 million.”²⁹

Moreover, Tomislav Dulic, a senior lecturer within the department of history at the Uppsala University, also expressed a strong sense of disapproval regarding Rummel’s methodological approach. Specifically, Rummel’s incorporation of the variation principle.³⁰ According to this doctrine, the author is inclined to make one-sided estimates, provided by sources that are both credible and authoritative. However, majority of the estimates provided by Rummel derived from secondary accounts, that were neither authoritative nor credible, warranting “a thorough revision of the method.”^{31, 32} This study agreed with Dulic, given that any historical discussion in general should be supported by a series of different primary and secondary sources.

In addition to these factors, this paper disagreed with a number of statements within the different books produced by Rummel discussing the concept of democide. Within *Eliminating Democide and War through an Alliance of Democracies* (2001), the author argued that the democratization of society is an empirically efficient solution to prevent domestic democides from arising.³³ However, historical events counteract these claims. For instance, between 1989-1990, the democratically elected leader of Sri Lanka, Junius Richard Jayewardene had ordered military units to track, capture and execute suspected supporters and members of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna.³⁴ In total, over twenty-five thousand individuals were murdered by “government agents acting in their authoritative capacity and pursuant to government policy or high command,” within a country that incorporated a democratic form of rule.^{35, 36}

²⁹ Dulić, Tomislav. *Tito’s Slaughterhouse: A Critical Analysis of Rummel’s Work on Democide*. Journal of Peace Research. January 1st 2004. p. 100. doi:10.1177/0022343304040051.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 98.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.* p. 100.

³³ Rummel, Rudolph J. *Eliminating Democide and War through an Alliance of Democracies*. International Journal on World Peace. September 2001. p. 56. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20753317>.

³⁴ Gleditsch, Nils P. R.J. Rummel: *An Assessment of His Many Contributions*. p. 117.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 118.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 112.

Furthermore, Rummel boldly asserted that democracy is a solution to democide, given that in his view, “democracies do not wage war on each other,” a position notoriously expressed within the democratic peace theory which argues that democratic states are “highly unlikely” to go to war with one another.^{37, 38}

This study strongly disagrees with the statement above as it wishes to remind the readers that the state of Israel, recorded as the 28th most democratic country in the world (2019), has carried out a number of military campaigns directly affecting the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip.³⁹ In addition to this, the Islamic political party otherwise known as Hamas, continued to launch rockets into Israel soon after democratically winning the Palestinian Legislative Elections in 2006.⁴⁰ Both warring parties are responsible for the deaths of unarmed civilians. Therefore, the pre-assumption that being a democratic country essentially limits or prevents acts of democide, or more generally war from arising is historically inaccurate in today’s set of circumstances.

As this chapter has discussed, it is evidently clear that there are an number of criticism’s regarding Rummel’s theory on democide and the way in which he had collected data as a political scientist. At the very same time, the framework provided by this theoretical concept grants the research paper the ability to accurately and effectively address the killings that took place during the Great March of Return.

The Academic Literature Available on Gaza since 2006:

The pre-existing literature produced by the leading academics within this field, such as Noam Chomsky, Ilan Pappé and Norman Finkelstein, arguably fails to specifically explore the nature of the political violence committed by the Israeli military against the Palestinian residents of Gaza at the turn of the twentieth century.

³⁷ Rummel. *Eliminating Democide and War through an Alliance of Democracies*. p. 56.

³⁸ Jeffrey W. Meiser. *Introducing Liberalism in International Relations Theory*. E-International Relations. February 18th 2018. Accessed January 2nd 2021. p. 1. <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/72781>

³⁹ The Economist. ‘Global Democracy Has Another Bad Year’. The Economist. January 22nd 2020. Accessed December 13, 2020.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=global+democracy+has+another+bad+year&oq=Global+Democracy+Has+Another+Bad+Year&aqs=chrome.69j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

⁴⁰ Somdeep Sen. *Bringing Back the Palestinian State: Hamas between Government and Resistance*. Middle East Critique. March 16th 2015. p. 212. doi:10.1080/19436149.2015.1017969.

Instead the books produced, such as *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians* (2010) and *Gaza: An Inquest Into Its Martyrdom* (2018), predominantly focused on “what has been done to Gaza,” assessing “the causes and consequences” of the “the Israeli war in Gaza,” particularly Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009) and Operation Protective Edge (2014).^{41, 42} Other notable publications includes Ilan Pappé's, *The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of the Occupied Territories* (2017) which delegates most of its attention to layout a historical overview, outlining the significant events that unfolded within the Occupied Territories over the years.

As stated above, much of the publications produced by these leading academics tends to either provide a historical overview on the region, or focus on the consequences of particular events that had directly affected the Gaza Strip. Therefore, by incorporating the theoretical framework provided by Rummel's theory subsequently granted the researcher the tools necessary to interpret and so address the type of political violence exerted by the Israeli military not only during the GMR, but more generally over the years.

Consequently, this research project revitalises Rudolph Rummel's theoretical concept on democide by tying a contemporary example to this theoretical framework. Most importantly however, this research paper intends to reduce the dearth of academic material available, by analysing the nature of the violence exerted by the Israeli military in Gaza, specifically during the GMR, with the ultimate intention to use this academic platform to provide a voice for the voiceless, “the deliberately silenced and preferably unknown.”⁴³

⁴¹ Luna Fakkas. ‘Review: Gaza in crisis: reflections on Israel's war against Palestinians, by Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé. University of California Press. July 1st 2011. Accessed on January 3rd 2021. <https://online.ucpress.edu/caa/article-abstract/4/3/372/104411/Review-Gaza-in-crisis-reflections-on-Israel-s-war?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

⁴² Norman G. Finkelstein. *Gaza: An Inquest Into Its Martyrdom*. University of California Press. 2018. p.xi

⁴³ Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere. ‘The Deliberately Silenced and Preferably Unheard.’ *Girls' Globe* August 10th 2018. Accessed on Friday 11th December. <https://www.girlsglobe.org/2018/08/10/the-deliberately-silenced-and-preferably-unheard/>.

Chapter 2: The Gaza Strip

“There are no innocents in Gaza.”

Former Defence
Minister of Israel
Avigdor
Lieberman
(April 8th 2018).⁴⁴

General overview of the Gaza Strip since 2005:

In 2005, the former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (2001-2006) had finalized his cabinet’s decision to withdraw all public Israeli interests from the Gaza Strip. Otherwise known as the disengagement plan (2004), this process entailed the dismantling of all twenty-one Israeli settlements in the region.⁴⁵ Based upon the wishful thinking that Gaza would one day evolve into a future Palestinian state, the former Israeli Prime Minister promised to delegate political power to Mahmud Abbas, the current President of the Palestinian National Authority, to effectively govern the region.^{46, 47}

However within the following year, Khaled Mashal, the then former leader of the Sunni Islamist nationalist party Hamas, had defeated Mahmud Abbas in the Palestinian Legislative Elections in Gaza, retaining 76 out of 132 parliamentary seats.⁴⁸ The electoral results infuriated Ariel Sharon’s successor, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert (2006-2009). It prompted the new Israeli leader to instruct the IDF to continue guarding “the perimeter of the Gaza Strip...to control Gaza air space, and continue to patrol the sea off the Gaza coast,”

⁴⁴ Tovah Lazaroff. “‘There Are No Innocents in Gaza,’ Says Israeli Defense Minister.” The Jerusalem Post. April 8th 2018. Accessed on September 30th 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/there-are-no-innocents-in-gaza-says-israeli-defense-minister-549173>.

⁴⁵ Joel Peters. *The Gaza Disengagement: Five Years Later*. Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs. July 29th 2015. p. 33. doi:10.1080/23739770.2010.11446612.

⁴⁶ Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Israel’s Disengagement Plan: Renewing the Peace Process*. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. April 20th 2005. Accessed on December 3rd 2020. p. 12. <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/israels%20disengagement%20plan%20renewing%20the%20peace%20process%20apr%202005.aspx>.

⁴⁷ Carol Migdalovitz. *Israel’s Disengagement from Gaza*. Library of Congress. September 16th 2005. p. 5. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20050916_RS22000_4951f98925775ed0fb2dcf0904ce43ba4783fc42.pdf

⁴⁸ Simon Jeffery. ‘Hamas Celebrates Election Victory.’ The Guardian. January 26th 2006. Accessed November 1st 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jan/26/israel1>.

a decision ultimately embedded within the wider framework of a new economic warfare campaign, instilled via the imposition of a military siege against the newly classified hostile territory.^{49, 50}

To clarify, an economic warfare campaign translates to “the use of, or the threat to use economic means against a country in order to weaken its economy and thereby reduce its political and military power.”⁵¹ By abiding by this framework, to safeguard Israeli citizens from “terrorism, rocket attacks and any other hostile activities” from Hamas, the Zionist state (with the diplomatic assistance of Egypt), regulates both the imports and exports of goods, services and people, whether by land, air or sea.⁵² It may be worth noting that the IDF’s economic warfare campaign was supported by The Israeli Supreme Court whom overarchingly claimed that “future harm...might be prevented by resorting to economic warfare.”⁵³

According to one of the key architects of the disengagement plan, Dov Weisglass, the purpose behind this economic warfare campaign was “to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger,” a calculative approach implemented with the hope that the following conditions would be met.⁵⁴ Hamas would recognize the existence of Israel, renounce violence against the Zionist state and lastly, honour all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.⁵⁵ Over a decade later, none of these conditions have been met.

In addition to the IDF’s ability to dictate both the imports and exports into the region, the Israeli military enforces a number of additional restrictions prohibiting Palestinians’ to access

⁴⁹ UN. *Israel's Disengagement Plan - Non-UN Document*. Question of Palestine. April 30th 2005. Accessed on October 3rd 2020. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-209303/>.

⁵⁰ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. OHCHR. February 25th 2019. p. 3. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIOPT/A_HRC_40_74.pdf.

⁵¹ George Shambaugh. ‘Economic Warfare.’ Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed on September 1st 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/economic-warfare>

⁵² Attila Somfalvi. ‘Cabinet: All Non-military Items Can Enter Gaza Freely’. Ynetnews. June 20th 2010. Accessed November 1st 2020. <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3907978,00.html>.

⁵³ Tamar Meisels. *Economic Warfare - The Case of Gaza*. Journal of Military Ethics. July 20th 2011. p. 101. doi:10.1080/15027570.2011.593712.

⁵⁴ Conal Urquhart. ‘Gaza on Brink of Implosion As Aid Cut-off Starts to Bite.’ The Guardian. April 16th 2006. Accessed on August 31st 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/apr/16/israel>.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

particular areas inside the Strip itself, or within Gaza's nearby territorial waters.⁵⁶ Otherwise known as Access Restricted Areas (ARAs), the IDF established a number of buffer zones theoretically separating the coastal enclave from the Israeli state.⁵⁷ The ARA prevents Palestinian farmers from using at least 35% of the agricultural land and fishermen from accessing 85% of Gaza's territorial waters.⁵⁸ At sea, Palestinian fishermen can only sail up to six nautical miles.⁵⁹ On land, the inhabitants are restricted from walking alongside the 1949 armistice line, otherwise known as the separation fence.⁶⁰ Any individual that enters the "no-go" zone is viable to be either killed or injured.⁶¹

Within this framework, "the closure of the Gaza Strip violates the full spectrum of rights owed to the Palestinian people in Gaza," severely infringing on their freedom of movement within the Strip itself, as well as their access to the outside world.⁶² No boat can enter or exit this coastal enclave. Moreover, Palestinians are rarely given the ability to leave the Strip. As a result of the restrictions imposed, the state of Israel is in violation of Article 12 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that "everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own."⁶³ Ultimately, the ARA's alone deeply impinges the freedom of movement of over two million residents.

Due to the panoply of restrictions imposed upon the Palestinian residents living within the region, representatives from international organisations such as John Holmes, the former Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Coordinator of the UN, has in the past commonly described the Strip as a "giant open-air prison."⁶⁴

⁵⁶ United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. *Gaza: Ten Years Later*. UNSCO. July 2017. Accessed November 7, 2019. https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/gaza_10_years_later_-_11_july_2017.pdf. p. 26.

⁵⁶ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 51.

⁵⁷ United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. *Gaza: Ten Years Later*. p. 26.

⁵⁸ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 53.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 52.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

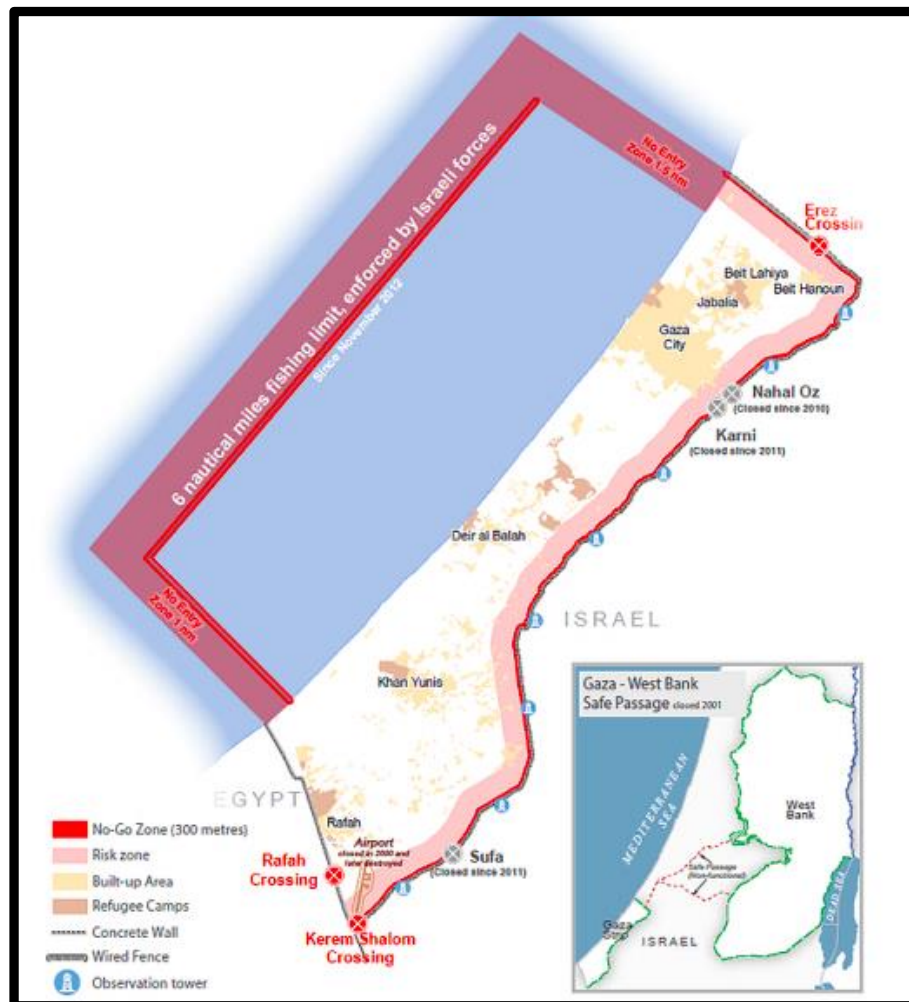
⁶² Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights. *Attacks on Unarmed Protesters at the "Great March of Return" Demonstrations A Two-Year Report from the Start of Demonstrations on 30 March 2018*. Al-Mezan. April 1st 2020. p. 4. <https://www.mezan.org/en/uploads/files/15952354571567.pdf>.

⁶³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commission. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. OHCHR. 1996. p. 7. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>.

⁶⁴ UN News. 'Israel Must Allow Full Access for Aid and Supplies to Rehabilitate Gaza – UN Relief Chief.' UN News. January 27th 2009. Accessed on November 23rd 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2009/01/289082-israel-must-allow-full-access-aid-and-supplies-rehabilitate-gaza-un-relief>.

Image 1:

Image below geographically locates the Access Restricted Areas within the Gaza Strip.⁶⁵



In addition to all of these factors, the Gaza Strip has been bombarded by a plethora of military campaigns conducted by the IDF. Collectively, Operation “Summer Rains” (2006), “Hot Winter” (2008), “Cast Lead” (2008-2009), “Returning Echo” (2012) and “Protective Edge (2014) had severely destroyed the region’s infrastructure. Abiding by the Dahiya doctrine, a military approach that encourages the destruction of civilian infrastructure in a hostile territory, official Palestinian headquarters of governments, hospitals, mosques and schools in the region had been either partially or completely destroyed by the Israeli

⁶⁵ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 51.

military.^{66, 67} Furthermore, the electricity network, sewage and water infrastructure had been seriously impaired.^{68, 69} Crippled by both the virulent military siege and the subsequent military assaults, the economy in Gaza is literally in “free fall”, as described by The World Bank.⁷⁰

As each year passes, the percentage of poverty, unemployment and food insecurity continues to reach unprecedented levels.⁷¹ According to The World Bank, every second person located in the most densely populated region in the world is living in poverty.⁷² Gaza holds one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, with youth unemployment over 70%.⁷³ At least 65% of its population is inflicted by food insecurity.⁷⁴ By July 2017, over one million inhabitants suffered from malnutrition, despite receiving external assistance from international and regional donors such as the UN, Qatar and Iran.^{75, 76} Moreover, the recent data provided by Oxfam indicated that “less than four percent of freshwater is drinkable,” calling attention to an evident ecological crisis in the region.⁷⁷ Ultimately, as long as the siege continues, hospitals and other forms of social services will only decay further.^{78, 79}

⁶⁶ Omar Abu Arqoub and Ozad Bahireefe. *Israeli Media Gatekeeper during Gaza War 2014 Coverage: Case of Study of Yedioth Ahronoth Newspaper*. Journal of Communication and Media Watch. January 2019. p. 23. doi:10.15655/mw/2019/v10i1/49560.

⁶⁷ Daniel Byman. *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. p. 364.

⁶⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *Detailed Infrastructure Damage Assessment Gaza – 2014*. OCHA. December 1st 2014. Accessed on September 2nd 2020. p. 17. <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/detailed-infrastructure-damage-assessment-gaza-2014>.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 13.

⁷⁰ The World Bank. ‘Cash-Strapped Gaza and an Economy in Collapse Put Palestinian Basic Needs at Risk.’ The World Bank. September 25th 2018. Accessed on September 1st 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/25/cash-strapped-gaza-and-an-economy-in-collapse-put-palestinian-basic-needs-at-risk>.

⁷¹ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 3.

⁷² The World Bank. ‘Cash-Strapped Gaza and an Economy in Collapse Put Palestinian Basic Needs at Risk.’

⁷³ *Middle East Monitor*. ‘Israeli Siege of Gaza Pushes Youth Unemployment Up to 70%.’ Middle East Monitor. February 18th 2020. Accessed on August 1st 2020.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200218-israeli-siege-of-gaza-pushes-youth-unemployment-up-to-70/>.

⁷⁴ Huthifa Fayyad. ‘Gaza’s Great March of Return Protests Explained.’ Al Jazeera. March 30th 2019. Accessed on September 9th 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/3/30/gazas-great-march-of-return-protests-explained>.

⁷⁵ United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. *Gaza: Ten Years Later*. p. 14.

⁷⁶ Humanitarian Country Team. *Humanitarian Needs Overview*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. December 2019. Accessed on September 19th 2020. p. 6.

https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hno_2020-final.pdf

⁷⁷ Oxfam. *Failing Gaza: ‘Undrinkable Water, No Access to Toilets and Little Hope on the Horizon.’* Oxfam International. June 2017. Accessed September 1st 2020.

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/failing-gaza-undrinkable-water-no-access-toilets-and-little-hope-horizon>.

⁷⁸ United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. *Gaza: Ten Years Later*. p. 22.

⁷⁹ Humanitarian Country Team. *Humanitarian Needs Overview*. p. 6.

Discussion:

Since the imposition of Israel's military blockade on the Gaza Strip, a minimum of four hundred and fifty Palestinian residents have died specifically because the IDF had restricted their access to effective medical treatment.⁸⁰ Reinforcing this notion, the International Committee of the Red Cross found that "persons are needlessly dying because of a lack of timely medical care," as a direct result of the siege.⁸¹ Many of the victims had been cancer patients, the elderly and babies that had been born prematurely.^{82, 83}

Therefore, the IDF, via its pre-meditated military siege embedded within an economic warfare campaign purposefully designed to subjugate a region, holds a wanton disregard for the lives of two million inhabitants living in the Gaza Strip, as many Palestinians died specifically because of the restrictions imposed on their movement as a result of the blockade. Therefore, you can pose the argument that the Israeli military is guilty of committing an act of democide by imposing a military siege upon the people of Gaza, resulting in the death of innocent civilians.⁸⁴

To briefly mention, Article 42 of the Hague Regulations of 1907 specifically states that a "territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army."⁸⁵ Therefore, under international law, Israel, as an occupying power must adhere to Article 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which specifically states that "if the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population."^{86, 87}

⁸⁰ Al-Jazeera. 'More Than 1,000 Palestinians in Gaza Died from Israeli Blockade'. Al Jazeera. February 25th 2018. Accessed on November 13th 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/2/25/more-than-1000-palestinians-in-gaza-died-from-israeli-blockade>.

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch (HRW). 'Deprived and Endangered: Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip.' HRW. January 13th 2009. Accessed on December 12th, 2020. https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/01/13/deprived-and-endangered-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip#_ftn27.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Mersiha Gadzo. 'Gaza's Cancer Patients: "We Are Dying Slowly".' Al Jazeera. February 5th 2017. Accessed on November 13th 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/2/5/gazas-cancer-patients-we-are-dying-slowly>.

⁸⁴ Rummel. *Death by Government*. p. 37.

⁸⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross. Treaties, States Parties, and Commentaries - Hague Convention (IV) on War on Land and Its Annexed Regulations, 1907 - Regulations: Article 42. International Committee of the Red Cross. October 18th 1907. Accessed on November 7, 2020. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/195>

⁸⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross. 'Treaties, States Parties, and Commentaries - Geneva Convention (IV) on Civilians, 1949 - 59 - Relief I. Collective Relief.' International Committee of the Red Cross. August 12th 1949. Accessed on December 2nd, 2020.

<https://ihldatabases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=EDA33BAD877F6183C12563CD0051BE90>

⁸⁷ UNHRC *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 18.

Despite the troubling ecological concerns, such as the collapsing water and sewage infrastructure, Israeli leaders continue to neglect the egregious humanitarian, economic and ecological crisis that continues to mutate in the region, as the IDF cites its security concerns, breaching a number conventions within international law.⁸⁸

As a direct result of the siege, the region will become “unliveable by 2020 due to a lack of hygiene, access to clean water, and food,” according to the UN.⁸⁹ This thesis was submitted in January 2021. Israel’s military blockade continues to remain in full effect.

⁸⁸ Zafirir Rinat. ‘Collapsing Environmental State of Gaza Poses Threat to Israel’s National Security, Report Warns.’ Haaretz. June 3rd 2019. Accessed on November 20th 2020. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-environmental-state-of-gaza-poses-threat-to-israel-s-national-security-report-warns-1.7328966>.

⁸⁹ Noura Erakat. *The Sovereign Right to Kill: A Critical Appraisal of Israel’s Shoot-to-Kill Policy in Gaza*. International Criminal Law Review. October 2019. p. 800. doi:10.1163/15718123-01905002.

Chapter 3: The Great March of Return

“Slow death by siege, wherein lack of medicine, the absence of future prospects, and massive unemployment constitute psychological and emotional death for young people who have no opportunity to meet such basic needs as housing, stability and work; or, defiance and rebellion, that is, for people to raise their voices en masse.”

Lead organiser of the Great
March of Return, Ahmed
Abu Artema (2018).⁹⁰

Introduction:

On January 7th 2018, Palestinian peace activist and poet, Ahmed Abu Artema posted an online status on Facebook.⁹¹ In response to the humanitarian conditions within the besieged Gaza Strip, Artema proposed the following idea, “what would happen if 200,000 protesters gathered near the Israel fence with the Gaza Strip,” marching peacefully alongside the 1949 armistice line, accompanied by international media.⁹² Whilst protesting against the living conditions in the region, Artema would also use the context of the march to demand the right for Gazans, whom two-thirds are the descendants of the Palestinian refugees that were displaced during the Nakba in 1948, to return to their ancestral homelands.^{93, 94}

Artema’s Facebook post sparked a robust public debate throughout the Strip. Very quickly, the idea began to gain momentum, soon evolving into a movement attracting the open support of Palestinians from various sectors of civil society, welcoming all ages, genders, socio-cultural and political affiliations.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Mustafa A Sneh. ‘Interview: The Palestinian Who Sparked March of Return with a Facebook Post.’ Middle East Eye. June 8th 2018. Accessed on July 3rd, 2018. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/interview-palestinian-who-sparked-march-return-facebook-post>.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Erakat. *The Sovereign Right to Kill*. p. 797.

⁹⁴ Defense for Children Palestine (DCIP). ‘Year-in-review: 2018 Rained Deadly Force on Palestinian Children.’ DCIP. December 31st 2018. Accessed on October 4th 2020.

<https://www.dcpalestine.org/year-in-review-2018-reigned-deadly-force-on-palestinian-children>.

⁹⁵ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 4.

Within a matter of weeks, the residents in Gaza drew up a twelve-principle charter outlining the nature of the demonstration, informing the state of Israel that the protests will be “fully peaceful from beginning to the end” and that the participants would be unarmed.⁹⁶ This pacifist approach was transparently instilled by the lead demonstrator of the march, who highlighted how it “is not an armed struggle...the concept was that we could protest and demonstrate without going to war,” exercising the universal Human Right to form a peaceful assembly.^{97, 98}

Well aware of the level of dogmatism embedded within Israel’s rhetoric to instrumentally apply Hamas as a pretext to justify any illegitimate act of violence carried out by the IDF, the twelve principle charter specifically informed the Israeli military that “the only flag raised during the march is the Palestinian flag with no partisan slogans.”⁹⁹ The fundamental purpose behind this principle was to remind the IDF that the protest at its core is an organised form of grass-root popular action.¹⁰⁰ In hindsight, this principle sought to dismantle any suspected assumptions that the march had been initiated by Hamas or any other militant organisation in the region.¹⁰¹

As weeks passed, thousands of Palestinians living in the Strip coalesced by the demarcation fence that separates Gaza from the state of Israel. Within the five major governorates in the region: Abu Safia (north Gaza), Malaka (east Gaza), El-Bureij (central Gaza), Khuza’a (east of Khan Younis) and lastly Al-Shawkah, (south of Rafah), Palestinians had established a “camp of return” stationed roughly seven hundred meters away from the separation fence, designed with the intention to provide “meals, traditional dabke dancing, football games and even weddings.”^{102, 103}

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Snehneh. ‘The Palestinian who sparked March of Return with a Facebook post.

⁹⁸ International Commission of Jurists ‘Chapter Four: Freedom of Assembly, Association and Expression. International Commission of Jurists. Accessed on November 12th 2020.

<https://www.icj.org/sogi-casebook-introduction/chapter-four-freedom-of-assembly-association-and-expression/> .

⁹⁹ Jihad Abusalim. *The Great March of Return: An Organizer’s Perspective*. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 4. 2018. doi:10.1525/jps.2018.47.4.90. p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 60.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 5.

¹⁰³ Hazem Balousha. ‘Time for Peaceful Resistance, Says Gaza’s New Movement.’ *The Guardian*. April 6th 2018. Accessed on 31st December 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/06/time-for-peaceful-resistance-says-gazas-new-movement>.

Originally scheduled to last for forty-five days, this unprecedented organised civil demonstration, otherwise understood as The Great March of Return (GMR) began on March 30th 2018 and continued until December 27th, 2019.^{104, 105}

The Israeli Military's Rules and Methods of Engagement:

Throughout the GMR, the IDF complied with the international law of enforcement, a paradigm that grants the soldiers the ability to distribute lethal force, only if the antagonist is an imminent threat to the people around them, and that all possible preventative and precautionary measures had been applied.^{106, 107} Moreover, the Israeli military had also abided by the conduct of hostilities framework, a model that allows the Israeli military to inflict deadly force upon any individual taking part in a hostile activity.¹⁰⁸ Hypothetically, if a Palestinian demonstrator happened to be participating in a direct form of violence, the Israeli military is expected to use live ammunition to “hit, break a bone – in the best case, break the kneecap...of a key rioter or a key inciter...only as a last resort.”^{109, 110}

To prevent this from occurring, the IDF not only air-dropped leaflets in Gaza, (see image 2) but had also contacted the major bus companies in the region in the days leading up to the first demonstration, commanding Palestinians not to participate in this social protest.¹¹¹ In addition to this, over one hundred highly-trained snipers deriving from the Gefen and Katif Brigades were placed alongside the perimeter, working in teams consisting of an observer and a spotter, led by a senior commander.^{112, 113}

¹⁰⁴ Al-Jazeera. ‘Organisers Say Gaza Protests to Be Scaled Back.’ Al-Jazeera. December 26th 2019. Accessed on August 3rd 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/26/organisers-say-gaza-protests-to-be-scaled-back>.

¹⁰⁵ Dale T Snauwaert. *Exploring Betty A. Reardon's Perspective on Peace Education: Looking Back, Looking Forward*. Basingstoke: Springer, 2020. p.134.

¹⁰⁶ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 30.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 82.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 84.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 85.

¹¹⁰ Hilo Glazer. “‘42 Knees in One Day’: Israeli Snipers Open Up About Shooting Gaza Protesters.’ *Haaretz*. March 6th 2020. Accessed on October 1st 2020. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-42-knees-in-one-day-israeli-snipers-open-up-about-shooting-gaza-protesters-1.8632555>.

¹¹¹ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 5.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 74.

The highly-skilled marksmen were equipped with either the Ruger 10/22 semi-automatic sniper rifle or the Israeli made Tavor assault rifles, stocked with live ammunition including explosive and fragmentation bullets, as well as rubber and sponge coated rounds.^{114, 115} Additionally, the graphic photographs of bullet wounds obtained by Amnesty International indicated that the Israeli Security Forces (ISF) were equipped with the US-manufactured M24 Remington sniper rifle, which possesses the ability to shoot a 7.62mm size bullet that expands inside the body.¹¹⁶ In addition to this, tear gas grenades were also available, dispersed via a remote-controlled drone.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, additional barriers were built, barbed wire coils were placed, deep trenches were dug, and earth mounds were erected, granting the soldiers a stronger optical view on the residents of Gaza.¹¹⁸ Consequently, it is evidently clear from the tactics adopted, as well as the weapons and tools equipped, that the IDF had demonized the GMR, interpreting the protest as a guise that grants armed Palestinian factions in the region the ability to breach the separation fence and so enter Israel.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 79.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 162.

¹¹⁶ Amnesty International. 'Six Months on: Gaza's "Great March of Return.'" Amnesty International. 2018. Accessed on September 10th 2019. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2018/10/gaza-great-march-of-return/>.

¹¹⁷ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.* p. 79

¹¹⁸ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.* p.5

Image 2:

The image below was shared by the official Twitter account of the Israeli Defence Forces in the days following up to the first day of protest.¹¹⁹



¹¹⁹ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 74.

March 30th 2018:

On the first day of the GMR, a minimum of forty thousand Palestinians had congregated at the five main camps mentioned above, peacefully protesting alongside the ARA buffer zones near the fence.¹²⁰ By the afternoon, an unarmed forty-one-year-old man named Abed Hawajri was targeted and fatally shot by a highly-skilled sniper in his abdomen, despite the fact that he “did not pose an imminent threat of death or serious injury to the ISF when he was shot.”¹²¹

In a single day, at least eighteen Palestinians had been killed.¹²² The majority of the victims were shot either in their abdomen, back, neck or head.¹²³ According to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the oldest casualty had been a seventy-one-year-old woman, the youngest, a two-year-old girl.¹²⁴

A total minimum of one thousand four hundred Palestinians were injured by the ISF, with over seven hundred demonstrators wounded by live ammunition.^{125, 126} The following day, the former Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman boldly claimed that there would be no investigations conducted that would assess the disproportionate use of violence exerted by the Israeli military on the first day of the protest.¹²⁷

On March 30th 2018, the highly-skilled Israeli snipers stationed by the earth mounds near the separation fence had indiscriminately shot a number of unarmed demonstrators with live ammunition, in many cases above their torso. Essentially, this indicates that there had been a strong intent to inflict serious harm against a defenceless population, whereby the majority were protesting in a civil manner. To conclude, the excessive armed force conducted by the Israeli military on March 30th 2018 constitutes as an act of democide. This day alone exposed the IDF’s wanton disregard for the human lives at cost, as Israeli snipers illegitimately

¹²⁰ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 7.

¹²¹ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 111.

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 109.

¹²³ Erakat. *The Sovereign Right to Kill*. p. 786.

¹²⁴ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 109.

¹²⁵ Erakat. *The Sovereign Right to Kill*. p. 784.

¹²⁶ UNRWA. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 9.

¹²⁷ HRW. ‘Israel: Gaza Killings Unlawful, Calculated’. HRW. April 3rd 2018. Accessed on December 29th 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/03/israel-gaza-killings-unlawful-calculated>.

targeted and killed unarmed demonstrators, such as Abed Hawajri. Ultimately, this subsection of this chapter serves to strengthen the argument that the Israeli military throughout the GMR had intentionally killed unarmed protesters participating in this march.

Image 3:

Photograph portraying Palestinians demonstrators and the Israeli military by the separation fence in the context of the Great March of Return.¹²⁸



Before summarising this chapter, this study will provide academic attention to the events that unfolded on the bloodiest day in Gaza since Operation Protective Edge (2014), addressing the nature in which the Israeli military had purposefully killed unarmed Palestinians participating in the GMR.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Jerusalem Post. '17 Dead, over a Thousand Injured After Palestinians Clash with IDF.' The Jerusalem Post. March 30th 2018. Accessed on December 17th 2020. <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/LIVE-COVERAGE-Multiple-dead-and-hundreds-hurt-as-Palestinians-clash-with-IDF-on-Gaza-Border-547534>.

¹²⁹ BBC News. 'Gaza begins to bury its dead after deadliest day in years.' BBC News. May 15th 2018. Accessed on September 19th 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east>

May 14th 2018:

On the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba, the Trump administration controversially opened its first embassy in Jerusalem.¹³⁰ As Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump joined the Israeli Prime Minister celebrating Israel's independence, Palestinians roughly sixty miles from the ceremony congregated in their tens of thousands, protesting against this diplomatic decision within the context of the GMR.¹³¹

Described by the 45th president of the United States as “a great day for Israel,” a minimum of sixty-three Palestinians in Gaza were killed by highly-skilled Israeli snipers.^{132, 133} The casualties included eight children, a paramedic and a double amputee.¹³⁴ Within a four-hour period, at least three thousand five hundred protesters were injured, two thousand of which resulted from gunshot wounds.^{135, 136}

Reporting the events from a first-hand perspective, Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta, the head of plastic and reconstructive surgery at the American University of Beirut, stated how the atmosphere reflected “something closer to a World War I type carnage than a demonstration.”¹³⁷

Disturbingly, medics found that many of the protesters had been shot with fragmentation bullets, a metal projectile that essentially breaks into 20 – 25 different pieces upon impact.¹³⁸ By using internationally prohibited bullets, it is clear that the IDF intended to “produce the kinds of injuries that would both incapacitate the health system and turn the able bodies of these young men into burdens on their families.”¹³⁹ In total, forty-four protesters had to undergo amputation surgery on May 14th 2018.¹⁴⁰ According to the UNHRC, one Israeli soldier was injured, reportedly by a stone.¹⁴¹

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 9.

¹³² Vittorio Felci, and Sofos A Spyros. ‘Clashes at Border Reveal How Israel Dehumanizes Palestinians’. The Globe Post. May 7th 2018. Accessed on December 10th 2020. <https://theglobepost.com/2018/07/03/israel-gaza-dehumanization/>.

¹³³ Amnesty International. ‘Six Months on: Gaza's "Great March of Return."’

¹³⁴ Riyad Al-Maliki. *Referral by the State of Palestine Pursuant to Articles 13(a) and 14 of the Rome Statute*. International Criminal Court. May 15th 2018. https://www.icc-cpi.int/itemsDocuments/2018-05-22_ref-palestine.pdf. p. 9.

¹³⁵ Perla Issa. *Interview with Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta: “There is no International Community”*. Journal of Palestine Studies. August 2018. p. 49. doi:10.1525/jps.2018.47.4.46.

¹³⁶ Peter Beaumont, Oliver Holmes and Hazem Balousha. ‘Global Protests Grow After Israeli Killing of Palestinian Demonstrators.’ The Guardian. May 15th 2018. Accessed on September 29th 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/15/palestinians-to-bury-58-people-killed-in-us-embassy-protests..>

¹³⁷ Issa. *Interview with Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta*. p. 49.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 50.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 51

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 49.

¹⁴¹ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 11.

To reinforce the notion that the Israeli military had intentionally shot unarmed Palestinians participating in the GMR on May 14th 2018, this paper wishes to delegate the reader's attention to the killing of Fadi Abu Salmi, a twenty-nine-year-old double amputee who "did not pose an imminent threat of life or injury to ISF soldiers at the time he was killed."¹⁴²

Losing both his legs during Operation Cast Lead (2008 – 2009), Mr. Salmi was struck by a bullet in his chest, released from the sniper rifle of an Israeli soldier stationed by the separation fence between Gaza and Israel.¹⁴³ By targeting a double amputee above his waist "as he sat in his wheelchair under a tree approximately 250-300m from the separation fence," indicated that the highly-skilled Israeli marksman held a wanton disregard for the life of Mr. Salmi, and so sought to illegitimately inflict a significant degree of pain which inevitably resulted in his death.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, this case study serves to illuminate and also represent the democidal characteristics embedded within the IDF's open-fire policy conducted throughout the GMR, specifically on May 14th 2020.

Internationally, the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, China, Russia and the UN had diplomatically expressed their collective concerns regarding the egregious level of violence exerted by the Israeli military.¹⁴⁵ The high commission of the UN Human Rights office, Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein was deeply outraged by the fact that unarmed protesters were "liable to be shot dead or injured: women, children, press, first responders, bystanders...at almost any point up to seven hundred metres from the fence."¹⁴⁶

Moreover, South Africa's president Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa condemned "in the strongest terms possible the latest act of violent aggression," whilst the Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan argued that "what Israel has done is a genocide."^{147, 148} Despite this level of

¹⁴² UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 159.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Beaumont, Holmes and Balousha. 'Global Protests Grow After Israeli Killing of Palestinian Demonstrators.'

¹⁴⁶ Al-Jazeera. 'Laila Anwar Al-Ghandour Becomes the Face of Gaza Carnage.' Al Jazeera. May 15th 2018. Accessed on November 3rd 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/5/15/laila-anwar-al-ghandour-becomes-the-face-of-gaza-carnage>.

¹⁴⁷ Emily Shugerman. 'Turkish President Accuses Israel of 'genocide' After Palestinian Deaths on Gaza Border.' The Independent. May 14th 2018. Accessed on November 3rd 2020. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/turkey-recalls-ambassadors-erdogan-israel-gaza-protests-genocide-us-embassy-jerusalem-border-fence-a8351746.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Kaveel Singh. 'SA Pulls Ambassador out of Israel over Gaza Violence.' News24. May 14th 2018. Accessed on August 23rd 2020. <https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/sa-pulls-ambassador-out-of-israel-over-gaza-violence-20180514>

international scrutiny, no individual nor Israeli institution has been held effectively accountable for the events that unfolded on May 14th 2018.

To defend its actions, the IDF informed the international community that twenty-four terrorists were successfully killed, failing to publicly provide any form of evidence to support this claim.¹⁴⁹ Regardless, if twenty-four Palestinians had been killed that was supposedly terrorists, what justifies shooting live ammunition towards two thousand demonstrators marching peacefully?

Discussion:

Since March 30th 2018, over two hundred and sixty-five demonstrators in Gaza had been killed in the context of the GMR.¹⁵⁰ More than two hundred of those protesters died either by live ammunition or via shrapnel wounds.¹⁵¹ Moreover, a total minimum of eighteen thousand people had been injured.¹⁵² At least six thousand were struck by live ammunition, including nine hundred and forty children, as well as over one hundred women.^{153, 154} At least two hundred Palestinians underwent amputation surgery as a result of the injuries sustained during the GMR.¹⁵⁵ According to an article published by The Jerusalem Post, a total of one Israeli sniper named Avi Levi was killed by a highly-skilled Palestinian marksman representing the militant organisation, Hamas.¹⁵⁶

The numerical disproportion within the number of casualties implies that the IDF had not been acting in self-defence throughout the GMR. Instead, the snipers stationed by the fence sought to administer a strong degree of deadly harm against Palestinians participating in the march, a notion advocated by the UNHRC, whom found that the Israeli military had shot live

¹⁴⁹ BBC News. *Gaza begins to bury its dead after deadliest day in years.*

¹⁵⁰ Huthifa. 'Gaza's Great March of Return Protests Explained.'

¹⁵¹ Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights. *Attacks on Unarmed Protesters at the "Great March of Return."* p. 19.

¹⁵² Al-Jazeera. *Gaza Protests: All the Latest Updates.* Al Jazeera. November 12th 2018. Accessed on December 5th 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/12/gaza-protests-all-the-latest-updates>.

¹⁵³ Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights. *Seven Protesters Killed, Two of Them Children, and 257 Injured at Friday Demonstrations in Gaza.* Al-Mezan. August 29th 2018. Accessed on December 1st 2020. <https://www.mezan.org/en/post/23230>.

¹⁵⁴ Landau. 'UN Council: Israel Intentionally Shot Children and Journalists in Gaza.'

¹⁵⁵ Snauwaert. *Exploring Betty A. Reardon's Perspective on Peace Education.* p. 137.

¹⁵⁶ Anna Ahronheim. 'IDF Names Aviv Levi, 21, As Soldier Killed by Hamas Sniper at Gaza Border.' The Jerusalem. July 21st 2018. Accessed on December 7th 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IDF-Strikes-terror-targets-in-Gaza-563027>.

ammunition towards “civilians who were neither participating directly in hostilities nor posing an imminent threat to life.”^{157, 158}

Table 1:
**Total number of fatalities and injuries during the Great March of Return
between 30th March – 31st December 2018.**¹⁵⁹

Category	Total	Women	Children	Body part targeted				Press ^e	Health workers ^f
				Head/neck	Torso	Upper limb	Lower limb		
Gaza:									
Fatalities by live ammunition ^a	183	1	32	70	101	0	12	2	3
Injuries by live ammunition ^b	6 106	159	940	175	401	493	4 903	39	39
Injuries by bullet fragmentation/shrapnel ^c	1 576	59	345	-	-	-	-	5	34
Injuries by rubber-coated metal bullet	438	36	124	-	-	-	-	4	34
Injuries by direct tear-gas canister hit	1 084	60	233	-	-	-	-	32	85
Israel:									
Fatalities ^d	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Injuries by stones, explosives	4	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

The events that unfolded throughout the GMR had vividly encapsulated a truly disturbing reality. Within a matter of weeks, the perimeter near the separation fence had ultimately transformed into a theatre of savagery, exhibiting multiple acts of democide. According to the UN, a total of one hundred and fifty unarmed Palestinians had been intentionally killed by a government agent since the protest began.¹⁶⁰

As this study will explore in more detail in chapter four, the Israeli snipers stationed by the separation fence had intentionally killed unarmed protesters, journalists, paramedics and children, in order to prevent Palestinians’ within the Strip from breaching the fence that separates Gaza from Israel.¹⁶¹ Therefore, the gross level of violence exerted throughout the march fundamentally constitutes as an act of democide.

¹⁵⁷ Landau. ‘UN Council: Israel Intentionally shot Children and Journalists in Gaza.’

¹⁵⁸ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed finds of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied of Palestinian territory*. p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 104.

¹⁶⁰ Landau. ‘UN Council: Israel Intentionally Shot Children and Journalists in Gaza.’

¹⁶¹ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed finds of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied of Palestinian territory*. p. 1.

To reinforce the notion that the Israeli military had intentionally killed unarmed protesters throughout the GMR, I wish to remind the readers that the highly-skilled snipers positioned by the separation fence had undergone an extensive set of training. As a result, the soldiers are well aware of the type of damage that their primary weapon, the formerly outlawed Ruger 10/22 semi-automatic sniper rifle, will cause to any specific location. Used throughout both Palestinian intifadas, the Israeli military is well aware of the weapon's velocity, thus its ability to kill.¹⁶² This inevitably implies that throughout the GMR, Israeli snipers had retained a strong understanding regarding the potential damage that can be possibly inflicted by their weapon.

Since the beginning of this protest, over nine hundred demonstrators had been purposefully shot above their torso by live ammunition released from this weapon.¹⁶³ Consequently, as the evidence suggest, the IDF's violent response had caused life-threatening harm to unarmed protesters, marching peacefully alongside the demarcation line, constituting as an act of democide.

Conversely, it would be politically incorrect to unanimously assume that there had been no acts of violence orchestrated by Palestinian since the beginning of this march. Yes, a minority of demonstrators had flown incendiary kites, balloons and had hurled stones towards the direction of the ISF.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, there is also validity behind the following notion that current and former members from Hamas, as well as other Palestinian political factions such as Fatah, had directly participated in the GMR.¹⁶⁵

Regardless of this reality, the GMR began as a grassroots political campaign and was maintained by peaceful Palestinian activists deriving from the various sectors of Gaza's civil society. In spite of the violent activities carried out by a small proportion of demonstrators, international organisations such as the UNHRC interpreted the "character of the GMR as a

¹⁶² Felix Black. 'The Israeli Army's Use of the Ruger Sniper Rifle. Palestine Monitor'. March 4th 2013. Accessed November 29th 2020. <https://www.palestinemonitor.org/details.php?id=u7gmbxa2971yfe99jd9ho>

¹⁶³ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed finds of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied of Palestinian territory*. p. 162

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 1

¹⁶⁵ Sneineh. *Interview: The Palestinian Who Sparked March of Return with a Facebook Post*.

peaceful civilian demonstration,” discrediting the legitimacy behind the IDF’s excessive use of armed force.¹⁶⁶

Despite being interpreted as a peaceful demonstration by the UNHRC, The Israeli Supreme Court defended the use of deadly force during the GMR as a legitimate form of self-defence on May 24th 2018.¹⁶⁷ In *Yesh Din v. Chief of General Staff, IDF* (2018), the panel of jurists unanimously rejected the two petitions filed by six human rights organisations that had challenged the Israeli military’s rules of engagement during the GMR, specifically between the months of March and May 2018.¹⁶⁸

Both the Israeli government and the Supreme Court stated that the protests were taking place within an organised framework maintained by Hamas, allowing the militant organisation to implement its “dirty war against Israel.”¹⁶⁹ Therefore, under the Law of Armed Conflict, Deputy Chief Justice Hanan Melcer legitimised the ISF’s ability to freely distribute lethal force upon any demonstrator, even if they do not pose as a risk, only after using a set of non-lethal methods to remove the supposed threat.¹⁷⁰

By reinforcing the conviction that the GMR was orchestrated and maintained by Hamas, the Israeli government, military and Supreme Court is attempting to justify the excessive use of force exerted by the IDF during this civil protest, an atmosphere described as a “warzone” by Israel’s former ambassador to the United States, Danny Ayalon.¹⁷¹ In an apparent dismissal of Israel’s justification for the use of lethal force, Rupert Colville, spokesman for the UNHRC, said that “it is not acceptable to say that ‘this is Hamas and therefore this is OK.’”¹⁷² Colville later added that “approaching a fence is not a lethal, life-threatening act, so that does not warrant being shot,” discrediting the legitimacy behind such attacks.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁶ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed finds of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied of Palestinian territory*. p. 107

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 783.

¹⁶⁸ Yahli Shereshevsky. *H CJ 3003/18 Yesh Din – Volunteers for Human Rights v. Chief of General Staff, Israel Defense Forces (IDF)*. American Journal of International Law. April 9th 2019. p. 361. doi:10.1017/ajil.2019.8.

¹⁶⁹ Eytan Gilboa. ‘The “March of Return”: Hamas’ Dirty War Against Israel.’ The Jerusalem Post. April 22nd 2018. Accessed on December 8th, 2020. <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/The-March-of-Return-Hamas-dirty-war-against-Israel-552445>.

¹⁷⁰ Shereshevsky. *H CJ 3003/18 Yesh Din – Volunteers for Human Rights v. Chief of General Staff, Israel Defence Forces (IDF)*. p. 365.

¹⁷¹ Al-Jazeera English. *Gaza Killings: Who is to blame? | Head-to-Head*. YouTube. July 20th 2018. Accessed on December 7th 2020. 06:47 seconds. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfw2AVqcne0&t=407s>.

¹⁷² Beaumont, Holmes and Balousha. ‘Global Protests Grow After Israeli Killing of Palestinian Demonstrators.’

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

Ultimately, the GMR exposed the IDF's indiscriminate open fire policy conducted against an unarmed population, exercising their fundamental right to form an assembly. It is evidently clear to international spectators and political experts that the military force exerted by the IDF and the collective punishment imposed upon the demonstrators, is a serious violation on the Palestinians' fundamental rights to life, the security of person, and so ability to live free from cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.^{174, 175}

To conclude, the protesters were using the march as a platform to peacefully voice their concerns against the humanitarian conditions in the region, as a result of Israel's military blockade. Moreover, the participants were also using this stage as a platform to demand the right for Palestinians to return to their ancestral homeland, thus drawing attention to the *United Nations Resolution 194 (III)* (1948), which specifically allows "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours."¹⁷⁶

The Israeli military responded by unleashing a panoply of bullets and tear gas canisters towards the direction of unarmed protesters. By intentionally shooting an unarmed demonstrator, who is not an imminent threat to the soldier or to the people around them, constitutes as an act of democide and amounts to a disproportionate use of violence. Despite the incidents that took place throughout the GMR, no individual nor institution has been held effectively accountable for the killings that took place throughout this civil protest. In the next chapter, this study begins to investigate three separate case study examples of unarmed Palestinian journalists, children and reporters that were intentionally killed by a government agent during the GMR, in order to expose the true nature of the violence orchestrated by the IDF.

¹⁷⁴ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 18.

¹⁷⁵ Erakat. *The Sovereign Right to Kill*. p. 786.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations General Assembly. *Resolution 194*. UNRWA. December 11th 1948. Accessed November 25, 2020. p. 24. <https://www.unrwa.org/content/resolution-194>.

Chapter 4.1 Journalists, Paramedics & Children:

Yaser Abd Al-Rahman Murtaja

“We thought it was just an injury and he will be injured for a while and then God will heal him, and he will come out it like the rest of the injured people.

I didn’t expect him to die.”

Yusra Murtaja reflecting on the
death of her son
Yaser Murtaja.¹⁷⁷

Introduction:

Yaser Abd Al-Rahman Murtaja was a 30-year-old Palestinian reporter that had been killed by an Israeli sniper during the GMR on April 6th, 2018.¹⁷⁸ Described as “one of Gaza’s best-known journalist”, the co-founder of Ain Media worked alongside Al-Jazeera, Vice, Araby TV and the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund, predominantly focusing on human rights, as well as the socio-economic and political issues arising within the Gaza Strip.¹⁷⁹



Image 4: Yaser Murtaja.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Ben Lynfield. ‘MK Demands Soldier Who Killed Gaza Photographer Be Put on Trial’. The Jerusalem Post. April 8th 2018. Accessed on September 3rd 2020. <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/mk-demands-soldier-who-killed-gaza-photographer-be-put-on-trial-549184>

¹⁷⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). ‘Yaser Murtaja’. Committee to Protect Journalists. April 7th 2018. Accessed on September 3rd 2020. <https://cpj.org/data/people/yaser-murtaja/>

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

On April 6th 2018, Murtaja was documenting the events unfolding during the second consecutive week of the GMR, capturing images of the demonstrations by the eastern periphery of the Strip.¹⁸¹ In the afternoon, the Palestinian photojournalists was shot with a live round of ammunition by the ISF, despite clearly wearing a navy-blue bullet proof vest with the words “PRESS” transparently written on it, roughly three hundred and fifty metres away from the fence which separates the Gaza Strip from the state of Israel.^{182, 183, 184}

The bullet had pierced Murtaja underneath his arm paving a trajectory towards his intestines, rupturing one of his main arteries.¹⁸⁵ After being fatally shot, Murtaja was transferred to Khan Younis’ Nasser Hospital, undergoing a four-hour operation whereby part of his liver had been removed.^{186, 187} As his physical state worsened, the Palestinian journalists soon died the next day at roughly 1 am, suffering from “severe damage in the spleen and arteries, resulting in substantial blood loss.”¹⁸⁸

The Investigation:

One day after Yaser Murtaja was killed, the Israeli military publicly issued a statement claiming that it “does not intentionally fire on journalists” and that “the circumstances in which journalists were hit, allegedly by IDF fire, are unknown to us and are being examined,” with Brigadier General Moti Baruch leading the investigation.^{189, 190} After supposedly conducting an extensive examination into the incident, the military institution, as well as the former Israeli Defence Minister, Avigdor Liberman, concluded that the

¹⁸¹ Al-Jazeera. ‘Yaser Murtaja, and His Dreams of Travelling’. Al Jazeera. April 7th 2018. Accessed on September 3rd 2020 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/4/7/yaser-murtaja-and-his-dreams-of-travelling>.

¹⁸² CPJ. *Yaser Murtaja*.

¹⁸³ Robert Fisk. ‘Opinion: Here’s How the Deaths of Journalists Are Brushed Aside in the Middle East.’ The Independent. January 31st 2019. Accessed on August 4th 2020. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/jamal-khashoggi-un-istanbul-embassy-saudi-arabia-yaser-murtaja-agnes-callamard-a8755366.html>.

¹⁸⁴ Al-Jazeera. *Yaser Murtaja, and His Dreams of Travelling*.

¹⁸⁵ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 156

¹⁸⁶ Al-Jazeera. *Yaser Murtaja, and his dreams of travelling*

¹⁸⁷ Altahrir. ‘One Year Ago Today, An Israeli Sniper Killed Palestinian Photojournalist Yaser Murtaja’. Altahrir. April 7th 2019. Accessed on August 5th 2020. <https://altahrir.wordpress.com/2019/04/07/one-year-ago-today-an-israeli-sniper-killed-palestinian-photojournalist-yaser-murtaja/>.

¹⁸⁸ CPJ. *Yaser Murtaja*.

¹⁸⁹ Fisk. ‘As the UN jabs nervously at the truth about Khashoggi, remember how often journalists’ deaths are brushed aside.’

¹⁹⁰ CPJ. *Yaser Murtaja*.

photojournalist Yaser Murtaja had been a secret agent for Hamas, disguised as a reporter, withholding a rank similar to a captain.¹⁹¹ No evidence was provided to support this claim.¹⁹²

In spite of this factor, this belief was advocated by both Ofir Gendelman, the current spokesperson to the Arab media and David Keyes, an Israeli American Public Relations representative.¹⁹³ Explicitly, David Keyes confidently told a reporter from The Jerusalem Post that “I’ve seen the intelligence and there is not one scintilla of doubt about his [Yaser Murtaja] being an officer in Hamas.”¹⁹⁴ Regardless of this conviction, both David Keyes’ and the Israeli military had ultimately failed to unanimously receive both the domestic and international support behind this notion.

Domestically, Ahmed Tibi, the leader of the Ta’al political party in Israel, dismissed the assertions made by the former Israeli Defence Minister.¹⁹⁵ In addition to this, the human rights organisation Al-Mezan, had expressed in an online report that Yaser Murtaja “didn’t have a Hamas connection” and so described the IDF’s conclusion as “rubbish”.^{196, 197}

Internationally, the Israeli military had once again received an array of criticism from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), ranging from the International Federation of Journalists, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the UN. Collectively, all organisations concluded that Yaser Murtaja had not been an imminent threat to either the people around him or to the sniper stationed by the earth mound when he had been fatally shot. Explicitly, the International Federation of Journalists concluded that the “Israeli soldiers murdered a journalist,” whilst also “fabricating lies to justify murder.”¹⁹⁸

In February 2019, the UN carried out an independent investigation into the incident and found that the highly-skilled marksman had “intentionally shot” the Palestinian journalists covering the GMR.¹⁹⁹ Soon after Murtaja had been killed, the CPJ had directly issued a letter

¹⁹¹ Noa Shpigel, and The Associated Press. ‘Slain Gaza Journalist, Branded Hamas Militant by Israel, Received U.S. Grant.’ Haaretz. April 10th 2018. Accessed on September 1st 2020. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/gaza-journalist-branded-hamas-militant-by-israel-received-u-s-funds-1.5990627>.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Seth J. Frantzman. ‘Terrorist or Journalist? Who Really Was the Slain Gazan Yaser Murtaja?’ The Jerusalem Post. April 13th 2018. Accessed on August 5th 2020. <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/terrorist-or-journalist-who-really-was-the-slain-gazan-yaser-murtaja-549709>.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Fisk. ‘As the UN jabs nervously at the truth about Khashoggi, remember how often journalists’ deaths are brushed aside.’

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Frantzman. ‘Terrorist or Journalist? Who really was the slain Gazan Yaser Murtaja.’

¹⁹⁹ Landau. ‘UN Council: Israel Intentionally Shot Children and Journalists in Gaza’.

to the current Israeli Prime Minister, demanding the “only democracy in the Middle-East” to effectively hold the Israeli sniper accountable.^{200, 201}

Ultimately, it is clear that the organisations’ or individuals’ which do not share similar interests to that of the Israeli military had found the highly-skilled sniper guilty of carrying out a democidal act of violence against an unarmed journalist, who had been documenting the events unfolding during the GMR on April 6th, 2018.

Discussion:

The death of this unarmed civilian who was carrying out his work as an investigative journalist was not out of necessity and amounts to a disproportionate use of force by the state of Israel, the culprits of a war-crime. Moreover, Murtaja’s death highlights the democidal nature embedded within Israel’s brutal open-fire policy conducted against journalists, a provocative attempt to intentionally silence the media coverage capturing the crimes committed by the ISF.

To reinforce my claim that the IDF had committed an act of democide via the death of Yaser Murtaja, I wish to remind the readers how a sniper, aiming down their scope, clearly “sees your face, he sees your expressions, he sees your age, he sees where he wats the bullet to lodge.”²⁰² In Yaser Murtaja’s case, “he [the sniper] knows exactly what kind of damage his bullet will cause to that location.”²⁰³

In relation to Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta’s statement above, the Palestinian photojournalist was struck by a bullet in the weak spot of his bullet-proof flak jacket, just below his arm, paving a trajectory towards his abdomen. Ultimately, the precision behind this interpersonal attack serves to emphasis the level of intimacy to inflict pain, therefore reinforcing the democidal nature behind this act of violence carried out against an unarmed person, by a government

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ Muqtedar Khan. *Israel: No More The “Only Democracy in the Middle East”*. Center for Global Policy. 2018. Accessed on August 8th 2020. p. 3.

https://www.academia.edu/37152942/Israel_No_More_The_Only_Democracy_in_the_Middle_East

²⁰² Perla. *Interview with Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta*. p. 51

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

representative, specifically the IDF. Yaser Murtaja was the twenty-eighth Palestinian killed within a week by the Israeli military.²⁰⁴

The death of an unarmed reporter infringes on a plethora of international laws and conventions purposefully designed to ensure their protection. Specifically, it violates the *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2222*, which requires a sovereign state to ensure the “protection of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in armed conflicts.”²⁰⁵ Moreover, the resolution calls for the “conduct of impartial, independent and effective investigations within their jurisdiction and to bring perpetrators of such crimes to justice.”²⁰⁶ That said, no one has been held accountable for the death of Yaser Murtaja. Thus, the lack of accountability combined with the culture of systematic impunity “has enabled Israel to continue its oppressive policies in Gaza,” specifically against Palestinian journalists in the Strip.²⁰⁷

Time and time again, media professionals stationed within the Gaza Strip are subjected to an excessive use of lethal force by the ISF. According to Amnesty International, since the beginning of the march, at least two journalists had been fatally shot. The first victim was Yaser Murtaja, the second, Ahmed Abu Hussein, who too was wearing a protective vest with the words “PRESS” emblazoned in bold.²⁰⁸ According to Al-Mezan, both “journalists... were also considered not to represent an imminent threat of death or serious injury to the Israeli forces when they were shot,” discrediting the legitimacy behind both attacks.²⁰⁹

Between March 30th – April 6th 2018, over thirty Palestinian reporters documenting the GMR had been injured by the Israeli armed forces, eleven of which had been shot with live ammunition.^{210, 211} That roughly equates to three journalists injured per day. Since the beginning of the march, over one hundred and seventy reporters have been injured by the

²⁰⁴ BBC. ‘Israel to Investigate Killing of Palestinian Journalist’. BBC News. April 7th 2018. Accessed on August 20th 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43683184>.

²⁰⁵ United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 2222*. UNSCR. May 27, 2015. p. 1. <https://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2222>.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 4

²⁰⁷ Defense for Children Palestine (DCIP). ‘Two Years On, No Accountability for Palestinian Child Protestors Killed by Israeli Forces.’ DCIP. March 30th 2020. Accessed on October 3rd 2020. https://www.dci-palestine.org/two_years_on_no_accountability_for_palestinian_child_protestors_killed_by_israeli_forces.

²⁰⁸ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 154.

²⁰⁹ DCIP. ‘Two Years On, No Accountability for Palestinian Child Protestors Killed by Israeli Forces.’

²¹⁰ Al-Haq. ‘Israeli Occupying Forces Target Journalists Covering Gaza Protests, Killing One and Injuring Others’. Al-Haq. April 12th 2018. Accessed on August 21st 2020. <https://www.alhaq.org/monitoring-documentation/6244.html>.

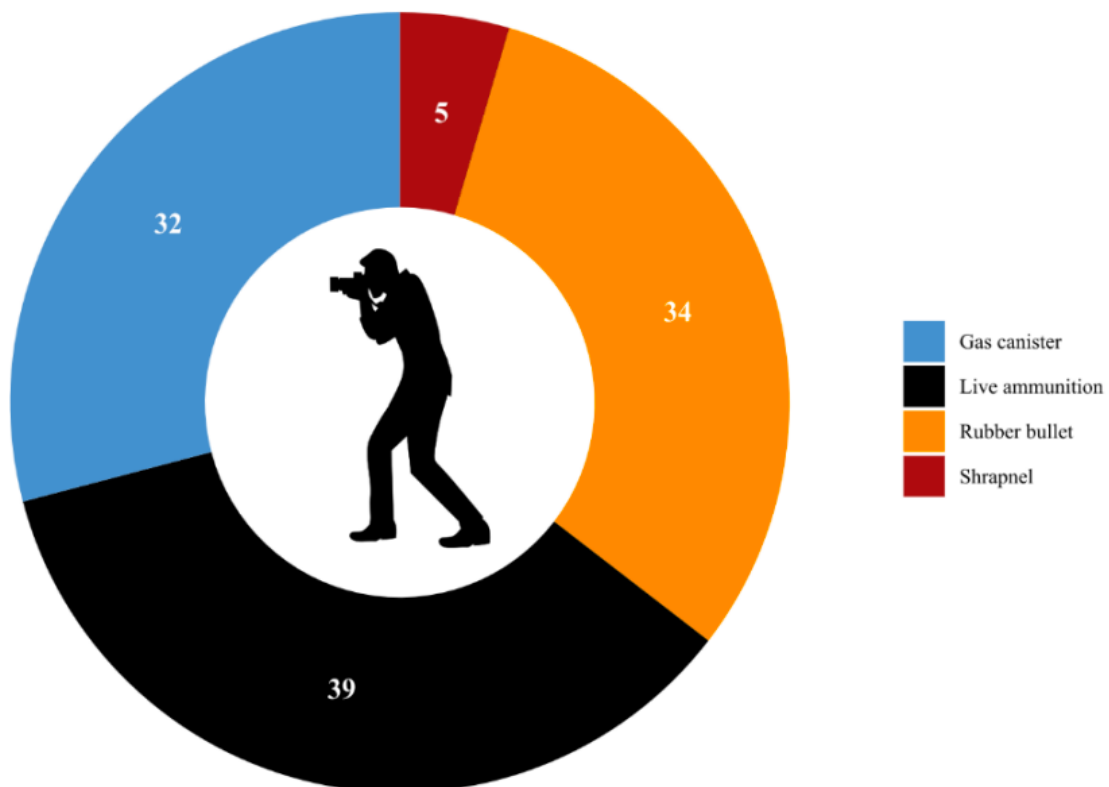
²¹¹ *Ibid.*

ISF, with sixty-four of those injuries resulting from the use of high-velocity ammunition.²¹²

²¹³ Moreover, more than thirty journalists had been attacked more than once by the ISF.²¹⁴

Graph 1:

Total number of injuries to journalists during the Great March of Return between March 30th – 31st December 2018.²¹⁵



It must be clearly understood that the specific targeting of journalists in the Gaza Strip is not a variable unique to the GMR alone. Within incidents in the past, Palestinian reporters residing in the Strip have been killed intentionally by the Israeli military. Throughout Operation Protective Edge, on July 9th 2014, Hamid Shehab, a Palestinian journalist that had worked for 24 Media was deliberately struck by a rocket while driving his car, despite the

²¹² Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights. *Attacks on Unarmed Protesters at the "Great March of Return*. p. 17.

²¹³ *Ibid.* p. 18.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 17.

²¹⁵ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 155.

fact that the automobile was branded as a press vehicle.²¹⁶ When questioned, the IDF claimed that it had no initial information and asserted that the military will look into the incident for more details.²¹⁷

Despite the IDF's response, many international observers interpreted the death of Hamid Shehab as "a deliberate and planned crime to discourage Palestinian journalists from showing occupation crimes and horrors of collective punishment against the Gaza Strip."²¹⁸ Hamid Shehab had been one of the seventeen journalists killed during Operation Protective Edge, the bloodiest year for reporters in Palestine.^{219, 220}

Two years before the death of Hamid Shehab, the Israeli military orchestrated a series of four coordinated artillery strikes in November 2012, resulting in the deaths of two Palestinian cameramen.²²¹ Without providing any evidence to support their claims, the Israeli government asserted that each of the four attacks had been directed against legitimate military targets. Discrediting these claims, the New York Based NGO, Human Rights Watch found "no indications that these targets were valid military objectives."²²²

Ultimately, through all of the examples mentioned above, you can pose the argument that the Israeli military, pursuant to a government policy, had committed an act of democide. Despite being both unarmed and uninvolved from any form of military activity, the IDF personnel continued to purposefully strike Palestinian journalists in Gaza that had been documenting the socio-political and human rights issues arising within the besieged Strip. Thus in hindsight, it is of no surprise that the CPJ had interpreted Yaser Murtaja's death as "part of the pattern," embedded within the ISF's open-fire policy conducted against protesters in the Gaza Strip during the GMR.²²³

²¹⁶ International Freedom of Expression Exchange. 'A List of Journalists Attacked by Israeli Forces in Gaza.' IFEX. July 25th 2014. Accessed on December 1st 2020. <https://ifex.org/a-list-of-journalists-attacked-by-israeli-forces-in-gaza/>.

²¹⁷ Mohammed Omer. 'Palestinian Journalists Under Israeli Fire.' Al Jazeera. July 11th 2014. Accessed on December 1st 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2014/7/11/palestinian-journalists-under-israeli-fire>.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center. *Examination of the Names of 17 Journalists and Media Personnel Whom the Palestinians Claim Were Killed in Operation Protective Edge*. The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center. February 11th 2015. Accessed December 5, 2020. p. 1. https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20771/E_013_15_299752333.pdf

²²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 3.

²²¹ HRW. 'Israel/Gaza: Unlawful Israeli Attacks on Palestinian Media.' December 20th 2012. Accessed on December 29th 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/12/20/israel/gaza-unlawful-israeli-attacks-palestinian-media>

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ Ali Abunimah. 'Reporters Without Borders Accepts Prize from Journalist-killing Regime.' The Electronic Intifada. May 28th 2019. Accessed on September 4th 2020. <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/reporters-without-borders-accepts-prize-journalist-killing-regime>.

Consequently, by purposefully shooting Yaser Murtaja underneath his arm, well aware that this was one of the only few weak spots within his protective bulletproof vest, the Israeli Sniper, whose identity remains anonymous, had committed an act of democide. Via the extensive training exercises, the highly skilled marksman would be well aware of the level of damage expected by precisely aiming at that specific location and so the likelihood that this attack may result in death.

Thus, as a result of this precise, pre-meditated attack against an unarmed journalist, the Israeli military not only committed an act of democide, but also a war crime and is subjected to prosecution under Article 8(2)(b)(i) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.^{224, 225} In spite of committing a war crime, the state of Israel has not held any individual nor institution accountable for the killing of Palestinian journalists during either Operation Protective Edge or the GMR.²²⁶

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ International Criminal Court. *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. July 17th 1998. Accessed on 19th September 2020. p. 7. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/documents/rs-eng.pdf>.

²²⁶ Amnesty International. 'Justice for Victims of War Crimes in Gaza Conflict.' Amnesty International. 2014. Accessed December 5, 2020. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2015/07/justice-victims-war-crimes-gaza-conflict/>.

Chapter 4.2

Razan Ashraf Abdul Qadir al-Najjar

“I was proud and calm because she was a paramedic, and I believed the Israeli military wouldn’t harm her.”

Sabreen al-Najjar
reflecting on the death
of her daughter, Razan
al-Najjar.²²⁷

Introduction:

Razan al-Najjar was a 21-year-old Palestinian paramedic that had been killed by an Israeli sniper during the GMR on June 1st, 2018.²²⁸ Miss al-Najjar had lived in Khuza’a, a Palestinian town located in the Khan Yunis Governorate in the southern Gaza Strip, roughly five-hundred meters away from the barbed wire fence.²²⁹



Image 5: Razan al Najjar.²³⁰

On June 1st 2018, thousands of Palestinians began to collectively protest alongside the 1949 demarcation line that separated the Gaza Strip from Israel. Tires were torched and stones were thrown to distract the Israeli soldiers stationed alongside the fence, as a minority of

²²⁷ B'Tselem. 'Paramedic Rozan A-Najar Was Killed by Deliberate Fire.' B'Tselem. July 16th 2018. Accessed on October 3rd 2020. https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20180718_paramedic_rozan_a_najar_killed_by_deliberate_fire.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Ali Abunimah. 'Remembering Razan Al-Najjar, Honoring Health Workers.' The Electronic Intifada. June 1st 2020. Accessed on September 28th 2020. <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/remembering-razan-al-najjar-honoring-health-workers>.

²³⁰ Middle East Eye. 'I See My Daughter Razan in the Eyes of Every Young Palestinian.' Middle East Eye. March 21st 2019. Accessed on September 25th 2020. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/i-see-my-daughter-razan-eyes-every-young-palestinian>.

Palestinians continued to push towards the barbed wire fence.²³¹ The ISF responded by firing canisters containing either tear or nerve gas towards the concentrated crowds.²³² Furthermore, live rounds were also shot near the feet of Palestinians as a scare tactic, in an attempt to disband the protest.²³³ By large, these crowd controlling techniques failed, as Palestinian demonstrators drew closer to the fence.

According to the New York Times (NYT) and B'Tselem, by 18:00 PM a group of paramedics including Razan al-Najjar had approached the fence with their hands held up in the air to evacuate two young men suffering from teargas inhalation.²³⁴ After evacuating the two protesters, Rami Abu Jazar, a Palestinian paramedic who had served alongside Miss. al-Najjar on the day of her death, claimed that the atmosphere “was very calm” as “there was no action.”²³⁵ However, very soon the tempo of the atmosphere had drastically increased. Rami Abu Jazar informed a B'Tselem reporter that “at around a quarter to six, we saw two soldiers get out of a military jeep, kneel and aim their guns at us, taking up a sniper stance.”²³⁶

At 18:31, an Israeli sniper who has yet to be identified had fired a bullet towards a crowded group of civilians, from a sand beam over one hundred metres away.²³⁷ One bullet had penetrated three paramedics.²³⁸ Essentially the metal projectile had ricocheted and “exploded,” piercing Razan al-Najjar’s chest, severing her aorta artery, tearing Rami Abu Jazar’s left leg whilst also crippling Palestinian paramedic Mohammed Shafee, who received shrapnel in both his right hand and pelvic area.^{239, 240}

Rami Abu Jazar and Mohammed Shafee had received treatment for their shrapnel wounds and were later discharged from the hospital. However, Razan al-Najjar who had been taken to

²³¹ B'Tselem. *Paramedic Rozan A-Najar Was Killed by Deliberate Fire.*

²³² Halbfinger. *A Day, a life: When a Medic was Killed in Gaza.*

²³³ B'Tselem. *Paramedic Rozan A-Najar Was Killed by Deliberate Fire.*

²³⁴ Halbfinger. *A Day, a life: When a Medic was Killed in Gaza.*

²³⁵ David Halbfinger, John Woo, Malachy Browne & Yousur Al-Hlou. ‘An Israeli Soldier Killed a Medic in Gaza: We Investigated the Fatal Shot.’ December 30th 2018. Accessed on November 1st 2020. 09: 18.

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/100000005933727/israel-gaza-medical-killed-rouzan-najjar.html#:~:text=and%20David%20M.,On%20June%201%2C%20an%20Israeli%20soldier%20shot%20into%20a%20crowd,fire%20as%20a%20last%20resort.&text=commanders%20to%20reveal%20how%20Rouzan%20was%20killed.-Advertisement>

²³⁶ B'Tselem. *Paramedic Rozan A-Najar Was Killed by Deliberate Fire.*

²³⁷ Halbfinger. *A Day, a Life: When a Medic was Killed in Gaza.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Halbfinger, Woo, Browne & Al-Hlou. ‘An Israeli Soldier Killed a Medic in Gaza.’ 09.39 Seconds.

²⁴⁰ B'Tselem. *Paramedic Rozan A-Najar Was Killed by Deliberate Fire.*

the European Hospital South of Khan Yunis, was pronounced dead at 19:10, after thirty minutes of resuscitation attempts.²⁴¹

The Investigation:

As months passed, the IDF was subjected to both external and internal scrutiny, soon pressurizing the institution to conduct a criminal investigation into her death on October 29th 2018, one-hundred and fifty days after Razan al-Najjar was killed.²⁴² Initially, the IDF Spokesperson, Colonel Conricus conceded that the killing of Ms. Najjar was unintended, asserting that “she was not a target,” reminding the international community that “none of the medical personnel are ever a target.”²⁴³ Soon after Miss al-Najjar’s death, the IDF declared that the Palestinian paramedic had been accidentally killed by an Israeli sniper who was supposedly aiming at someone else.²⁴⁴

However, very soon after adopting this notion, the army’s social media unit began a coordinated smear campaign against the paramedic, suggesting that she had either been engaged in some form of rioting, or had attended the protest to shield Hamas militants disguised as protesters.²⁴⁵ Several Israeli representatives and diplomats had adopted the latter notion and began to tweet a deceptively edited video, released by the IDF, titled “Hamas’ use of human shield must stop,” with the hope to tarnish the image of Razan al-Najjar.^{246, 247} The video portrayed a female medic, wearing a hijab, throwing a gas canister in the air, with a subtitle that reads “this medic was incited by Hamas to give up her life for their goals.”^{248, 249}

²⁴¹ Halbfinger, Woo, Browne & Al-Hlou. ‘An Israeli Soldier Killed a Medic in Gaza.’ 09.45 Seconds.

²⁴² Ali Abunimah. ‘Israeli Sniper Deliberately Killed Medic Razan Al-Najjar, Investigation Finds.’ The Electronic Intifada. July 17th 2018. <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/israeli-sniper-deliberately-killed-medic-razan-al-najjar-investigation-finds>. Accessed on September 28th 2020.

²⁴³ Halbfinger. *A Day, a Life: When a Medic was Killed in Gaza*.

²⁴⁴ Robert Mackey. ‘Israel Attempts to Smear Razan Al-Najjar, Palestinian Medic It Killed, Calling Her “No Angel”.’ The Intercept. June 8th 2018. Accessed on September 29th 2020. <https://theintercept.com/2018/06/08/israel-attempts-smear-razan-al-najjar-palestinian-medic-killed-calling-no-angel/>

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁴⁶ The Independent. ‘Israeli Army Edits Video of Palestinian Medic Its Troops Shot Dead to Misleadingly Show She Was a “human Shield for Hamas.”’ The Independent. June 11th 2018. Accessed on September 29th 2020. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/gaza-protests-latest-idf-condemned-edited-video-angel-mercy-medic-razan-al-najjar-a8389611.html>

²⁴⁷ Mackey. ‘Israel Attempts to Smear Razan al-Najjar.’

²⁴⁸ Erakat. *The Sovereign Right to Kill*. p. 786.

²⁴⁹ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 193.

The video was shared via social media by Mark Regev, former Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom and Avichay Adraee, an Arabic language spokesperson for the IDF, who personally emphasised that “Razan al Najjar is not the angel of mercy that Hamas propaganda attempts to portray.”²⁵⁰ To conclude, the IDF’s investigation claimed that Razan al-Najjar had links to the militant organisation Hamas, retaining a set of ulterior motives during the GMR.

On the contrary, B’Tselem, who too conducted an investigation into Razan al-Najjar’s death found that she “was fatally shot by a member of the security forces who was aiming directly at her as she was standing about 25 meters away from the fence, despite the fact that she posed no danger to him or anyone else and was wearing a medical uniform.”²⁵¹

Similar notions were expressed by David M Halbfinger and a team of journalists representing the NYT, who had collectively conducted an investigation into the death of Miss al-Najjar. The NYT analysed over a thousand detailed crowd-sourced videos and photographs taken on June 1st 2018, whilst also interviewing over thirty individuals - with the ultimate aim to reconstruct and understand the events that took place on June 1st 2018. After analysing a detailed reconstruction of the event, the NYT concluded that the shooting was unjustified given that “we don’t see a single protester or violent threat within 100 yards of the fence.”²⁵² Shockingly, the team of journalists found that the bullet which had killed Ms. Najjar was fired towards a crowd of white-coated medics who, according to David M. Halbfinger, were in plain sight.²⁵³

Following the conclusions adopted by both B’Tselem and the NYT, the IDF received further criticism for deceitfully editing a video to purposefully tarnish the image of Razan al-Najjar, with the hope to clear both the soldier and the military institution from any wrongdoings.

To sum up, both B’Tselem and the NYT found that the Palestinian paramedic posed no threat whatsoever to the people around her or the Israeli sniper that had killed Miss al-Najjar. Moreover, the investigation established the notion that there was no conscious attempt carried

²⁵⁰ Mackey. *Israel Attempts to Smear Razan al-Najjar*.

²⁵¹ Abunimah. ‘Israeli Sniper Deliberately Killed Medic Razan Al-Najjar, Investigation Finds.’

²⁵² Halbfinger, Woo, Browne & Al-Hlou. ‘An Israeli Soldier Killed a Medic in Gaza: We Investigated the Fatal Shot.’ 13:53 Seconds.

²⁵³ Halbfinger. *A Day, a Life: When a Medic was Killed in Gaza*.

out by the Palestinian paramedic to break the separation fence.²⁵⁴ Therefore, the “intentional killing of an unarmed or disarmed person by a government agent acting in their authoritative capacity and pursuant to government policy or high command,” amounts to a war crime and serves to expose the democidal traits embedded within the ISF’s open-fire policy.²⁵⁵

Discussion:

The killing of this unarmed paramedic, who did not pose as an imminent threat to the Israeli sniper or to the people around her, was not out of necessity and amounts to an excessive use of force by the state of Israel. By shooting a bullet designed for a sniper rifle towards a concentrated group of people, the highly-skilled Israeli sniper retained a “reckless and wanton disregard for the lives of those affected” and is therefore guilty of committing an act of democide.²⁵⁶

Disturbingly, many of the individuals within this concentrated group had worn white-coated uniforms that day, informing the marksman that they were professional medical personnel. Moreover, all white-coated medics were unarmed and none of them had engaged in any form of violent activity at the time Miss. al-Najjar had been fatally shot. With this in mind, the Israeli military has failed to provide any legitimate reasoning to justify the targeting and subsequent killing of Razan al-Najjar on June 1st 2018.

To briefly mention, the killing of an unarmed paramedic infringes on a number of international laws and conventions purposefully designed to ensure their protection. Theoretically, “medical personnel exclusively assigned to medical duties must be respected and protected in all circumstance,” according to Rule 25 of the Customary International Humanitarian Law.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Yossi Beilin. ‘Israel’s ‘shooting Routine’ on Gaza Border.’ Al-Monitor. January 7th 2019. Accessed on December 1st 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/01/israel-gaza-strip-palestinians-demonstrations-paramedic-idf.html>.

²⁵⁵ Gleditsch. *R.J. Rummel: An Assessment of His Many Contributions*. p. 112.

²⁵⁶ Rummel. *Death by Government*. p. 42

²⁵⁷ International Committee of the Red Cross. ‘Rule 25. Medical Personnel.’ International Committee of Red Cross. 1949 Accessed on December 29, 2020.

https://ihl.databases.icrc.org/customaryihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule25#:~:text=light%20individual%20weapons,Rule%2025.,acts%20harmful%20to%20the%20enemy

In spite of this convention, a total of three Palestinian medical workers had been killed during the GMR between the period of March 30th to December 31st 2018.²⁵⁸ The first victim had been Musa Abu Hassainen, a thirty-five-year-old Civil Defence paramedic who was shot in his chest, on May 14th 2018.²⁵⁹ The second, Razan al-Najjar. The third was Abed Abdullah Al-Qotati, a twenty-two-year-old volunteer that had been fatally struck by a bullet in his back whilst holding a red first-aid kit, tending to an injured demonstrator on August 10th, 2018.²⁶⁰

According to the UNHRC, all three victims had worn medical clothing items the day that they had been killed which clearly distinguished their profession and thus their purpose during the GMR. Moreover, all three medical professionals posed no threat to the ISF, or to the people around them at the moment they had been killed.^{261, 262} Despite this, all paramedics mentioned above were struck by a metal projectile above their waist by an Israeli sniper, who was determined to exert a deadly use of force towards Palestinian health workers in the Gaza Strip during the GMR. Thus, within each of these cases, you can pose the argument that the Israeli military had committed an act of democide, by purposefully shooting unarmed paramedics in areas which in many cases proved to be fatal.

Essentially, the death of Razan al-Najjar serves as a poignant illustration representing the IDF's willingness to use battlefield weapons against unarmed paramedics. This case study example vividly portrayed the Israeli military's indiscriminate open-fire policy, a framework that essentially welcomes the likelihood of acts of democide to arise. Due to this framework, it would be incorrect to assume that democidal acts of violence, specifically towards Palestinian paramedics, is a variable unique to the GMR alone.

²⁵⁸ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 150.

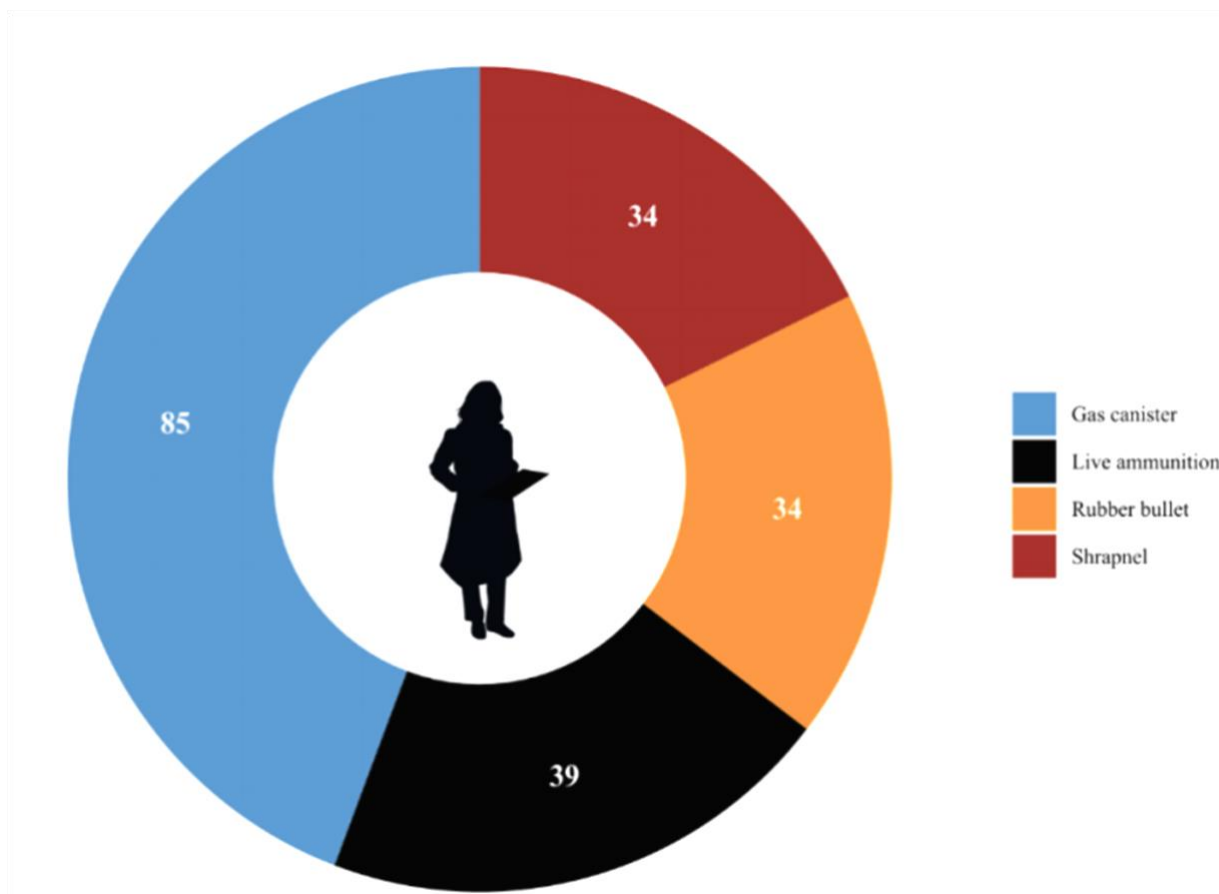
²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 151.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 152.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.* 151.

Graph 2:
Total number of Injuries to health workers during the Great March of Return between March 30th – 31st December 2018.²⁶³



During Operation Protective Edge (2014), there had been “continuous attacks on hospitals, medical personnel, rescue teams and ambulances.”²⁶⁴ Throughout this military campaign, a minimum of twenty-three health workers had been killed as a direct consequence of artillery fire, orchestrated by the Israeli military.²⁶⁵ In some incidents, the IDF intentionally targeted

²⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 150.

²⁶⁴ Gaëlle Dusepulchre and Manuel Lambert. *Trapped and Punished. The Gaza Civilian Population under Operation Protective Edge*. FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights. 2015. Accessed on October 24th 2020. p. 30. <https://palestina-komitee.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Gaza-Trapped-and-Punished-FIDH-2015.pdf>

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 31.

vehicles transporting the injured and hospitals housing the wounded.^{266, 267} In all cases, the World Health Organisation concluded that the deceased medical workers had died as a result of the IDF's "direct targeting of health facilities," as more than fifty medical related installations all throughout the Strip had been attacked, with one hospital and seven health care facilities being completely destroyed by the Israeli military.²⁶⁸

In relation to these artillery assaults, the Israeli military "released insufficient information regarding the specific military objectives of its attacks," which essentially discredits the notion that there had been some form of military activity within or around the specific health facilities it had attacked.²⁶⁹ Moreover, eye-witness accounts told an independent commission representing the UNHRC that only "civilians were the victims of the IDF barrage" against the health facilities within the Strip.²⁷⁰

By dropping a number of artillery shells on health facilities designed to safeguard the wounded and protect the sick, the Israeli military by large held a wanton, disregard for the human life at cost within these targeted areas, a fundamental democidal characteristic.²⁷¹

To mention briefly, medical institutions and facilities are theoretically protected under Article 19 of the Geneva Convention I which explicitly states that "medical service may in in no circumstances be attacked, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict."²⁷² However, throughout Operation Protective Edge, the Israeli military had targeted medical institutions which resulted in the death of over twenty health care workers. This fact serves to reinforce the claim that the Israeli military had not only violated Article 19 of the Geneva Convention, yet had also orchestrated a number of democidal acts of violence in the past.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 30.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 3.

²⁶⁸ Arvind Reddy. *Israeli Violations of International Humanitarian Law During Operation Protective Edge*. 2015-2016. p. 135. <https://prizedwriting.ucdavis.edu/sites/prizedwriting.ucdavis.edu/files/users/mtrujil3/131PW%20Reddy.pdf>

²⁶⁹ UNHRC. *United Nations General Assembly. Report of the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1*. United Nations Digital Library. 2015. Accessed on October 25th 2020. p. 19. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/800872?ln=en>

²⁷⁰ Reddy. *Israeli Violations of International Humanitarian Law During Operation Protective Edge*. p. 144.

²⁷¹ Rummel. *Death by Government*. p. 36

²⁷² International Committee of the Red Cross. *Practice Relating to Rule 28. Medical Units*. International Committee of Red Cross. 1949. Accessed December 8, 2020. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule28

To conclude, it is evidently clear that democide, as a theoretical concept is not just applicable to the GMR. As this discussion demonstrated, democidal traits were evidently embedded within past military campaigns conducted by the IDF, such as Operation Protective Edge, which ultimately resulted in the deaths of many unarmed, innocent medical health workers.

Therefore, it is clear that the targeting and killing of medical officials in Gaza by the Israeli military is not an anomaly. As this sub-chapter highlighted, the Israeli military had coordinated artillery and drone strikes specifically against innocent medical personnel throughout Operation Protective Edge, violating a plethora of international laws and conventions designed to safeguard medical officials in times of conflict or dispute. Furthermore, this chapter exposed the IDF's willingness to intentionally target and kill white-coated medical officials, such as Razan al-Najjar, in the Gaza Strip during the GMR. To conclude, the excessive use of lethal force that translates into the killing of unarmed paramedics who are theoretically protected under international law, constitutes as an act of democide.

Chapter 4.3

Ahmad Misabah Abu Tyour

“Ahmad loved to listen to dahiya dance music and dance the dabkeh. Since he died, I haven’t been able to hear dahiya songs because they remind me of him. I keep watching the footage of his injury over and over again, despite the pain. His crying out still pain me. I wish I’d taken the bullet instead of him.”

Aidah Abu Tyour reflecting on the death of her son.²⁷³

Introduction:

Ahmad Misabah Abu Tyour was a 16-year-old Palestinian teenager that had been killed by an Israeli sniper during the GMR on September 7th, 2018. Born in Rafah, a Palestinian city in the Southern Gaza-Strip, Abu Tyour grew up in a besieged environment, forced to witness the destruction caused by the many military assaults conducted by the IDF since 2008. On Friday 7th September 2018, Ahmad Abu Tyour was waving his hands at an Israeli sniper stationed alongside the separation fence, standing by the concertina wire laid out by the IDF.²⁷⁴



Image 6:
Ahmad Misabah Abu Tyour.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ B'Tselem. 'In 6 Months of Gaza Protests, Israeli Forces Fatally Shoot 31 Palestinian Minors.' B'Tselem. October 15th 2018. Accessed on September 30th 2020.

https://www.btselem.org/firearm/20181015_31_minors_killed_in_gaza_protests_in_6_months

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Describing the atmosphere moments before his brothers' death, Tamer Abu Tyour told a B'Tselem field researcher how "soldiers fired live bullets at us from the red tower. Ahmad was standing by the fence with his hands up in the air, about 25 meters away from me when suddenly he fell down."²⁷⁶

At roughly 18:00, Ahmad Abu Tyour was fatally shot in his thigh by an Israeli sniper stationed alongside the separation fence.²⁷⁷ Describing the feeling as "electricity going through my leg", the bullet had ravaged Ahmad's femoral artery.^{278, 279} After being rushed into an ambulance, Abu Tyour was driven to the European Gaza Hospital undergoing two major surgeries during which "Ahmad's heart had stopped twice," with the hope to suture the severed artery.²⁸⁰ As hours passed, Abu Tyour's physical state had worsened. Despite being given several blood transfusions, on Saturday 8th September, at 11:00, Ahmad Abu Tyour had died.²⁸¹

The Investigation:

Soon after the teenager's death, the IDF instrumentally issued a statement claiming that the "appropriate authorities" will conduct an inquiry, ensuring that "the events [on September 7th, 2018] will be reviewed by the relevant command echelons."^{282, 283} After the relevant command echelons reviewed the incident, the Israeli military concluded that in relation to the "violent disturbances along the fence, IDF soldiers responded with riot control measures and acted in accordance with open-fire regulations," on September 7th 2018.^{284, 285} Whether the state of Israel believes that such "riot control measures" should result in the death of a sixteen-year-old teenager is a separate matter of discussion.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ UNHRC *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 13.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ B'Tselem. 'In 6 Months of Gaza Protests, Israeli Forces Fatally Shoot 31 Palestinian Minors.'

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² Myriam Puurtscher. 'Two Palestinian Teenagers Killed in Ongoing Protests in Gaza.' *Palestine Monitor*. September 10th 2018. Accessed on September 2nd 2020. <https://www.palestinemonitor.org/details.php?id=mw9n5da20456y2h0rx3fv3>

²⁸³ I24News. 'IDF to Investigate shooting of two Gazan teens killed during border clashes.' I24News. September 9th 2018. Accessed on November 1st 2020. <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/183742-180908-shooting-of-palestinian-teen-at-gaza-border-riots-caught-on-video>

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Puurtscher. *Two Palestinian Teenagers Killed in Ongoing Protests in Gaza*.

Soon after adopting this conclusion the Israeli military, once again, reminded the general public that the militant organisation governing the region, Hamas, was using the protest as an excuse to carry out a series of armed attacks against the Zionist state. By doing so, Israeli high officials had essentially shifted the responsibility of Abu Tyour's death, from the Israeli sniper that had pulled the trigger, to the shoulders of the Islamist government.²⁸⁶

Domestically, NGOs in the region such as B'Tselem, had found that the sixteen-year-old teenager was not an imminent threat to either the people around him or to the ISF at the time he had been fatally shot.²⁸⁷ Moreover, this notion was also propagated by the leading left-wing Israeli media outlet, Haaretz, that had published an article titled *16-year-old Gazan Shot to Death by Israeli Soldiers While Waving His Hands; Army to Investigate Incident* (2018), providing video footage of the incident to support this claim.²⁸⁸ Internationally, organisations such as the UNHRC found that Abu Tyour, who had been unarmed, was fatally shot whilst performing “a traditional Palestinian dance, along with his hands in the air.”²⁸⁹

As a result, human rights organisations in the region, such as the Defence for Children International Palestine concluded that the deliberate targeting and subsequent killing of this Palestinian teenager was a crime against humanity, violating international law, thus amounting to a war crime which the state of Israel and the soldier specifically must be held effectively accountable for.²⁹⁰

Discussion:

Ahmad Abu Tyour was not an imminent threat to the IDF or to the Palestinian demonstrators near him, yet was fatally shot by an Israeli sniper stationed by the separation fence while the unarmed sixteen-year-old boy was waving his hands towards the sky. As the UNHRC concluded, the Palestinian boy was not a representative of Hamas, uninvolved in any form of

²⁸⁶ I24News. *IDF to Investigate shooting of two Gazan teens killed during border clashes.*

²⁸⁷ B'Tselem. In 6 Months of Gaza Protests, Israeli Forces Fatally Shoot 31 Palestinian Minors.

²⁸⁸ Jack Khoury, Yaniv Kubovich, and Almog Ben Zikri. '16-year-old Gazan Shot to Death by Israeli Soldiers While Waving His Hands; Army to Investigate Incident.' Haaretz. September 8th 2018. Accessed on November 3rd 2020. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/video-shows-16-year-old-gazan-shot-by-israeli-soldiers-while-waving-hands-1.6463970>.

²⁸⁹ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.* p. 13.

²⁹⁰ DCIP. 'Two years on, no accountability for Palestinian child protesters killed by Israeli forces.'

militant activity on September 7th 2018.²⁹¹ Ultimately, the state of Israel has failed to provide a legitimate justification in accordance with international law explaining why this child was killed by a highly-skilled Israeli marksman. To stress, a metal projectile designed for a sniper rifle, piercing a sixteen-year-old in his thigh can have life-threatening consequences, a fact which the Israeli military, specifically the well-trained sniper was well aware of.

Since the beginning of the protest, a minimum of forty-eight children had been killed and six hundred and twenty-five injured by live fire from the IDF.^{292, 293} Despite there being over forty children deaths, only four criminal investigations were opened by the state of Israel.²⁹⁴ Ahmad Abu Tour was the fourteenth child that had been killed by an Israeli sniper stationed alongside the separation fence during the GMR. Within the same month of Abu Tyour's death, fourteen-year-old Mohamed Naiyf al-Houm was fatally shot in his abdomen, east of al-Boreij refugee camp by an Israeli sniper during the social protest.²⁹⁵ On that very same day, twelve-year-old Nasser Azmi Musbih was shot in the head.²⁹⁶

It must be noted that children enjoy a special form of protection under international law. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) was purposefully designed to protect children's right to life.²⁹⁷ Specifically, Article 19 declared that "State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence."²⁹⁸ However, via the pre-mediated killing of Ahmad Abu Tyour and many other Palestinian children during the GMR, the Israeli military had violated Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This notion was also expressed by the UNHRC, who claimed "that Israel violated those rights when its forces used lethal force against children who did not pose an imminent threat of death or serious injury to others at the time they were shot."²⁹⁹

²⁹¹ UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 148.

²⁹² DCIP. 'Two Years On, No Accountability for Palestinian Child Protestors Killed by Israeli Forces.'

²⁹³ Al-Mezan. *Attacks on Unarmed Protesters at the "Great March of Return"*. p. 7.

²⁹⁴ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p 19.

²⁹⁵ Amnesty International. *Six Months on: Gaza's "Great March of Return."*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Office of the High Commission for Human Rights. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 1989. Accessed on October 31st 2020. p. 1.
<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>.

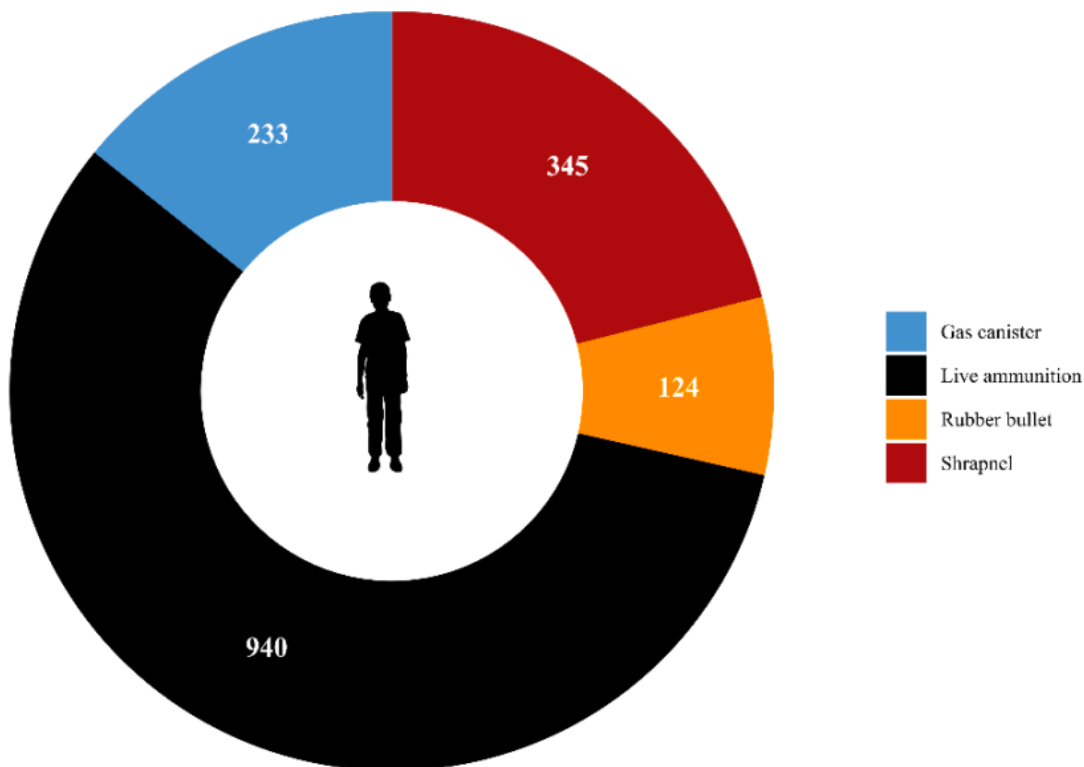
²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 5.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 19.

Furthermore, the UNHRC “finds reasonable grounds to believe that Israeli snipers shot them intentionally, knowing that they were children.”^{300, 301} Ultimately, the qualitative and quantitative information available portrays a willingness, on behalf of the ISF, to systematically target and instrumentally kill children, such as Ahmad Abu Tyour, throughout the GMR.

Graph 3:

Total number of injuries to children during the Great March of Return between March 30th – 31st December 2018.³⁰²



It must be understood that since the imposition of the military siege, Palestinian children residing within the Gaza Strip are subjected to an increasing excessive level of military force, exerted by the IDF. Therefore, it would be incorrect to assume that no acts of democide committed against Palestinian children in Gaza took place, prior to 2018.

³⁰⁰ Landau. ‘UN Council: Israel Intentionally shot Children and Journalists in Gaza.’

³⁰¹ UNHRC. *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 13.

³⁰² UNHRC. *Report of the detailed findings of the independent international Commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. p. 142.

Throughout Operation Protective Edge (2014), a minimum of five hundred and thirty children had been killed by a direct attack orchestrated by the Israeli military.³⁰³ Almost sixty-eight percent of the children killed had been twelve years of age or younger.³⁰⁴

Throughout this military operation, the IDF had “committed grave violations against children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories,” killing a minimum of eighteen children specifically by drone and artillery strikes conducted against schools in the region.³⁰⁵

To reinforce the notion that the Israeli military had committed an act of democide during this epoch, this chapter briefly investigates two incidents below, exposing how unarmed children had been intentionally killed by a government agent, pursuant to government policy or high command.

On July 16th 2014, at roughly 15:30 the Israeli naval forces “directly targeted and killed four boys” from the Bakr family “while they played on a Gaza City Beach”, as a result of a coordinated artillery attack.³⁰⁶ In response to the domestic and international backlash, the IDF admitted that this had been a “tragic outcome”, reaffirming the notion that “the incident took place that had long been known as a compound belonging to Hamas.”³⁰⁷ Such a statement however fails to exonerate the state of Israel from this act of democide, especially given that international journalists stationed in nearby hotels in the region reported no militant activity in that specific area, at the time the Bakr family had been present on the beach.³⁰⁸

Disturbingly, this had not been the first time during this military campaign whereby unarmed children, not involved in any form of military activity, had been intentionally killed via a coordinated artillery or drone attack by a government representative, pursuant to a policy or high command.

On August 3rd 2014, an Israeli drone had deliberately fired a missile at a UNRWA – run school in the north of Gaza, killing a minimum of nine children.³⁰⁹ Discrediting the

³⁰³ DCIP. *Operation Protective Edge: A War Waged on Gaza's Children*. DCIP. April 16th 2015. Accessed on December 2nd 2020. p. 1. <https://www.dcipalestine.org/operation-protective-edge-a-war-waged-on-gaza-s-children>

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.20.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 71.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 25.

³⁰⁷ Muhammad Hussein. "Remembering Israel's Killing of Four Children on the Beach in Gaza." Middle East Monitor. July 16th 2020. Accessed on December 11th 2020. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200716-remembering-israels-killing-of-four-children-on-the-beach-in-gaza/>

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ DCIP. *Operation Protective Edge: A war waged on Gaza's children*. p. 12.

legitimacy behind such an attack, the DCIP, whom conducted an investigation into this specific incident found no reports to indicate any form of military activity within or near the educational institution at the time it had been attacked.³¹⁰ Therefore, by intentionally carrying out a co-ordinated strike upon a beach and an educational institution, despite there being no indication of military activity, thus killing unarmed children, the Israeli military had committed an act of democide on both July 16th and August 3rd 2014.

In total, the Israeli military had completely destroyed two educational institutions, damaging a minimum of one hundred and eighty-seven government schools, as well as ninety-two UNRWA – run schools.³¹¹ As a result of such precise pre-meditated attacks, a minimum of eighteen children inside or near an educational institution had been killed by Israeli artillery shelling during Operation Protective Edge.³¹²

Following this military campaign, the former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon (2007 – 2016) denounced these “criminal acts” of democide conducted against children, demanding the Israeli military, the culprits of a war crime, to be held accountable for the “gross violation of international humanitarian law”.³¹³

³¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 73.

³¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 71.

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ Jason Burke. "Gaza School Attack Denounced As 'criminal Act' by UN Chief." *The Guardian*. August 3rd 2014. Accessed on December 27th 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/03/israel-air-strike-un-school-gaza-rafah#:~:text=A%20deadly%20attack%20on%20a,general%2C%20Ban%20Ki%2Dmoon.&text=United%20Nations%20officials%20in%20Gaza,incident%22%20or%20an%20air%20strike>

Table 2:
Table below charts the total number of children killed within Israeli military offensives in the Gaza Strip since 2008.³¹⁴

Table 1: Total Number of Children Killed in Israeli Military Offensives in Gaza since 2008		
Name of Israeli military offensive	Date	Children Killed
Operation Warm Winter	February to March 2008	33
Operation Cast Lead	December 2008 to January 2009	352
Operation Pillar of Defense	November 2012	33
Operation Protective Edge	July to August 2014	535
Total		953

Essentially, Palestinian children residing in the Gaza Strip are subjected to a gross use of lethal force by the IDF. As this chapter demonstrated, within past military operations the Israeli military have committed acts of democide against children, who were intentionally targeted and killed by either a co-ordinated artillery or drone strikes. Continuing this trend, throughout the GMR, many unarmed children like Ahmad Abu Tyour was fatally shot with live rounds of ammunition by Israeli snipers stationed on top of the earth mounds near the 1949 armistice line. Ultimately, the death of Ahmad Abu Tyour and many other Palestinians under the age of eighteen throughout the GMR represents the IDF's willingness to intentionally use live ammunition against innocent unarmed children, an act of violence which constitutes as democide.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 9.

Conclusion

“There is a level of intimacy in sniper injuries that doesn’t exist in other acts of war. For example, a fighter pilot travelling at 15,000 feet in the air will not see their victims’ faces, nor will an artillery gunner. But the sniper sees your face...he sees where he wats the bullet to lodge, he knows exactly what kind of damage his bullet will cause to that location. So, it’s an intimate crime...it’s a much crueller crime.”

Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta (2018).³¹⁵

The first conclusion drawn from this study is that the IDF, via its pre-meditated military blockade on Gaza embedded within an economic warfare campaign, had committed an act of democide. As chapter two portrayed, the IDF’s siege on Gaza directly resulted in the deaths of cancer patients and the elderly residing in the Strip, whose ability to receive effective medical assistance was greatly limited due to the constraints imposed upon their movement. Therefore, chapter two of this study finds that the IDF held a wanton disregard for the lives of over two million people living in the Gaza Strip. To reinforce the notion that the IDF had committed an act of democide, this paper wishes to remind the readers, that a military siege which subsequently contributes to a humanitarian disaster, resulting in the death of an individual can be interpreted as an act of democide, a notion expressed in Rudolph Rummel’s book titled, *Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder* (1995).

The second conclusion drawn from this paper was that throughout Operation Protective Edge (2014), the Israeli military had deliberately killed unarmed civilians in Gaza, ranging from medical personal, reporters and children. As chapter four demonstrated, the IDF, abiding by the Dahiya doctrine, had coordinated a series of aerial strikes against hospitals, schools and news stations in the region. In other words, the Israeli military had recklessly carried out a set of destructive acts of violence against civil institutions, well aware of the risks involved and the potential damage that this attack may cause upon that location and the human lives at cost. As the Israeli military had intentionally killed unarmed medical officials, media correspondents and children throughout this military campaign, this study finds that the IDF, the culprits of a war crime, had committed an act of democide.

³¹⁵ Issa. *Interview with Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta*. p.51.

The third conclusion drawn from this research project was that the Israeli military, specifically the highly skilled snipers stationed by the demarcation fence that separates the Gaza Strip from the state of Israel, had intentionally shot unarmed Palestinians participating in the Great March of Return, above their torso, in their chest, neck and head. As discussed in chapter three and chapter four, the events that unfolded on March 30th, May 14th, June 1st and September 7th 2018, exposed the IDF's willingness to use military grade weaponry against a defenceless population exercising their universal right to form an assembly. By shooting unarmed Palestinians in fatal areas which in many cases resulted in their deaths, this thesis propagates the notion that the Israeli military had indiscriminately killed innocent Palestinian men, women, paramedics, journalists, children and the disabled with intent, throughout the GMR, constituting as an act of democide.

In addition, this research paper established a number of minor conclusions. Firstly, it finds that there is a strong culture of systematic impunity at an institutional level within the Israeli military, granted to any soldier that had intentionally killed a Palestinian protester during the GMR. Secondly, this study finds that the GMR was a civil protest, developed and maintained by Gaza's civil sector, not by Hamas or any other militant organisation in the region. Thirdly, as chapter two, chapter three and chapter four had demonstrated, the state of Israel has violated an extensive collection of international laws and conventions, designed to safeguard the well-being of a said population.

Limitations:

To a degree, this project was affected by a number of limitations. Firstly, the scope of the project was narrow, given that this study predominantly focused on the activities that unfolded throughout the GMR alone. In order to strengthen the notion that the Israeli military have committed multiple acts of democide against the Palestinian population in the region, this project would have benefitted from engaging in a discussion that explored the form of political violence exerted by the IDF in the West Bank and Jerusalem during times of dispute or conflict.

Another limitation of this research project lies within the researcher's inability to collect evidence that ultimately varied in its origin and presentation. As mentioned in the introduction, the majority of the information gathered to support this research project largely stemmed from academic databases and online search engines. To a strong degree, this paper would have benefitted from field work experience, which would have granted the social researcher the ability to speak with the residents of Gaza, documenting the significant events that unfolded during the GMR, which would have ultimately strengthened the project's credibility.

Importance of the Research Project:

Despite relying on the information produced by academic databases and online search engines, this thesis project presents a nuanced argument, supported by over one hundred and twenty primary and secondary sources, deriving from Israeli, Palestinian and International organisations and institutions that produced qualitative and quantitative information discussing the violence taking place in Gaza throughout the GMR, thus strengthening the integrity of the project's argument. Another important aspect of this project lies in its ability to develop our intellectual understanding behind the theoretical concept of democide. Tying a relatively recent case study to a twentieth century theoretical concept that essentially revitalises our awareness behind Rudolph Rummel's theory.

Ultimately, this thesis paper wishes to conclude on the following notion.

Since 2006, Palestinians residing in the Gaza Strip are illegitimately targeted and killed by the Israeli military who are in deep violation of Article II of the Human Rights Act (1998), which specifically states that “nobody, including the government can try to end your life.”³¹⁶ In order to prevent future democidal acts of violence from occurring, the Israeli military must be held effectively accountable in an international court for the war-crimes committed not only throughout the GMR, but also within past military campaigns such as Operation Protective Edge.

³¹⁶ Equality and Human Rights Commission Human Rights Act 'Article 2: Right to life.' November 15th 2018. Accessed on September 11th 2020. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights-act/article-2-right-life#:~:text=Everyone's%20right%20to%20life%20shall,2>.

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