



CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

**UN Human Rights Council: Thirty-Fifth Session, Agenda Item 7
Joint Oral Intervention: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Co-sponsored by Al-Haq and Al Mezan Center for Human Rights¹**

Delivered by: Mona Sabella

Mr. President,

At the opening of the session, the High Commissioner marked 50 years of Israeli military occupation. He recalled that throughout half a century of "deep suffering," Palestinians have been denied their most fundamental freedoms, and have endured systematic violations of international law that have been condemned "by virtually all States." Yet, Israeli occupation seems to have "no end in sight" as noted by the Special Rapporteur on the OPT. He described the occupation of Palestinian territory as a "perilous situation" intensified by systemic violations of human rights by Israel, including collective punishment, excessive use of force and unlawful killings.

In illegally annexed East Jerusalem, residency revocations and collective punishment policies are used to forcibly transfer Palestinians. All over the OPT, arbitrary detention, torture and repression represent a daily reality for the civilian population. In the Gaza Strip, a man-made humanitarian crisis is rapidly worsening due to the residual effect of 10 years of unlawful collective punishment, measures and frequent massive bombardment, where severe hardship is the new normal reality, including the death of patients as they are denied access to medical treatment available only hours away from them. More than 260 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces since October 2015. A large number of these cases appear to amount to extrajudicial killings. Despite this, impunity continues to prevail as the Israeli justice system is failing to conduct independent and impartial investigations into these as well as thousands of other cases in Gaza and the West Bank, including Jerusalem.

The comprehensive review issued this session testifies to Israel's persistent impunity over accountability. It highlights Israel's utter disregard of key UN recommendations requiring adherence to international law. Most concerning, however, is that some Member States of this honorable Council have been successfully steered away from the *erga omnes* obligation to promote and protect human rights and international law by questioning the legitimacy of Agenda Item 7, which is one of the few human rights recourse mechanisms accessible to Palestinians on State level under a reality of perpetuated occupation. The Occupying Power's strategy to diverge attention away from Agenda Item 7 has resulted in a situation that has cemented the culture of impunity and allowed for an increasing volume human rights violations and grave breaches of international law to go unchecked.

Mr. President, Item 7 does not target Israel per say. It legitimately deals with its occupation and the repression that has allowed it to last for five decades. We look forward to the day when Item 7 is no longer needed. That day will come when the occupation is history, rather than today's reality.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ The following NGOs also endorse this Oral Intervention: ADDAMEER Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Community Action Center of Al-Quds University