



الهيئة الفلسطينية المستقلة لحقوق المواطن

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights

Date: 3 January 2008

December 2007 Report on Human Rights Violations

21 Citizens Killed due to Ongoing state of Lawlessness and Political Conflict throughout PNA-Controlled Territory

During the month of December 2007, the **Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights (PICCR)** reported several human rights violations throughout the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) controlled territory, particularly incidents resulting from the state of lawlessness, security instability and political conflict. **PICCR** also monitored a number of violations against other human rights and freedoms, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful gatherings, attacks on personal security and arrests.

1. Violation of the right to life and physical safety:

Compared to 17 citizens killed in November, incidents of violations of the right to life and physical safety increased during the month of December. **PICCR** reported that 21 citizens were killed during incidents of security chaos and infighting throughout the PA-controlled territory. Of these, 6 citizens were killed in the West Bank and 17 in the Gaza Strip.

In the course of ongoing political conflict in the Gaza Strip, Police Forces affiliated with the Hamas' deposed government prevented Fatah activists from commemorating Fatah's 43rd anniversary on 31 December 2007. As a result, an armed confrontation took place between Police Forces and armed members of Hamas as well as armed individuals from Fatah and their respective families, during which 7 citizens were killed in several areas in the Gaza Strip.

In the West Bank, 5 citizens were killed in family fights and acts of revenge. In addition, 4 citizens were slain as a result of arms chaos. Another 3 citizens died under obscure circumstances; 1 citizen in a robbery; and another in prison under unknown conditions.

Of those killed were 4 children. Additionally, 17 citizens were killed by firearms or due to the detonation of explosive devices.

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Furthermore, **PICCR** reported that 130 citizens were injured as a result of infighting and security instability, particularly during the armed confrontation reported on 31 December in the Gaza Strip.

2. Atrocities against Freedom of Opinion and Expression:

Over the past month, several violations and aggressions were reported to have been committed against the freedom of opinion and expression throughout the Palestinian territory. On 14 December, PNA security forces enforced arbitrary measures in the West Bank on the eve of Hamas' 20th anniversary. Security forces arrested several leaders and members of the Hamas movement as well as raided and closed down Hamas' offices. Moreover, PNA security forces erased Hamas' slogans, which were painted on walls and in public places, and confiscated Hamas' flags and banners.

On 28 December, Hamas *de facto* government in the Gaza Strip also implemented a series of illegal measures to prevent Fatah activists from celebrating Fatah's 43rd anniversary. Police forces arrested a number of Fatah leaders and activists, raided Fatah's headquarters and offices, and confiscated their contents, including flags, equipment and banners prepared for commemoration of the anniversary. As a result, Fatah leaders decided to cancel the festival of Fatah anniversary in fear that the deposed government's Police Forces take illegal measures against Fatah members as well as safeguard their safety.

Over the month of December, several violations were also committed against freedom of the media. A large number of Hamas armed individuals raided the offices of the Saudi *Al Huda* Satellite Channel and *Al 'Anoud* Artistic Production Company as well as confiscated pieces of furniture, equipment and files.

In addition, Police officers arrested a number of journalists and authors in the Gaza Strip. On 14 December, Police forces arrested journalist Omar Hilmi al Ghoul after he returned to the Gaza Strip. Al Ghoul is still held in custody as of the date of reporting.

3. Attacks on public and private Institutions and property:

During the month of December, **PICCR** reported that 13 attacks were committed against public and private institutions and property. The majority of these attacks took place in the Gaza Strip.

On 28 – 31 December, Police forces and masked individuals raided several offices belonging to the Fatah movement and Palestine Liberation Organisation in the Gaza Strip and confiscated their contents.

On 22 December, unidentified individuals also raided the offices of the *Majd* Charitable Association in the city of Khan Yunis, confiscated some contents, and set the offices on fire. Reasons behind the attack were not known.

On 7 December, unidentified individuals detonated an explosive device in the vicinity of the As Saraya governmental complex in the Gaza city, causing damage to the complex.

On 8 December, unidentified individuals opened fire towards a vehicle belonging to the director general of the Relief Police in the West Bank governorates near the city of Jenin. Reasons of the attack were not reported.

On 9 December, unidentified individuals also detonated an explosive device near a commercial shop in the Gaza city, causing grave damage to the shop as well as to neighbouring citizens' properties.

4. Attacks on personal security and arrests:

Over the past month, **PICCR** reported hundreds of incidents of arbitrary detentions carried out by security forces affiliated with the Hamas *de facto* government in the Gaza Strip. The majority of detentions took place on 26 – 31 December. Hamas government's security forces arrested Fatah activists to prevent them from commemorating Fatah's anniversary.

On the eve of Hamas' 20th anniversary on 14 December, PNA security forces also arrested Hamas activists.

In the Gaza Strip, incidents of detentions were confused with abductions. In many cases, masked armed individuals abducted several citizens. On 31 December, a large number of armed individuals abducted Ibrahim Abu an Naja, a Fatah leader and former member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, after raiding his house overnight. They also took him to an unknown area, detained him for 2 hours, and released him after having cut his hair and shaved his moustache in a humiliating, demeaning manner. The Gaza *de facto* government denied its responsibility and stated that it would investigate this incident.

Over December, **PICCR** also received dozens of complaints from released detainees and their families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in which they asserted that they were subjected to torture. The majority of torture incidents were reported to have been committed by security forces of the deposed government in the Gaza Strip.

5. Attacks on Academic Freedom:

Last month, **PICCR** monitored a number of violations against academic freedoms, especially in the Gaza Strip. On 28 December, Police forces and Hamas armed individuals raided the *Al Azhar* University campus in Gaza city and arrested over 30 university students, ostensibly because they prepared to hold a festival to commemorate Fatah's 43rd anniversary. On 3 December, after a student quarrelled with a security guard at the entrance to the university, Police Forces raided the university campus and opened fire, injuring a university student. Additionally, Police officers beat and injured another student.

On 31 December, approximately 200 supporters of Hamas, carrying clubs and hammers, raided the *Al Quds* Open University campus in the governorate of Northern Gaza, brought down Fatah flags and banners, and beat a number of the university students. Confrontations also took place, during which more than 20 university students sustained injuries. As a result, all students were forced to leave the university. Meanwhile, 4 Police

patrols were outside the university, but Police officers did not prevent Hamas supporters from raiding the university campus.

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