



# 2018 Annual Report

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**2018 marked the 51st anniversary of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. In 2018, B'Tselem continued to document and publicize human rights violations, while exposing the injustices and violence of the occupation and the policies of dispossession that lie at the very core of the occupation regime. We continue to challenge the occupation’s legitimacy in Israel and abroad to bring about its end.**

**Message from Hagai El-Ad, B’Tselem’s Executive Director**

**When we celebrate Israeli democracy, we celebrate the violence of occupation**

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In democratic countries, elections are conventionally described as ‘a celebration.’ But in an undemocratic reality of endless military occupation, they become an overt celebration of the violence of the powerful.

“So long as I do not firmly and irrevocably possess the right to vote I do not possess myself. I cannot make up my mind — it is made up for me. I cannot live as a democratic citizen, observing the laws I have helped to enact — I can only submit to the edict of others.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered these words in his 1957 “Give Us the Ballot” speech, part of his attempt to challenge the reality in America’s Deep South, where black people were citizens yet still denied the right to vote by various ruses. For Palestinians who have lived under Israel’s rule since 1967, the very right to vote is not even an option.

On 9 April, the Israeli public went to the polls for another round of elections in which we, Israeli citizens, make decisions not only about our own fate, but also about the fate of millions of subjects who are perpetually denied political rights. The regulations we dictate will continue to advance our interests while managing their lives. All they can do is submit to decisions made by others.

Regardless of whether or not public discourse during the elections addresses these issues, and even if politicians and the public do their utmost to avoid mentioning the occupation, the political choices Israelis make determine the mechanisms of the occupation regime. We determine how we will manage the enormous prison that is the Gaza Strip from the outside; how many homes we will demolish and how many communities we will displace in the West Bank; and how many Palestinian families will be deprived of their homes in East Jerusalem.

We rely on these “democratic elections” to both justify what we do to our subjects as well as to market this reality as acceptable. In this way, the election actually forms a vital component in granting a guise of legitimacy to our ongoing control of the lives of subjects, the Palestinians. It is an inherently violent situation, since it is impossible to justify the ongoing violence without being part of the violence itself.

The violence is manifested not only in the physical violence of a soldier shooting or beating a Palestinian. It is there every time a lawyer in the State Attorney’s Office closes the case of a Palestinian death, or when a Supreme Court justice approves another home demolition, or when an Israeli official prevents yet another Palestinian student from traveling abroad to continue their studies. Their lives are in our hands, and we apply this violence through a slow, protracted, and arbitrary bureaucracy. Moreover, the presence of “democratic elections” is of great importance not only in terms of image and public relations, but also as a crucial valve that holds back assertive action by the international community from, at long last, expressing its rejection of this reality.

**B'Tselem continued collecting and publishing credible and current information on human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt), informing public discourse and policy:**

- B'Tselem field researchers wrote up **1,414 testimonies and field reports** on various suspected violations. They collected 1,209 testimonies from Palestinians (930 men and 279 women) who experienced or witnessed human rights violations, and compiled 205 field reports. After vetting, B'Tselem data coordinators catalogued the testimonies and field reports in our digital database.
- The data were used to write **133 short research reports** describing incidents of human rights violations as well as analysis of trends and phenomena and were posted on B'Tselem's website and via social media.
- B'Tselem's data coordinators made **24 Freedom of Information Requests**, including 14 to the Israel Prison Service (IPS), 8 to the IDF Spokesperson, and one request each to the Civil Administration and The Courts Administration.
- B'Tselem's data coordinators compiled and published **statistics** on [fatalities](#) and [home demolitions](#), based on B'Tselem's own field work and published official figures on [Palestinian detainees and prisoners](#) in Israeli custody.
- B'Tselem published **1 comprehensive research report** [Minors in Jeopardy: Violation of the Rights of Palestinian Minors by Israel's Military Courts](#) (March), and **1 position paper**, [If the Heart Be Not Callous: On the Unlawful Shooting of unarmed Demonstrators in Gaza](#) (April).

**B'Tselem's materials, respected domestically and internationally as a primary source of information for media correspondents, received wide media coverage.**

- B'Tselem issued **35 press releases** in Hebrew, Arabic and English to 2,200 journalists and members of the international community
- B'Tselem conducted over **20 field visits** for 50 journalists.
- **55 interviews** with B'Tselem staff were published in electronic and print media.
- B'Tselem was cited **hundreds of times** in the Israeli, Palestinian and international media, including major publications such as [The New York Times](#), [The Guardian](#), [The BBC](#), [The Washington Post](#), [Le Monde](#), [The Nation](#), and all major Israeli and Palestinian news outlets.
- **15 op-eds** by B'Tselem staff and board members were published in Israeli and international media.
- **20 op-eds** by newspaper editorial boards and prominent Israelis cited B'Tselem.

**B'Tselem continued to harness the power of video for the struggle for human rights, with the help of 138 Palestinian video volunteers who document their lives under occupation. The Camera Project captures and publicizes images that give a face to human rights violations, making them tangible and concrete.**

- B'Tselem conducted **10 group workshops** and **21 individual mentoring sessions** for Palestinian volunteers.
- B'Tselem's volunteers and field researchers sent in **352 camera memory cards** with video documentation.
- B'Tselem's video department prepared and posted **68 videos** on B'Tselem's digital platforms, including short productions like [Voices from Gaza: Women at Work](#), the [Balah Falestin plant](#).
- The short film "[The Boy from H2](#)" by Helen Yanovsky, produced by B'Tselem, was screened at the Solidarity Human Rights Film Festival in Tel Aviv, where it was [awarded the Grand Prize](#).
- B'Tselem held **7 film screenings** for Israelis. About 400 people total attended these screenings.

## **B'Tselem's social media informed millions in Israel and internationally about human rights in the oPt:**

- B'Tselem's social media network grew to a total of **273,473 followers**:
  - Hebrew Facebook page: **82,642** followers, 263 posts, 4,157,152 views;
  - English Facebook page: **114,803** followers, 257 posts, 5,796,818 views;
  - Twitter: **50,720** followers, 1,038 tweets in Hebrew, English and Arabic, 11,068,110 views;
  - Instagram: **2,969** followers;
  - B'Tselem's YouTube channel: **22,359** followers.
- Pages on B'Tselem's tri-lingual website (Hebrew, Arabic and English), were viewed 1,340,585 times by 512,787 unique users. The short research reports most viewed in English were Settlers destroy 2,000+ Palestinian-owned trees and vines, backed by Israeli authorities with 6,567 page views, Why Israeli soldiers must refuse to fire at unarmed Palestinian protesters with 6,525 pageviews and Israeli Border Police seize 6-year-old in Hebron, drag him to a checkpoint, and hold him for an hour with 4,643 page views. The reports most viewed in Hebrew were Hagai El-Ad's address at the United Nations Security Council, 18 Oct. 2018 with 1,898 pageviews, Israeli soldiers raid the Da'na home at night and wake the family with 1,151 pageviews and Soldiers joined settlers assaulting Palestinians in 'Urif, shot at residents, and beat several with rifle butts with 1,096 pageviews.
- B'Tselem's videos were viewed a total of 4,284,575 times via Facebook, with another 291,615 views on Twitter and 5,600,000 views on B'Tselem's YouTube channel.
- The posts with the highest number of views were a tweet about Israeli soldiers shooting at unarmed Palestinian demonstrators in Gaza, gaining 752,000 impressions, and a Facebook post stating that shooting at unarmed demonstrators is manifestly illegal, with 352,898 views in English and 253,000 in Hebrew.
- The highest viewed videos on Facebook in English were:
  - Israeli Civil Administration confiscates two classrooms in Khirbet Khilet A-Dabe': 167,155 people reached
  - Checkpoints on their way to school: Just another afternoon for minors in Hebron: 153,774 people reached.

## **B'Tselem advocated for action against the occupation by the international community**

- B'Tselem staff shared information and analysis and advocated its positions in **160** meetings, briefings, field visits, panels and events for the international community, including diplomats, government officials, UN agencies, clergy and international organizations from the European Union and 19 countries.
- B'Tselem staff led over **20 field visits** to the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), for **110** diplomats, foreign decision-makers and international groups.
- B'Tselem staff travelled to Europe and the United States for advocacy missions, visiting **7 cities** (including 6 capitals), and participating in numerous events with policymakers and the international public.
- B'Tselem staff met with **38 groups** (630 participants), including an address to the J Street conference, attended by thousands of American Jewish duty-bearers and activists.
- B'Tselem staff met with **20 groups** (600 participants) of Israeli teenagers studying at pre-military service academies.

## Campaigns

### The Israeli Open-Fire Policy in Gaza Protests

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Since 30 March 2018, when the protests by the Gaza perimeter fence began, Israeli security forces killed over 200 demonstrators – including dozens of minors – and injured thousands of demonstrators with live gunfire. The vast majority of casualties were unarmed, and were fatally shot from a distance while in the Gaza Strip itself. Some protesters threw stones, some damaged the fence, and a small number crossed it or threw hand grenades, IEDs and Molotov cocktails at the troops. The protectively clad troops sniping at them from other side of the fence were not in any real danger. Despite the heavy toll on life and limb, all state and military officials refuse to cancel these manifestly unlawful open-fire orders and continue to issue – and justify – them.

On 5 April, B'Tselem took the unusual step of calling on soldiers to refuse the manifestly illegal orders to fire at unarmed demonstrators in an ad it ran in the Hebrew papers. The ads read “Sorry Commander, I cannot shoot”. Ahead of the 13 April protest, B'Tselem issued a position paper with a legal analysis explaining why the open-fire orders are manifestly illegal. On 26 April, B'Tselem published an ad with the names of 35 Palestinian protestors shot and killed by Israeli forces while demonstrating along the Gaza fence, who were shot in compliance with manifestly illegal orders for which the government and the senior military command are primarily responsible. That same day, ahead of UN Security Council's debate, B'Tselem wrote a letter to UN Secretary General António Guterres, urging the UN to do “all that is in its power – and its responsibility – in order to protect Palestinian lives and uphold international norms.”

B'Tselem reported on the violence against protestors, including several eyewitness accounts. B'Tselem published five press releases, tweeted 125 tweets and posted dozens of Facebook posts on the Gaza protests in Hebrew, English, Arabic and French, reaching 5.5 million viewers; 6,000 people opened the B'Tselem newsletter devoted to the Gaza protests, written by one of B'Tselem field researchers in Gaza. On 15 May, together with 16 other Israeli organizations, B'Tselem called on Israel to immediately refrain from the use of lethal force against unarmed civilians.

B'Tselem's call to soldiers to refuse to shoot unarmed demonstrators sparked wide media coverage in the Israeli, Palestinian and international media, and B'Tselem staff were interviewed extensively to explain this decision and to draw attention to the unlawful and immoral orders soldiers received. B'Tselem's call was covered by all major media outlets in Israel (Ha'aretz, Ynet, Reshet Bet, Kan and Channel 10, the Times of Israel, and i24, in Russian on Channel 9 and Vesty), and internationally in a New York Times editorial and article, The Washington Post, The Guardian and UK's Channel 4, among many others. Chair of B'Tselem's Board David Zonsheine explained B'Tselem's position in an op-ed in Haaretz and an interview on IDF Radio, among others. On BBC radio, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad stated that Israeli soldiers “should use lethal force – live ammunition – as a last course of action and not as a crowd-control mechanism.”



The Times of Israel published El-Ad's remarks to the Congressional Progressive Caucus at the US Congress, including this statement: "It is manifestly illegal to fire at unarmed people who pose no mortal danger. Yet this is what happened, while the whole world watched. If Palestinian lives matter, we must speak out."

### Khan al-Ahmar: "Say No to Forcible Transfer"



In May 2018, after more than a decade of legal proceedings, the justices of Israel's High Court of Justice (HCJ) determined there was no legal obstacle to demolishing the structures in the Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar – located south of the settlement of Kfar Adumim – as construction in the compound was "unlawful."

Following the ruling, B'Tselem published an analysis of the decision, concluding that the ruling greenlights the state to commit a war crime under international law for which the justices will also be liable. B'Tselem published a letter in ads in Israeli newspapers signed by 300 elected officials, legal scholars, academics, artists, faith leaders, and activists from around the world and Israel, opposing to Israel's plans to forcibly transfer the community, stating that it would constitute a war crime.

B'Tselem brought the plan to demolish Khan al-Ahmar, as part of Israel's forcible transfer policy, to the attention of Israeli and international journalists and the international community. It conducted extensive advocacy activities, including 20 field visits to threatened communities, 30 lectures to Israeli and international audiences, including addresses to the J Street conference attended by several thousand people, 40 meetings with representatives of the European Union and 19 strategic countries, 5 panel events, and advocacy trips to 6 world capitals.

## Key 2018 Events

### United Nations Security Council Speech

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In October 2018, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad addressed the United Nations Security Council at the quarterly session scheduled in accordance with Resolution 2334. He urged the international community to take action against the continued dismantling of the Palestinian people: “a calculated and deliberate process of slowly splitting up an entire people, fragmenting their land, and disrupting their lives: separating Gaza from the West Bank, breaking up the West Bank into small enclaves, and walling off East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. Eventually, what remains are isolated bits, the easier to oppress.”

El-Ad addressed the Israeli-imposed blockade on the Gaza Strip and the humanitarian crisis it engendered, and Israel's plans to demolish Khan al-Ahmar, a shepherding community. El-Ad said, “The rules-based international order will not defend itself. And the successful fragmentation of Palestine is detrimental to both Palestinians and Israelis, as well as to international law and the values enshrined in it. [...] The Security Council must take action [...] As Israel tests the international community's resolve to see how far, and how fast, it can proceed, what might happen any day now in Khan al-Ahmar will determine the fate of Palestinian communities all over the West Bank. [...] High-level international statements have had no impact, not even the united voice, as expressed on September 20, of the five current European members of this Council, joined by former member Italy and future members Belgium and Germany. You have my sincerest thanks and deep appreciation for these statements. Without your efforts, I doubt if Khan al-Ahmar would still be standing today. Yet Israel has already answered your call, by continuing with preparations for the demolition. Just a few days ago, the Minister of Defense ... called on you to stop your “flagrant interference” in Israel's plans, as if the forcible transfer of Khan al-Ahmar, a strategic step in Israel's dismantling project, is somehow an internal, domestic matter. Members of the Security Council: you have spoken, and you have gotten Israel's answer. Action must now follow.”

### **B'Tselem and Al-Haq receive 2018 Human Rights Award of the French Republic:**

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B'Tselem and Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq jointly received the 2018 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic, which was awarded this year to organizations being harassed or pressured for defending and promoting human rights. B'Tselem's Executive Director thanked the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, saying “The occupation ... is organized, prolonged, state violence, which brings about dispossession, killings, and oppression. All branches of the state are part of it: ministers and judges, officers and planners, parliamentarians and bureaucrats. Those who lead the opposition to this unjust reality are human rights organizations – precisely because we categorically reject violence and harm to civilians.”



## Minors in Israeli Military Courts



In March 2018, B'Tselem published an in-depth research report, [Minors in Jeopardy: Violation of the Rights of Palestinian Minors by Israel's Military Courts](#). The report describes how, every year, hundreds of Palestinian minors undergo the same scenario. Israeli security forces pick them up on the street or at home in the middle of the night, then handcuff and blindfold them and transport them to interrogation, often subjecting them to violence en route. Exhausted and scared – some having spent a long time in transit, some having been roused from sleep, some having had nothing to eat or drink for hours – the minors are then interrogated. They are completely alone, cut off from the world, without any adult they trust, and without consulting with a lawyer before the interrogation. The interrogation often involves threats, yelling, verbal abuse and sometimes physical violence. Its purpose is to get the minors to confess or provide information about others. They are taken to the military court for a remand hearing, where most see their lawyer for the first time. In most cases, the military judges approve remand, even when the only evidence against the minors is their own confession, or allegedly incriminating statements made against them by others. This is the case even when the statements were obtained through severe infringement of the minors' rights. Given these circumstances and that a prison sentence is the likely outcome, the minors plead guilty in a plea bargain. They sign it so that they can resume their lives after serving the prison sentence set out in the plea bargain, which was then approved by the justice of the juvenile military court.

Over the past decade, the state has made several changes to the military orders that deal with the arrest and detention of minors and their treatment in the military courts. Though these changes were ostensibly meant to improve the protections afforded to minors in the military justice system, in reality, the changes Israel made have had no more than a negligible impact on minors' rights. The facts and figures all demonstrate that minors' rights are still being regularly and systematically violated.

B'Tselem held a briefing for the media and diplomatic community where the report's author, B'Tselem's Research Director Att. Yael Stein, presented the findings. B'Tselem published 19 posts about the report's findings in Facebook and Twitter, with tens of thousands of views. In Israel, the report was cited on Channel 10, [i24 News](#), [the Jerusalem Post](#). Internationally, it was cited in [the Washington Post](#), [the Guardian](#), [the Daily Mail](#) and [al Jazeera](#). An op-ed by Stein was published in [Newsweek](#) and in Hebrew in [Ha'aretz](#). On 21 March, B'Tselem issued a [press release](#) and an update highlighting how the case of Ahd Tamimi, sentenced to 8 months imprisonment in a plea bargain for slapping an Israeli military officer, [demonstrates the practices presented in the report](#). B'Tselem's spokesperson also participated in a public event in Tel Aviv, with Breaking the Silence, about Palestinian minors in Israel's military courts. In May, B'Tselem presented the subject of minors in military courts to an Israeli audience after a screening of its documentary [The Boy from H2](#) at the Solidarity Human Rights Film Festival in Tel Aviv where it was [awarded the Grand Prize](#).

## Communities Facing Expulsion



For years, Israel has been implementing a plan to forcibly transfer thousands of Palestinians who live in farming-shepherding communities in the West Bank. Forcible transfer – by direct physical force or by creating a coercive environment that makes residents leave their homes – is a war crime. All people responsible for it – including the Israeli prime minister, the minister of defense and High Court justices – bear personal liability.

Focusing on three areas – the Jordan Valley, the South Hebron Hills, and the area east of Jerusalem – Israel aims to establish facts on the ground that would achieve exclusive *de facto* Israeli control in those areas, and eventually facilitate formal annexation.

To bring this critical issue to public attention:

- B'Tselem published **47 updates** on its dedicated **Facing Expulsion blog**.
- We trained and mentored **67 video volunteers** from the vulnerable communities, who recorded **167 memory cards** documenting life in these communities.
- The footage was used to produce **22 videos** of violations these communities experienced.
- B'Tselem worked with the media, issuing **8 press releases** to Israeli and foreign journalists, taking journalists to threatened communities and assisting journalists in the preparation of articles. Media engagement resulted in wide press coverage of the plight of the communities endangered by Israel's planning policies, including dozens of articles in which B'Tselem's data were cited.
- To inform **Israeli and global audiences** about the plight of communities facing expulsion, B'Tselem launched a **campaign** (see above, "Say No to Forcible Transfer") to raise prominent voices against the impending expulsion.
- On 23 March, B'Tselem launched a **dedicated mini-site**, that includes a video and background information in 10 languages: Hebrew, Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Dutch, Swedish and Italian.
- B'Tselem published a series of photos on its phot blog, **Eyes Wide Open**, focusing on **Khan al-Ahmar**.
- B'Tselem also published dozens of social media posts in Hebrew, English, Arabic and French sharing photos, videos and information on communities facing expulsion within and from Area C, reaching hundreds of thousands of people.

## No Accountability: Israeli Security Forces Act with Impunity

Israel fails to uphold its security forces accountable for their actions in the oPt and its investigative apparatus merely creates a semblance of law enforcement – both in criminal law and civil law. As a result, those responsible for harming Palestinians go unpunished, and the victims receive no compensation for the harm they suffer.

The impunity of security forces is clearly demonstrated by how infrequently personnel who are perpetrators of violence are investigated, more rarely prosecuted, and even more rarely convicted. The opening of an investigation – exceptional in and of itself – does not lead to the prosecution of those responsible for the unlawful killing, and certainly not of senior officials. This conduct renders hollow the open-fire regulations, which are supposed to restrict the use of live and lethal gunfire, thereby evincing Israel's profound disregard for the life and limb of Palestinians. Ultimately, the systemic policy of whitewashing the killing of Palestinians allows soldiers to act in gross violation of the open-fire regulations without consequences. The policy enables the continuing use of lethal force, a critical component in Israel's ability to maintain its violent control over millions of Palestinians.

The few, isolated exceptions when the perpetrator of a violation against Palestinians is investigated, tried and convicted serve only to bolster the illusion that the law enforcement systems in place are properly functioning. Even in those rare cases of conviction, sentences are light:

- In 2018, Ben Deri of the Border Police was convicted of killing Nadim Nawarah during protests in Bitunya in 2014. Deri was sentenced to a mere 9 months in prison. B'Tselem data coordinator Eyal Sagiv published an op-ed in April, following the conviction.
- A similar approach was seen in the decision to withdraw the indictments case against the soldiers who shot and killed 16-year-old Palestinian Samir 'Awad. B'Tselem stated: “As evidenced by hundreds of cases, closing investigations and failing to prosecute soldiers who killed Palestinians is the norm.”

In 2018, B'Tselem investigated several cases of unjustified killings by Israeli security forces that no one will likely be held accountable for:

- In February 2018, B'Tselem exposed the circumstances of the killing of Yassin a-Saradih (35), a Palestinian who attempted to assault Israeli soldiers in Jericho. Video footage of the incident, published by B'Tselem, reveals that soldiers beat and abused him as he lay wounded, and did not offer him medical aid. The footage disproved the military's explanation of his death. B'Tselem stated that “the absence of a firm, unequivocal statement by the military that such conduct will not be tolerated effectively condones the soldiers' actions, allowing such incidents to recur in the future.” The incident was widely covered in the Israeli media, including Ynet, Haaretz, Channel 10, Kan, and Ma'ariv.
- In July, B'Tselem reported that 'Iz a-Din Tamimi was shot from behind as he was fleeing after throwing a stone at the soldier. Though a Military Police investigation was launched, experience has shown that the purpose of such investigations is to silence any criticism against the military, and B'Tselem is not hopeful that anyone will be held responsible.
- In September, B'Tselem reported that Israel bombed a Deir al-Balah home, killing a pregnant mother and toddler during an exchange of fire between Israel and armed operatives in Gaza. Muhammad Abu Khamash, who lost his pregnant wife and daughter, stated, ‘everything vanished in a second. I lost my whole family, for no reason whatsoever.’ B'Tselem noted that Israel did not even bother to explain why the bomb was dropped. It is not clear what the target was – the Abu Khamash house or something else. The only thing that is clear is the result: a pregnant woman and her toddler daughter lost their lives
- In December, B'Tselem disproved the Israeli military's explanation of the death of Muhammad Habali. By analyzing video footage obtained from security cameras and the footage aired in the media, B'Tselem clearly demonstrated that Israeli soldiers' fatal shooting of Muhammad Habali was unjustified and illegal.

Contrary to the military's claims, the soldiers who fired at Habali were not responding to a "violent disturbance of the peace" and were in no danger.

- Also in December, B'Tselem published a video analysis in partnership with UK institute Forensic Architecture, into [the killing of two teenagers in Gaza](#) in July 2018. Amir a-Nimrah and Luai Kahil, were killed by a 'roof knocking, warning missile" as they sat on the roof of a building, and not by the actual strike that followed. B'Tselem's [investigation](#) found that the sequence of videos published through the @idfspokesperson Twitter account edited out the first, fatal strike. B'Tselem's investigation was published in [The New York Times](#), [The Times of Israel](#), and [+972 Magazine](#) .

## The Blockade on the Gaza Strip

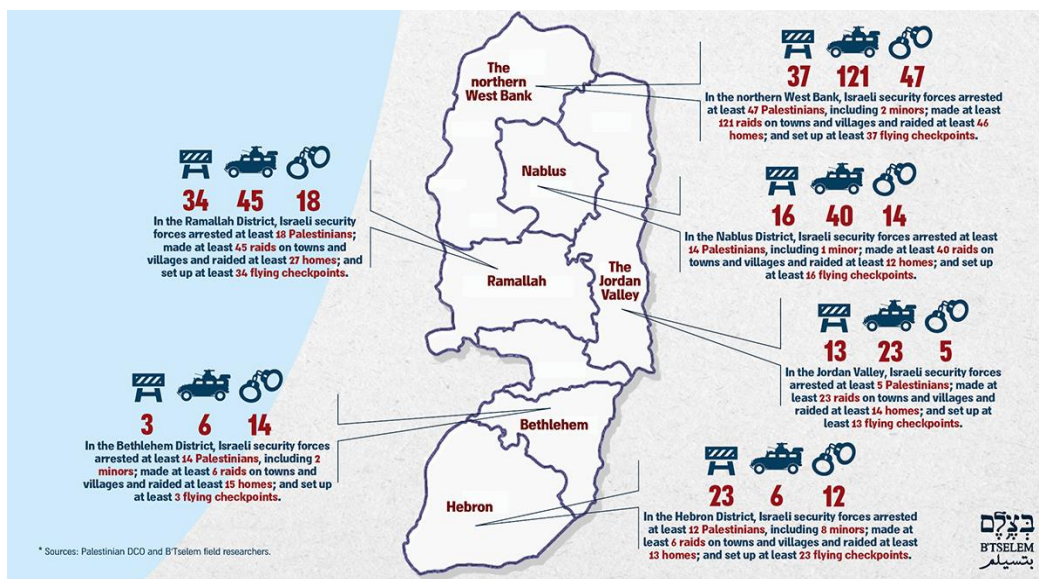


The Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip has driven Gaza's economy into collapse, made even worse by three rounds of fighting. In 2018, B'Tselem continued to document and report on the devastating impact of the Israeli policy of siege. B'Tselem reported on several related issues:

- [Women trapped in Gaza away from their homes and partners](#)
- [Severe restrictions imposed on prison visits by immediate family to Gazans held in Israel](#)
- The [failing Gaza health care system](#) and its inability to handle thousands of live fire injuries during demonstrations
- [The efforts of Gazan women to support their families](#)
- B'Tselem also published a [photo blog from Gaza](#), to bring the conditions of the residents to viewers in Israel and around the world.



## A Routine Founded on Violence



To illustrate the routine nature of violence under the occupation, B'Tselem publishes updates on military measures throughout the West Bank, as well as reports on specific incidents. In 2017, B'Tselem launched a campaign that tracks the number of arrests, raids on villages and homes, and checkpoints using the hashtag #Occupation365. In 2018, B'Tselem posted **13 #Occupation365 updates** on its website, Facebook and Twitter.

In February, B'Tselem launched a new **#Occupation365 photo blog** depicting the reality of daily life under occupation. B'Tselem's coverage of the issue was reported in the media, including in The Swedish online magazine OmVärlden ("the World") featured B'Tselem's infographics showing frequency of different violations, in a report on arrests of minors by Israel.

B'Tselem has brought to light several central components of the violent routine of occupation to demonstrate its impact on Palestinian human rights.

### Night Raids

Scenes of the military raiding a Palestinian village in the dead of night, rousing entire families from their sleep and wreaking havoc in their homes, have long since become part of the routine shaped by the occupation regime in the West Bank. Soldiers are not required to obtain search warrants to carry out these raids, which take place whenever and wherever the military chooses. The raids, which are clearly designed to intimidate the residents, have no justification. B'Tselem reported on repeated security forces raids on Palestinians homes throughout the West Bank, including:

- Night raids in Beit 'Einun, Qusrah, Beit Umar, al-Mazra'ah al-Qibliyah, 'Azzun and 'Urif;
- In the village of al-Mughayir, soldiers entered homes and kept people confined for hours;
- In Jenin Refugee Jenin Refugee Camp, soldiers set dogs on elderly Palestinians and teenagers in their homes;
- In al-Jalazun Refugee Camp, Israeli forces raided homes and cultural center, assaulted and humiliated residents and shoot passersby.

## Collective Punishment

Imposing restrictions on the movement of Palestinian West Bank residents is one of the main tools Israel uses in enforcing its regime of occupation and control over the Palestinian population. In addition to the permanent restrictions in place, the military also employs travel restrictions in order to collectively punish villages, and sometimes entire regions, following instances of throwing stones or Molotov cocktails at roads. B'Tselem documented such incidents this year: the Israeli military blocked roads, collectively punishing residents of three Palestinian West Bank communities for the acts or alleged acts of one or a few of its members

Palestinians in the West Bank depend entirely upon the Civil Administration to work in Israel or the settlements, tend their land, or visit relatives. In May, B'Tselem reported that Israel revoked permits of 20 members of one family, leaving them jobless and that Israel is punishing hundreds of Palestinians by preventing them from working in Israel in response to attacks committed by residents of their communities with the same family name.

Other examples documented by B'Tselem of a routine founded on violence:

- The arrest of two young brothers in Hebron.
- Soldiers harassing Palestinian students in al-Arrub, and
- Incidents in which Israeli security forces arrest Palestinians to pressure relatives to turn themselves in

## Settlements

The settlements are the single most important factor shaping life in the West Bank. Their destructive impact on the human rights of Palestinians extends far beyond the thousands of hectares, including farmland and grazing areas, that Israel appropriated from Palestinians in order to build them. More land has been expropriated to pave hundreds of kilometers of roads for settler use only; roadblocks, checkpoints, and other measures that limit Palestinian movement only have been erected based on the location of settlements; Palestinian landowners have been effectively denied access to much of their farmland, both within settlements and outside them; and the winding route of the Separation Barrier, which severely violates the rights of Palestinians living near it, was established inside the West Bank in order to leave as many settlements as possible – and large tracts of land for expanding them – on the western side of the barrier.

B'Tselem reported on Israel's official recognition of the Gilad Farm settlement outpost after 15 years of ignoring land seizure by the settlers, and the establishment of new settlement outposts in the northern Jordan Valley, dispossessing Palestinians living in the area. B'Tselem exposed the impact that settlements have on the daily life of Palestinians in the West Bank and devoted a special project to the impact on one particular community, al-Jalazun Refugee Camp.



## Spotlight on al-Jalazun Refugee Camp: Life in the shadow of the settlement of Beit El



B'Tselem published a series of short research reports and a [photo blog](#) under the title “[al-Jalazun Refugee Camp: Life in the shadow of the settlement of Beit El](#),” focusing on a typical example of a Palestinian community affected by the presence of settlements.

The settlement of Beit El borders al-Jalazun Refugee Camp, a proximity that has led to increased permanent military presence in the area. B'Tselem reported on [soldiers frequently clashing with camp residents](#), mostly boys and young men. Between 2012- 2017, roughly 160 Palestinians have been injured (according to OCHA figures), and six have been killed, four of them minors, by live ammunition fired by Israeli forces. B'Tselem also reported on [travel restrictions imposed on residents](#), and on how the proximity to the settlement affects children, publishing “[Going to school in a state of constant peril](#).”

B'Tselem prepared an [information sheet](#) (print and digital versions) summarizing the history of al-Jalazun Refugee Camp and the influence the settlement of Beit El has had on life in the community. B'Tselem shared the digital version via its social media, including 24 social media messages in Hebrew, English and Arabic, garnering nearly 125,000 views, and distributed hard copies. B'Tselem took several diplomats to visit al-Jalazun Refugee Camp. There, they met with residents who were injured by soldiers and were subjected to violence and human rights violations. The information provided in B'Tselem's online updates was reviewed by journalists Gideon Levy and Alex Levac, in *Haaretz* ([Hebrew](#) and [English](#) editions).

### Settler Violence

Settler violence has long since become part of Palestinians' daily life under occupation, and 2018 saw severe and ongoing violence. Israeli security forces enable these actions, which result in Palestinian injuries and fatalities as well as damage to land and property. In some cases, they even serve as an armed escort, or even join in the attacks. Investigations, if even opened, are usually closed with no action taken against perpetrators as part of an undeclared policy of leniency.

Settler violence has gradually dispossessed Palestinians of more and more areas in the West Bank, paving the way for a state takeover of land and resources. This occurs because Palestinians avoid entering areas in which they have been attacked, usually close to settlements. As a result, extensive Palestinian farmland near settlements has been vandalized and neglected to such an extent that it yields poor crops, making it not worthwhile for the owners to take the risk of going there. This process has essentially erected invisible walls throughout the West Bank, which Palestinians know crossing will expose them to violence, and even endanger their lives.

B'Tselem monitored and documented violence against Palestinians. In February, we reported on [settler attacks in the village of Far'ata](#), and [in the Nablus District](#). In April, we reported that [Yitzhar settlers assaulted residents](#)

of 'Urif while soldiers stood by. In May, settlers attacked Palestinians in 'Einabus with soldiers' assistance. In June, soldiers joined settlers assaulting Palestinians in 'Urif. In September, B'Tselem published video documentation of an incident when settlers and military continue their joint assaults on the village of 'Urif with impunity. In December, B'Tselem documented a particularly severe incident in which Border Police escorting settlers invading al-Mazra'ah al-Qibliyah land fire at residents who clashed with them, killing two. Reports by B'Tselem were cited in Ha'aretz and Times of Israel.

Settler violence often disrupts Palestinian's ability to grow and harvest olives and grapes. In summer 2018, B'Tselem documented 10 instances in which settlers destroyed 2,000+ Palestinian-owned trees and vines, backed by Israeli authorities. In December, B'Tselem published an overview of the olive harvest in the Ramallah and Nablus areas, with numerous testimonies illustrating how the 'coordination system', which supposedly enables Palestinians to harvest their olives, actually allows settlers to gradually seize control over Palestinian land.

## **Hebron**

40,000 Palestinians and 800 settlers live in Area H2 of Hebron. In the name of protecting the settlers, Israeli authorities impose a regime intentionally and openly based on legal and physical segregation between the Israeli settlers and the Palestinian residents, whose burden is borne entirely by the local Palestinian population. Palestinians living in the area are subjected to extreme restrictions on their movement by car or on foot – including the closure of main streets – while settlers are free to go where they wish. In addition, the military has issued shutdown orders to hundreds of stores and commercial establishments in the area.

B'Tselem documented several incidents in December 2018, when settlers, in view of Israeli soldiers, stone ambulance in Tel Rumeidah and Israeli Border Police seize 6-year-old in Hebron, drag him to a checkpoint, and hold him for an hour. B'Tselem also published several testimonies in which Palestinians describe life in center of Hebron under impossible terms imposed by military.

## **Detainees and Prisoners**

In 2018, B'Tselem continued to provide monthly figures on prisoners and detainees obtained from the Israeli Prison Service by submitting Freedom of Information Requests. The data, compiled by B'Tselem's data coordination department, was used by the media, researchers, activists and the diplomatic community. In August, B'Tselem reported on the mistreatment of relatives of prisoners that are held inside Israel, in violation of international law.

B'Tselem continued to document the routine use of administrative detention, detention without trial, by the Israeli authorities. Over the last year, 29 Palestinians were taken into administrative detention every month, on average. In the past decade, the number of detainees held by Israel in a single month never fell below 150.

## **Home Demolition and Displacement in East Jerusalem**

Israel demolishes Palestinians homes in East Jerusalem and its vicinity, both as a punitive measure and on administrative grounds. B'Tselem reported in January on home demolitions in Bir 'Onah, Beit Jala, and in February on home demolition by the Jerusalem Municipality Silwan, East Jerusalem. The reports were cited by al-Jazeera.

In November, B'Tselem reported how the High Court of Justice paves way for cleansing of Palestinians from Silwan. The Israeli High Court rejected an appeal filed by 104 residents of Silwan to overturn a September 2002 decision by the Custodian of Absentee Property to "release" the land on which they have lived for decades to Ateret Cohanim, a settler association that works to Judaize East Jerusalem. In the judgment, the Court's role is narrowed down to examining questions relating to administrative law. In choosing this avenue, the Court sent

the residents back to fight, against all odds, the civil proceedings that Ateret Cohanim has undertaken in order to evict them from their homes.

In its analysis, B'Tselem stated that the judgment was written without addressing the context whatsoever: as though the land were not "liberated" by handing it over to an association whose goal is to drive Palestinians out of their homes; as though the law does not allow Jews alone to file ownership for land abandoned in 1948; as though the Court were not sanctioning the broadest move to dispossess Palestinians since 1967. The judgment proves, yet again, that the Israeli High Court gives its seal of approval to almost any infringement of Palestinians' rights by the Israeli authorities.

### **Attacks on Israeli Civilians by Palestinians**

B'Tselem stated time and again that deliberate targeting of civilians undermines every moral, legal and human standard. There is no justification for the willful killing of civilians, nor can there be. That is why international humanitarian law defines such attacks as grave breaches that constitute war crimes and cannot be justified, whatever the circumstances.

B'Tselem strongly condemns any and all deliberate attacks against civilians. B'Tselem publishes condemnation after every Palestinian attack against Israeli civilians on its [website](#) and Facebook pages.

### **Engagement with Israeli Society**

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In 2018, B'Tselem continued to engage the Israeli public through meetings, film screenings, interviews in the Israeli media and op-eds in Israeli newspapers. During the year, B'Tselem spoke with 20 groups of pre-military service academy students with 600 participants.

B'Tselem brought the grim reality of life under the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and under Israeli blockade in Gaza to the Israeli public in several screenings of films produced by our video department from footage shot by our Gaza field researchers and volunteers from our camera project to audiences of 400 +. In late April, B'Tselem screened 'Growing up Under Occupation' 'A View of Gaza' the [Solidarity –Tel Aviv Human Rights Film Festival](#), followed by a Hebrew language discussion between Khaled al-'Azayzeh – one of B'Tselem's field researchers in Gaza – and the Israeli audience. In June, B'Tselem screened 'A View of Gaza' at the Solidarity Festival at the Herzliya Cinematheque. In July, the same collection of videos was screened twice at Café Shapira in Tel Aviv. In December, to mark International Human Rights Day and also the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, B'Tselem held the "[A View of Gaza on Human Rights Day](#)" event at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque, where the 47-minute collection of footage shot by B'Tselem's Gazan field researchers was presented to an audience of 150 Israelis. B'Tselem's Spokesperson moderated a panel of speakers about life in Gaza, and the audience had a rare opportunity to speak with a B'Tselem field researcher in Gaza, via Skype.

B'Tselem continued to use social media extensively to engage the Israeli public, and to give [interviews](#) and publish op-eds in Hebrew in Israeli media. B'Tselem's staff and board members published 15 [op-eds](#) in mainstream Israeli media, and was cited in op-eds by [Zehava Gal -On](#), and [Prof. Mordechai Kremnitzer](#).

## Shrinking Space for Civil Society

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B'Tselem continues to operate in a hostile environment, cultivated by incitement by the government and politicians from the right and center. In contrast, B'Tselem also enjoyed inspiring messages of support and solidarity by Israelis and internationals, who also demonstrated the shared principles and values by donating generously. 20% of B'Tselem's budget was raised from small donors.

B'Tselem's call to soldiers to refuse to shoot unarmed demonstrators was met with strident responses from Israeli ministers and *Knesset* Members. Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman and MKs called to open investigation against B'Tselem for instigating mutiny, followed by a formal appeal to the Attorney General. "I am asking that you immediately open an investigation into B'Tselem's request to Israeli soldiers and commanders. In particular, I would like to examine whether this constitutes a criminal offense under Section 110 of the Penal Law (incitement to disobedience), which [mandates] a more severe punishment when it is committed during a period of hostilities against the State of Israel," Liberman said.

B'Tselem responded: "We reiterate our appeal to Israeli soldiers to refuse to abide by patently unlawful orders to use lethal force against unarmed protesters in Gaza. The dangerous assertions made by Minister Lieberman, implying Gazan protesters are legitimate target, evince disdain for basic morals."

Later, B'Tselem was summoned for a hearing at the National Service Authority regarding the B'Tselem's eligibility for a national service volunteer position in B'Tselem, although B'Tselem has not filled the position for years. B'Tselem's eligibility was suspended.

In 2018, the government continued to pursue legislation intended to limit the activities of human rights organizations. In June, a bill that would criminalize the filming of Israeli soldiers in certain circumstances was backed by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation. The Guardian cited B'Tselem as one primary target of the proposed bill. B'Tselem is determined to continue to document human rights violations in the oPt, including through the medium of video, even in challenging legal circumstances.

This legislative initiative, which has not yet resulted in a new law, attests to the attitude of the government towards monitoring violations of human rights, which is regarded as obstructing soldiers in fulfilling their duty. Such a bill might be able to get majority support in the *Knesset* if not for external considerations, such as Israel's international image and its relationships with the international community. B'Tselem is determined to continue documenting human rights violations under the occupation, even in complex circumstances.

In October 2018, ahead of B'Tselem's executive director Hagai El-Ad's address to the United Nations Security Council, when asked how he defines B'Tselem, Prime Minister Netanyahu called B'Tselem a 'disgrace.' Immediately following El-Ad's address, while on the UNSC floor, Israeli Ambassador to the UN Dannon, said in English: "B'Tselem is an Israeli organization that is funded by the EU and European governments. It was invited to the Security Council today by Bolivia... By bringing B'Tselem, Bolivia has in fact proven the strength of Israel's vibrant democracy. I challenge you all to find a Palestinian, or a Bolivian, who could dare defame his government at the Security Council. At best, he might be thrown in jail. But he would more likely end up dead." Yet immediately following these words, Ambassador Dannon delivered a contradictory message in Hebrew, and said: "Mr. El-Ad, you're a citizen of the State of Israel who serves our enemies. They're using you against us. IDF soldiers protect you and you come here and defame them. Shame on you, collaborator." In other words, in English at the UNSC, the Israeli Permanent Representative (PR) to the UN boasts of "the strength of Israel's vibrant democracy" because – so claims the PR – B'Tselem's staff, unlike in other countries, can speak freely and need not fear retaliation. Yet the very same Israeli government official immediately proceeds to – while switching to Hebrew – incite against and threaten B'Tselem staff.

The Permanent Missions of France, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom to the United Nations took issue with Danon's Hebrew comments, stating in a 26 October letter to the Security Council that "It is

vital that these individuals can contribute to our meetings without facing negative consequences, including personal attacks or insults, either within or outside the Security Council chamber”.

In his UN speech, El-Ad expressed B’Tselem’s defiance: “to Prime Minister Netanyahu I say this: you will never silence us – nor the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who reject a present founded on supremacy and oppression, and stand for a future built on equality, freedom and human rights”.

In December, when B’Tselem was awarded the 2018 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic (see above) El-Ad commented on the pressure that Israeli government officials exerted on French decision-makers: “The hysterical response by Israeli government officials, attempting to prevent this prize from being awarded, illustrates the reality within which we work: propaganda, lies, and threats by a government which believes that silencing and coverup will enable further human rights violations. In the face of this moral bankruptcy, we are here not only to further expose the truth – but also to bring an end to the injustice.”

## **International Advocacy**

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B’Tselem advocated for respect for human rights and for an end to the occupation with hundreds of duty bearers, opinion shapers and other key figures in Israel, the oPt and internationally. B’Tselem staff advocated our positions and analysis in over 160 meetings, briefings, and events for the international community, with diplomats, foreign government officials, UN agencies, religious groups and international organizations.

B’Tselem’s Executive Director Hagai El-Ad joined B’Tselem USA in the United States for several days of B’Tselem activity. Together with B’Tselem field researcher, Nasser Nawaj’ah, El-Ad presented B’Tselem’s analysis and messages at the 2018 J Street Conference. At the UN headquarters in NY, El-Ad met with NGOs and officials. In Washington, he met with members of the House of Representatives and addressed the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC). Additional B’Tselem staffers participated in advocacy visits, meetings and workshops in seven cities and organized an advocacy visit to Brussels for two members of Palestinian communities at risk of forcible transfer.

During the year, B’Tselem continued dedicating great effort to raise awareness of the Israeli intention to demolish Bedouin community Khan al-Ahmar (see above). B’Tselem accompanied members on the international community on dozens of field visits to the community and to other communities at risk of transfer in the East Jerusalem periphery, and advocated to call on various states to take action to prevent the demolition.

As previously mentioned, in October, El-Ad spoke before the United Nations Security Council address. He said, “Ongoing efforts to legislate against Israeli human rights organizations now go hand in hand with the routine in which opposition to the occupation is being equated with treason. The Israeli government’s statements ahead of today’s Council meeting are just one more unfortunate example of the spirit of the times. So, to Prime Minister Netanyahu I say this: you will never silence us – nor the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who reject a present founded on supremacy and oppression, and stand for a future built on equality, freedom and human rights.”