

FAILING GAZA

WILPF International

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Photo: Flickr/ Rusty Stewards

On July 21, 2014 a young female blogger from Gaza tweeted “I’m Farah Baker Gazan Girl, 16 Old. Since I was born I have survived 3 wars, I think it is enough.”

Today marks one year since the launch of the operation “Operation Protective Edge”, Israel’s 56 days military operation in Gaza, killing 1,462 Palestinian civilians, including 551 children and 299 women. The shelling and bombing of Gaza by Israel has been the major cause of direct and indirect civilian harm in this conflict. The bombardment has damaged or destroyed Gaza’s only power plant, houses, hospitals, schools, shelters, and other humanitarian sites.

While these numbers speak volumes about the scale of the devastation and the enormous price paid by civilians, even these numbers cannot do justice to the intensity of human suffering or reveal how the conflict post trauma will continue to impact on Palestinians, especially women and children, both those living in Gaza and outside the Strip.

One year later, the reconstruction process has barely begun, and international condemnation followed by promises and solidarity has not lead to any improvement or stability. The economic and social consequences will be endured by the civilian population with no choice of escape due to the continued Israeli blockage of Gaza. [International geopolitical and economic interests closely linked to arms trade with Israel also severely hinder possibilities for a durable solution.](#)

The unprecedented amount of loss of civilian life and the complete destruction of buildings and infrastructure in the densely populated Gaza strip is largely due to the Israeli Defense Forces massive use of explosive weapons.

The recent Independent Commission of Inquiry to Gaza states in its [report](#) released in July 2015: “During the ground operations, the Israel Defense Forces used explosive weapons extensively in densely populated areas of Gaza.” It adds that such attacks are highly likely to constitute a violation of the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks and therefore would constitute a war crime. Despite compelling evidence also in the [2009 Goldstone report](#), the international community has consistently failed to speak out more broadly against the [use of explosive weapons in populated areas](#). The use of such weapons in populated areas gives rise to a predictable pattern of death, injury, displacement, and destruction of essential infrastructure.

The Human Rights Council voted on July 3rd to adopt the resolution: “[Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem.](#)”

An overwhelming majority of states, including EU member states voted for the resolution. This is the 58th resolution of the Human Rights Council related to human rights violations committed by the occupying state of Israel. The resolution stressed that all those responsible for human rights violations must be held to account and effective remedies should be given to all victims, including reparations.

Nonetheless, even as the international community notes and condemns on-going human rights violations and acknowledges the deteriorating situation in the Occupied State of Palestine, particularly in besieged Gaza, there has been no corresponding translation into real obligations by member states to ensure that Israel, the occupying power, is held accountable for these violations.

It is the collective responsibility of the international community to ensure women’s protection and security in accordance with UNSCR 1325, 2122 and CEDAW GR30, to take seriously what women advise and to act on the new ideas and observations they present. As Palestinian women have repeatedly observed, this inaction marks yet another set of broken promises and failed assurances.

One year after the aggression in Gaza, we need to see a real commitment from the international community to stop the violations, uphold and seek accountability for international human rights and humanitarian law, and keep the promise to the civilian Palestinian population to secure stability and human security. The specifically gendered impacts of the on-going conflict have received little public attention. Palestinian women’s organisations remain a lone voice arguing that women’s experiences of daily insecurity – whether in their families or in the public sphere – qualify them to bring a different analysis, discourse and set of solutions.

In connection with the 29th session of the Human Rights Council, WILPF in collaboration with a coalition of Palestinian women's organisations produced [a statement with clear recommendations to the international community](#).