



Palestinian Bar Association Report on the Devastating Impact of the Genocidal War on Gaza

We, at the Palestinian Bar Association, present this report as a result of the severe damage and destruction inflicted upon the Bar Association's headquarters in the Gaza Strip due to the ongoing genocidal onslaught. The Association represents a wide sector of Palestinian society, with lawyers forming an essential component of the justice system and the protection of rights.

The Palestinian Bar Association is one of the most important professional and union institutions in Palestine. It was officially established in July 1997, operating under the Palestinian Lawyers Law No. 3 of 1999 and its amendments. The Association's council is composed of fifteen elected members, including the President (the Bar President) who is elected by the council. Nine council seats are allocated to the northern governorates (West Bank), while six seats are for the southern governorates (Gaza Strip).

The Palestinian Bar Association is an independent professional institution with legal personality and financial autonomy. It is governed by a council elected by its General Assembly and functions as a unifying and representative framework for Palestinian lawyers across the Palestinian territories. It focuses on the social and professional affairs of lawyers and defends their interests through various programs and trainings. The Association plays a vital role in upholding the rule of law, defending human rights, and protecting the legal profession from violations or degradation.

Since its inception, the Association has stood as a symbol of justice and a stronghold for lawyers in the face of political, economic, and social challenges. However, the large-scale Israeli aggression that began on October 7, 2023, marked a tragic turning point that deeply affected the Association's infrastructure, functionality, membership, services, and institutional presence.

Destruction of Bar Association Headquarters in Gaza

The three headquarters of the Palestinian Bar Association in Gaza have suffered extensive destruction, severely impacting their infrastructure. This has negatively affected daily legal operations and the conditions of both lawyers and citizens.

- The main headquarters in Gaza consisted of four floors and a basement.
- The southern branch in Khan Younis consisted of four floors.
- The Rafah branch was a rented apartment.

Both the main Gaza headquarters and the Khan Younis branch were directly bombed, resulting in complete destruction of the buildings, including essential furniture, equipment, important legal documents, lawyers' records, and case files.

Legal activities at the Bar Association have been suspended due to the destruction of its headquarters and the loss of vital documents—this will significantly disrupt the progress of cases in the courts.

Human Losses and Displacement Among Lawyers

Numerous lawyers and their families have been injured, killed, or lost their homes and offices due to Israeli airstrikes and bombardments. This has severely impacted their ability to practice law and meet their basic needs.

- 215 lawyers have been martyred to date, though exact numbers remain unavailable due to ongoing Israeli attacks.

Dire Humanitarian Situation in Gaza

Gaza is facing an extremely dire humanitarian crisis. Home to nearly 2 million people, the Strip has suffered under an oppressive blockade for over 18 years, compounded by repeated aggressions—the latest and most brutal being the current genocide that has lasted for more than a year.

Impact of Israeli Aggression on Lawyers and Citizens in Gaza

The war's effects on the lives of lawyers and citizens have been severe and painful. Key impacts include:

1- Destruction of Property and Infrastructure

Many homes, law offices, and public facilities have been bombed and destroyed by the brutal Israeli assaults.

- Approximately 3,400 lawyers have lost their homes completely and now live in tents like the rest of the displaced population.

2- Disruption of Legal Operations

Court proceedings have been halted due to the destruction of courthouses and legal institutions.

- This has created a legal vacuum, preventing lawyers from following up on cases or providing services.

3- Injuries and Human Losses

Many citizens and lawyers have been wounded or killed by Israeli airstrikes.

- 215 lawyers have been martyred, and
- 16 have died due to war-related causes.

This has had a deep psychological and social impact on the legal community, many of whom have lost colleagues and loved ones.

- 220 lawyers have been injured to date, but a precise count is unavailable due to unsafe conditions and the lack of human and technical capacity.

4- Worsening Economic Conditions and Humanitarian Crisis

The destruction of livelihoods has affected all sectors, including lawyers.

- 907 law offices have been destroyed,
- including 277 partially damaged and
- 630 fully destroyed offices.
- 2,500 lawyers and their families are currently living in tents,
- Approximately 200 lawyers are staying in shelters,
- Around 350 lawyers are living with relatives in severely overcrowded conditions.

Some lawyers urgently require medical treatment for chronic illnesses and immune disorders.

- Roughly 238 lawyers are in need of medical care.

The humanitarian crisis has worsened due to repeated displacement and forced evacuation of civilians from their homes. In these devastating conditions, a few lawyers have managed to offer limited legal support to affected citizens.

Conclusion:

The ongoing genocide and acts of ethnic cleansing have caused a profound humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, disrupting daily life and deepening the legal, social, and economic crises. The Palestinian Bar Association stands as a witness to the destruction of justice institutions and the silencing of the rule of law in the face of relentless aggression.