



בצלם - מרכז המידע הישראלי לזכויות האדם בשטחים (ע.ר.)

مركز المعلومات الإسرائيلي لحقوق الإنسان في الأراضي المحتلة-بتسيلم

B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

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## B'Tselem IHL Program – Key achievements

### January – December 2010

An overview of the issues addressed by B'Tselem over the past year reveals significant achievements, while also highlighting the work that remains to be done in the promotion of respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law:

**Working Against the Gaza Siege** – B'Tselem began the year with the release of our innovative video bloggers project "[Gaza: an Inside Look](#)" that presented Israelis with a rare human face to the Gaza Strip. The project was featured in ynet, Israel's leading news website, and hundreds of thousands of Israelis viewed these short videos on daily life in Gaza. The Gaza siege was the primary focus of our US office, which succeeded in putting the issue on the public and policy agenda months before Israel forcibly stopped a flotilla of protest ships bound for the Gaza Strip in May, killing nine Turkish activists in the process. In the wake of the flotilla disaster, Israel has significantly relaxed restrictions on imports into the Gaza Strip. However, there is still much to be done to ensure the free movement of people, and the exports needed to rebuild the Gaza economy. On October 13, 2010, B'Tselem was called before the Turkel Commission, the Israeli government commission charged to investigate the Gaza flotilla, where we testified on the serious harm caused to Gaza civilians by Israel's siege and on the legal obligations of both Israel and Hamas to respect human rights and humanitarian law.

**Promoting Accountability** – B'Tselem continued to advocate for accountability for the tremendous harm to the Gaza civilian population in Operation Cast Lead. B'Tselem was instrumental in bringing about the filing this year of the first indictment relating to the death of civilians in Cast Lead. While we continue to promote accountability in individual cases where human rights are violated, B'Tselem also continues to push for a comprehensive Israeli investigation into Cast Lead. In the West Bank as well, we are promoting accountability for individual cases – B'Tselem filed demands for investigations into 75 separate cases, which resulted in the opening of 38 criminal investigations into alleged military misconduct and one high-profile conviction. We are also advocating for policy change that will ensure that accountability for harm to civilians is the rule rather than the exception, in accordance with obligations to international humanitarian law .

**Exposing the Human Rights Implications of Settlements** – B'Tselem released a comprehensive report this year - *By Hook and by Crook: Israeli Settlement Policy in the West Bank* - on the human rights implications of Israel's settlement enterprise. Throughout the year we conducted public education and advocacy activities in Israel and in the United States – including op-eds in leading media outlets and high-profile speaking engagements – to emphasize that settlements are not only a diplomatic stumbling block. They are also a central human rights concern. In November 2010, B'Tselem highlighted the blatant discrimination in law enforcement between settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank; B'Tselem partnered with three other Israeli human rights organizations – ACRI, Yesh Din Volunteers for Human Rights, and Rabbis for Human Rights - to produce detailed documentation of 35 cases of theft and vandalism by settlers during the olive harvest. The organizations sent a joint petition calling on senior Israeli military

commanders to take all necessary steps to ensure that Palestinians and their properties are protected.

**Camera Distribution Project** – B'Tselem expanded this groundbreaking project, through which we distribute video cameras to Palestinian volunteers and provide them with training in documenting human rights abuses. At present, B'Tselem has trained over 200 volunteers, each of whom carries a B'Tselem video camera. B'Tselem's video archive presently contains more than 2,200 hours of footage used to support Israeli military and police investigators, journalists and researchers. In August 2010, B'Tselem launched a **pilot security camera project** of CCTV (closed-circuit television) camera units, in order to assess the effectiveness of closed-circuit cameras in deterring violence in high-friction areas, as well as in promoting accountability. A basic unit of two cameras and a DVR was successfully installed in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem, where settler violence towards Palestinian residents regularly takes place.

**Impact of US Office** - Through numerous meetings with American officials, members of Congress, policy-makers, writers and human rights advocates, B'Tselem- USA advocated an end to the Gaza siege, the easing of export restrictions from Gaza (a necessary step towards economic sustainability), and a comprehensive investigation into Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. The office also injected important information into the Washington debate on the settlement construction freeze, with B'Tselem's new report on settlements providing timely statistics and analysis regarding the impact of settlements on Palestinians' daily lives.

#### **Activities in 2010 included:**

- 8 visual articles and films made available online.
- 827 testimonies collected by B'Tselem's field research team throughout the West Bank and Gaza.
- Comprehensive statistics compiled on a wide range of IHL and human rights issues, based on B'Tselem's fieldwork as cross-referenced with government statements, press reports, and other sources of information.
- 6 comprehensive reports, including *B'Tselem Human Rights Review: 1 January 2009 to 30 April 2010*; *By Hook and by Crook: Israeli Settlement Policy in the West Bank*; *The Right to Demonstrate in the Occupied Territories*; *Void of Responsibility: Israel Military Policy not to investigate Killings of Palestinians by Soldiers*; *Kept in the Dark: Treatment of Palestinian Detainees in the Petach- Tikva Interrogation Facility of the Israel Security Agency*; and *Caution: Children Ahead: The Illegal Behavior of the Police toward Minors in Silwan Suspected of Stone Throwing*.
- B'Tselem provided 153 briefings and study tours for policymakers, journalists, diplomats, and international organizations.
- 23 press releases issued in English, Hebrew, and Arabic to over 1,300 local and foreign journalists:
- 10 email updates distributed by email to over 15,000 subscribers, with hundreds of additional print copies.

- 2.5 million visitors to B'Tselem's website, which contains information in four languages – Hebrew, Arabic, English and Russian – and which includes comprehensive reports, short films and video footage, statistics, maps, and testimonies from Palestinians and soldiers.
- An internet campaign that complemented the *B'Tselem's Annual Report*: B'Tselem released and an interactive online presentation that complements the full textual report, receiving over 670,000 hits in the period since its publication on July 14, 2010.
- Over 400 hours of video material collected and provided to journalists and filmmakers in Israel and overseas. At the end of the reporting period, B'Tselem had collected over 2,200 hours of footage in its video archive.
- 116 requests for investigations filed with Israeli law enforcement authorities.
- Some 850 articles in the local and international press.