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بتسيلم - مركز المعلومات الإسرائيلي لحقوق الإنسان في الأراضي المحتلة

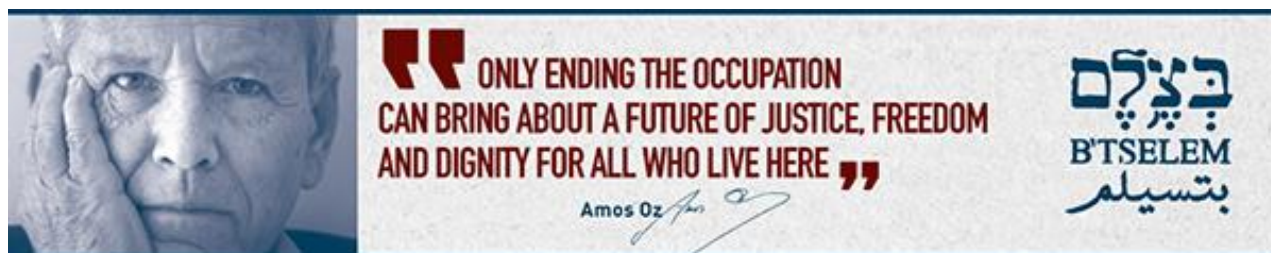
B'Tselem - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

# 2015 Annual Report

January - December 2015

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## Letter from Amos Oz



Dear friends,

The occupation is already in its 49th year. I am certain that it must be brought to an end as soon as possible for the sake of the future of the State of Israel, a future to which I am deeply committed. In view of the increasingly extreme policies espoused by the Israeli government and its clear intentions to go on controlling the Occupied Territories while dispossessing the local Palestinian population, I recently resolved to no longer attend any affairs held in my honor at Israeli embassies around the world. It was not a decision taken lightly, and it was one that pained me greatly. Yet the ongoing oppression and dispossession in the Occupied Territories, the incitement against anyone who objects to the government's policies, and the legislative efforts to curb freedom of expression and undermine the courts – all combined to bring about my resolution.

I have been on B'Tselem's Public Council for many years. I would gladly forego this honor were the occupation a thing of the past. But, until that time comes about – and it will – I am proud of the fearless work carried out by B'Tselem: from the field researchers in Gaza and the West Bank to the office staff in Jerusalem and its volunteers. B'Tselem not only reliably and meticulously documents human rights violations in the Occupied Territories, it holds up a mirror to Israeli policy, revealing the dubious guise of legality under which Israel has held sway over Palestinians for nearly fifty years, seizing their land and oppressing them.

2014 was one of the deadliest years that Israelis and Palestinians have known since 1967. Lamentably, 2015 has also seen many, many weeks of violence. I object to any and all violence against innocent persons. But I also reject the attempt to pin recent events exclusively on incitement or "anti-Semitism", while discounting the occupation regime with its many years of daily violence against millions of Palestinians bereft of rights.

These are some of the reasons I choose to be on B'Tselem's Public Council and support the organization. And that is why I am writing to you, to ask that you join me in strengthening B'Tselem by making a clear show of support in favor of human rights and against the occupation. Only ending the occupation can bring about a future filled with justice, freedom and dignity for all who live here. Please join me and support Israel's leading human rights organization which sees the occupation for what it is, documents it, elucidates its implications, and takes a clear stand against it.

Thank you,

Amos Oz

*This letter was included in B'Tselem's end of year newsletter: [Help End the Occupation: Support B'Tselem](#). [Amos Oz](#) is an Israeli writer, novelist, journalist and intellectual. He is also a professor of literature at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba. He is regarded as Israel's most famous living author.*

# Executive Summary

**June 2015 marked 48 years of occupation and July marked a year since Operation Protective Edge began - one of the cruelest, and deadliest, in the history of the occupation.**

2015 was a turbulent year for the human rights community. March saw the election of the fourth Netanyahu government - an extreme right-wing religious coalition with a clear policy of maintaining the occupation while avoiding a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. Starting in early September, a new wave of violence erupted, which some call the "Knife Intifada", with the tragic involvement of particularly young attackers, and devastating implications for human rights and human lives. Later on, December was characterized by escalating assaults on Israeli human rights organizations that oppose the occupation, with B'Tselem prominently among them. B'Tselem used the attention generated to send out an unequivocal message: No attack will keep us from speaking out against the occupation, and we will not stop until the occupation ends. It is in this atmosphere of intensifying hostility from Israeli policymakers and public alike, and in light of Israeli disregard for Palestinian human rights and human lives, that B'Tselem has reaffirmed its commitment to bring the reality in the oPt to light, to protect human rights, promote respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and end the occupation.

## In 2015

- **B'Tselem published three comprehensive research reports:** [\*Black Flag: The Legal and Moral Implications of the Policy of Attacking Residential Buildings in the Gaza Strip, Summer 2014\*](#); [\*Presumed Guilty: Remand in Custody by Military Courts in the West Bank\*](#); and [\*Backed by the System Abuse and Torture at the Shikma Interrogation Facility\*](#). Printed reports were distributed by post to nearly **10,000** recipients in Israel and abroad, including policymakers, diplomats, journalists and academics. They were also sent electronically to tens of thousands of people.
- **B'Tselem continued to closely monitor human rights violations in the oPt**, in order to provide accurate, impartial data on the occupation. B'Tselem's field researchers collected **901** testimonies and **243** incident reports. We submitted **26** requests to Israeli authorities under the Freedom of Information Law, and continued our accountability work, turning to the Israeli authorities on **50** incidents of suspected human rights violations, and submitting requests to investigate **49** fatalities. **19** investigations were opened in 2015, 18 on fatalities, and one on violence in detention. We also submitted **9** principled requests in 2015.
- **B'Tselem's new-media outreach program continued to expand.** B'Tselem's social networks have grown considerably in the last year, now hosting **190,500** members, with the Hebrew and English Facebook pages reaching a combined average of **139,000 people every day**. B'Tselem's website was visited **557,157** times by **407,208** visitors in 2015. B'Tselem's YouTube channel, one of the most popular non-profit channels in Israel attracted a staggering **2,268,273** views in 2015.
- **B'Tselem's media visibility continued to grow** - B'Tselem issued **38** press releases in Hebrew, Arabic and English to over **2,200** local and foreign journalists, and continued to be cited on a daily basis in the press. In 2015, B'Tselem had over **1,000** references in the Israeli press and **hundreds** of references in the international press, including dozens of monthly references in major outlets. B'Tselem video footage was streamed regularly in the media, and about a dozen op-eds by B'Tselem staff were published in local and foreign papers.
- **B'Tselem employed outspoken international and local advocacy to fight impunity.** B'Tselem conducted meetings, briefings and field visits with a broad range of influential international and local decision-makers and agencies in the oPt and abroad, enriching policy discourse by providing impartial information and analysis. B'Tselem was cited often by government officials, academics and journalists. The importance of B'Tselem and its research in the international discourse is illustrated in the [UN Gaza commission report](#) (June 2015), which cited B'Tselem **68** times.

- **B'Tselem's video project continued to expand** – our film [Smile, and the World will Smile Back](#), created through the project continued to win international acclaim. It was screened at important film festivals, won several awards, and was short-listed for the [European Film Awards](#). The film had its [Tel Aviv premiere](#) in May, screened to a packed audience.
- **Hagai El-Ad, Executive Director, completed his first year at B'Tselem in June.** El-Ad initiated a process of organizational review of our goals and strategy through ongoing dialogue and monthly staff meetings in Beit Jala with B'Tselem's Jerusalem staff and West Bank field researchers, with our three Gaza field researchers taking part via Skype. The review led to a **paradigm shift from calling for an end to human rights abuses under occupation to calling for an end to the occupation**, which is itself a human rights abuse. El Ad's [op-ed](#) in the New York Times on the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the occupation stressed the need to unmask the guise of "temporariness", one of our new key messages.

## Environment and Political Context

2015 marked 48 years since Israel occupied the West Bank and 20 years since the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II) was signed. Over the 48 years of occupation, Israel has consistently failed to uphold its legal obligations towards the protected Palestinian population. Israel has also failed to provide these protected persons basic rights such as housing, welfare, livelihood, education and healthcare. It is a good time to recall that the word "occupation" is first and foremost a legal term that describes the temporary status of a territory that was seized by a state during an armed conflict. After 48 years of disregard for the laws of occupation, Israel's occupation of the West Bank can be considered neither temporary nor benevolent in intent.

### The Gaza Strip

July 2015 also marked [a year since Operation Protective Edge](#), one of the cruelest and deadliest clashes in the history of the occupation. In July, B'Tselem launched a campaign [Gaza Today – One Year Later](#) to mark a year since the bombings of the Gaza Strip began. For hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the previous summer's nightmare had become an ongoing reality. At the end of 2015, more than 16,000 families (over 90,000 individuals) remained displaced as a result of the 2014 Gaza-Israel hostilities, which destroyed 11,000 homes and severely damaged or rendered uninhabitable an additional 6,800 homes. The living conditions of these families raise a range of concerns, including overcrowding, limited access to basic services, lack of privacy, tensions with host communities, risks due to unexploded ordnance and exposure to the elements in all weather conditions.

Beyond the destruction wrought by Protective Edge, Gazans continue to deal with severe infringements of human rights and IHL caused by the Israeli siege, ongoing since shortly after Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007. In addition, they are subject to other violations resulting from Israel's continued influence on the Gaza Strip. For example, in October and November, demonstrations held in Gaza to express solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank, in view of recent events there, were met with [unwarranted life gunfire](#) by the Israeli military. B'Tselem field researchers in the Gaza Strip found that up to 14 November 2015, 14 people were killed in these demonstrations, including two who were wounded and later succumbed to their wounds. Thirteen of the people killed were hit by live bullets and one by a tear-gas canister that penetrated his chest. 379 people were wounded, 247 by live ammunition, 110 by rubber-coated metal bullets, and 22 were struck directly by tear-gas canisters.

In December 2015, Gazan farmers reported that Israel had [sprayed their land with herbicides](#), damaging crops in areas Israel had told farmers they were permitted to work. The military frequently changes the scope of the "no-go" zone by the perimeter fence, but does not mark it or inform farmers.

### The West Bank

In the West Bank, 2015 saw a surge of demolitions in communities at risk of *de facto* expulsion in Area C. In August 2015 the Civil Administration carried out a particularly large and cruel [demolition spree](#), demolishing structures in 29 villages and communities throughout [Area C](#). Israeli authorities demolished 101 structures, including 50 residential structures which were home to 228 people, 124 of them minors.

The extensive demolitions are part of Israel's overall policy toward Area C – which comprises 60% of the West Bank – based on its perception of Area C as meant primarily to serve Israeli needs. Israel works to establish facts on the ground, creating a reality that would be difficult to change under a future agreement. Such actions include exploiting local resources and building and expanding settlements. At the same time, Israeli authorities take action designed to force out and expel Palestinian residents from Area C, citing “illegal construction” – a flawed argument since Palestinian residents have virtually no way to build legally.

The expulsion plans violate IHL, which prohibits the forcible transfer of protected persons, unless carried out for their own protection or for an imperative military need. Even when the transfer meets these criteria, it must be temporary. As the occupying power, Israel has an obligation to work for the welfare of the residents of the occupied territory. The plan to expel residents from their homes violates this obligation.

2015 also saw an intensification of punitive home demolitions by Israeli authorities, a measure resumed in July 2014 following a nearly decade-long hiatus. Since October 2015, Israel has stepped-up its use of house demolitions as a punitive measure. [In October, authorities blew up three homes](#) (in the process, two adjacent apartments not slated for demolition were also destroyed) and sealed another apartment. [In November, authorities demolished 14 apartments](#), eight of which were not slated for demolition. [In December, authorities demolished six apartments](#), four of which were not slated for demolition.

The months since the 1 October [killing of Eitam and Naama Henkin](#), have seen dozens of assaults on civilians and members of Israel's security forces by Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank. These attacks have taken the form of stabbings, car-rammings and gunfire. The death toll continues to rise. 19 Israelis, including three members of Israeli security forces, a foreign citizen and a Palestinian civilian were killed by Palestinians, and two Israelis were accidentally killed by “friendly fire” during attacks. 108 Palestinians were killed by Israelis, mostly by Israeli security forces.

Meanwhile, Israeli government officials and others in position of authority have been calling explicitly to “shoot to kill”, so the lives of Palestinians even suspected of perpetrating attack are forfeit, even when they no longer pose a threat. Up to 31 December 2015, 89 assailants, or suspected assailants, were shot dead by Israeli security forces or civilians, in some cases, after the assailants no longer posed a threat.

2015 was also characterized by a severe contraction of the Israeli civil space. The political spectrum has narrowed considerably, with mainstream positions now echoing positions previously held by the right wing. An occupation that will go on indefinitely is presented as the only viable option, while no genuine attempt is made to negotiate with the Palestinians or attempt to resolve the conflict through a diplomatic process. There is little political opposition to the government position on the occupation, and members of the opposition have publically criticized human rights NGOS, often voicing positions even further to the *right* of the current government. In order to maintain the narrative that Israel has no choice but to sustain the occupation, the government has invested serious efforts in trying to silence the voices from within Israeli civil society speaking out against the occupation. It has also attempted to divert public attention from the failure of its policies through scapegoating imagined “traitors” from within. The Israeli right wing has asserted a monopoly over the Israeli agenda, so that the genuine aspirations of Israelis to end nearly 50 years of occupation over millions of Palestinians is seen not as a legitimate Israeli goal, but a hostile foreign agenda imposed from abroad. Human rights NGOs are treated not as Israeli citizens exercising their own rights to freedom of speech and association, but as traitors representing anti-Israeli, and even anti-Semitic, foreign interest.



Throughout 2015, human rights NGOs were subjected to relentless attacks and threats meant to silence and intimidate them. B'Tselem has endured hate speech campaigns on social media, including violent threats, threatening phone calls and emails, and more. Addresses of staff members' homes have been published on social media. In December 2015, a video published by 'Im Tirzu' portrayed Israeli human rights defenders as treacherous foreign agents planted by foreign governments supporting terrorism. These attacks forced B'Tselem to take significant security measures to ensure our staff's safety and the integrity of our work. B'Tselem has hired security guards, submitted complaints to the police, and gotten restraining orders against instigators. These attacks are a direct assault on our own civil and human rights to freedom of speech and association, both as citizens of Israel and as human beings.

However, while the longest ongoing military occupation in modern history carries on uninterrupted, meaningful debate about the length and nature of the occupation is still strikingly absent from the Israeli public agenda and discourse. B'Tselem is determined to change this reality. We must not normalize the occupation. This reality is morally reprehensible, and ensures the very opposite of peace and justice. For the millions of Palestinians living under occupation, "normal" means living a nearly defenseless existence in the face of a constant threat of harm. Human rights violations must never become the norm – not after 48 years, nor after one hundred.

## Research Informing Policymakers and the Public

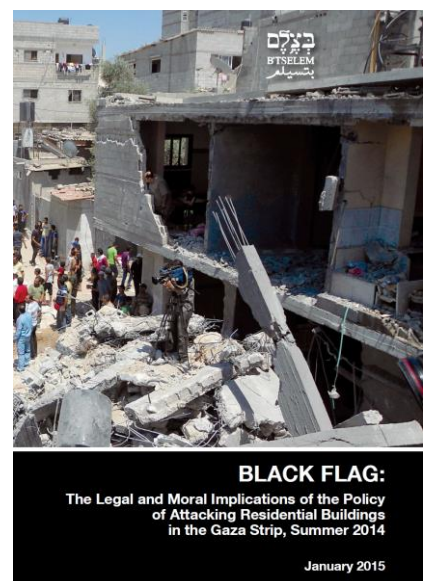
B'Tselem's meticulously-researched, in-depth materials continue to serve as a valuable resource and inform discourse amongst Israeli policymakers, as well as policymakers and diplomats from around the world. In 2015, B'Tselem posted **over 40 research-based items** on its website, updating information on a range of issues such as: restriction of movement, settlements, East Jerusalem, the South Hebron Hills, residency & family separation, expulsion of communities, administrative detention, Gaza, fatalities, and demolitions.

B'Tselem also published three comprehensive research reports during this period, each of them distributed by post to nearly **10,000** targeted recipients, including Israeli policymakers and advisors, government officials, diplomats, journalists and academics, in addition to on-line distribution to tens of thousands of people.

### Black Flag: The Legal and Moral Implications of the Policy of Attacking Residential Buildings in the Gaza Strip, Summer 2014

Published in January, [the report](#) analyzes the policy of **bombing residential buildings in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge**. This policy was one of the horrifying hallmarks of the fighting in Gaza in the summer of 2014, leading to the deaths of hundreds of people – more than a quarter of the operation's Palestinian casualties. While Hamas openly declared its intent to harm Israeli civilians, Israeli officials insisted, both during and after the hostilities, that the military had obeyed the law and done everything in its power to avoid harming civilians. The report indicates that these claims are baseless. B'Tselem made sure *Black Flag* would not go unnoticed, promoting our message on three levels:

- **The press:** B'Tselem issued a [press release](#) in Hebrew, Arabic and English to 2,200 journalists and made dozens of personal follow up calls. For the international news media, B'Tselem held a press briefing to allow the report's author and B'Tselem's Executive Director discuss the report's findings and make media



statements. Approximately 20 journalists attended, including from major media outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, The Associated Press and *The Independent*. In addition, B'Tselem's spokesperson – together with the author of the report – held several targeted briefings with key media outlets, such as *Washington Post*. **Consequently, the report got excellent coverage in the international, Israeli and Arabic language media.** For example: [The New York Times](#); [Fox News](#); [The Daily Telegraph](#); [The Sydney Morning Herald](#); [The Guardian](#); [The Independent](#); [Al Jazeera](#); [Die Welt](#); [Stern](#); [L'Express](#); [The Israeli Broadcasting Service](#); [Ha'aretz](#); [Mako](#) (Israeli Channel 2); to name a few.

- **The diplomatic community:** B'Tselem held three separate briefings targeting key diplomats. The first two were aimed at diplomats stationed in Israel and the oPt, and were held at the political offices of the EU Delegation to Israel in Ramat Gan, and at B'Tselem's offices in Jerusalem. These were attended by over 30 high-ranking staff from the representative offices, consulates and embassies of the US, the EU Commission, Britain, Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Britain, Switzerland, Canada, Slovenia and Japan, as well as international aid organizations such as UNICEF. The third briefing was conducted by telephone, on a conference call attended by 25 officials from the US State Department and organizations such as Amnesty International. B'Tselem field researcher Khaled al-'Azayzeh joined the briefing from Gaza.
- **The public:** B'Tselem produced three short videos and an infographic which accompanied the release of the report on a [dedicated mini-site](#). The *Black Flag* pages were visited over 14,775 times. In addition, B'Tselem's social networks posted a series on the bombing of homes in Gaza, including videos, and linking to the mini-site and the report. The Facebook posts on the report alone (in Hebrew and English), reached over half a million people. In addition, a dedicated newsletter was sent out, announcing the report to 23,000 people in Israel and abroad.



## Presumed Guilty: Remand in Custody by Military Courts in the West Bank

Published in June 2015, [the report](#) asserts that in many cases, charging a Palestinian in a military court is tantamount to conviction.



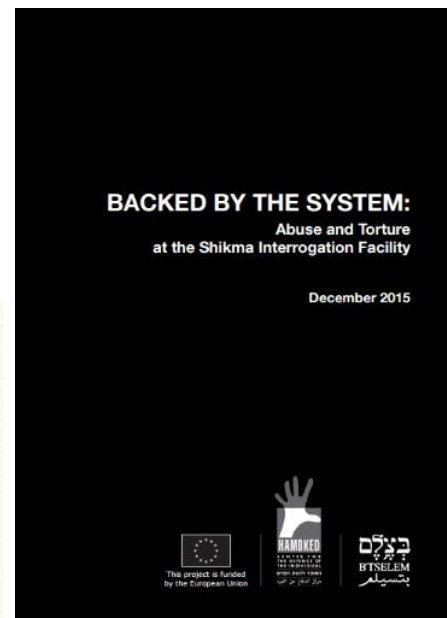
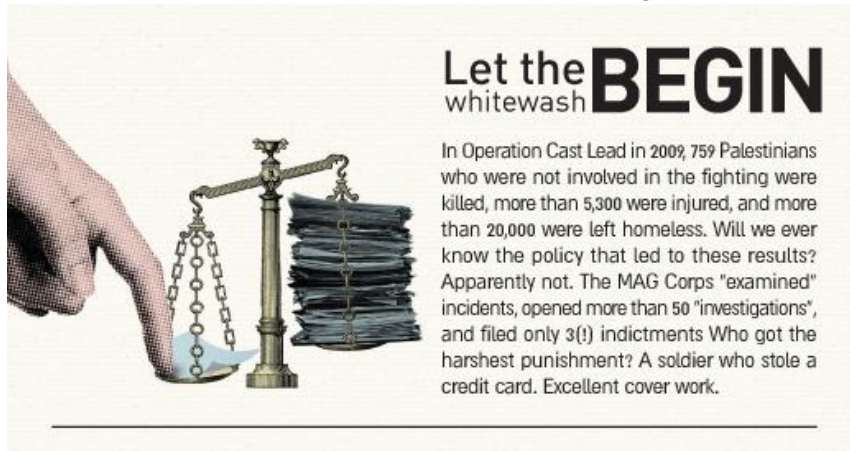
B'Tselem's research found that remand until the end of legal proceedings is the rule, not the exception, for most Palestinians charged in Israel's military courts in the West Bank (except individuals charged with traffic violations). One result of this policy is that the vast majority of military court cases end in plea bargains. This is because defendants know that if they go to trial while in custody – even if going to trial would mean

eventual acquittal – they may spend more time imprisoned than the prison sentence they would receive in a plea bargain. When remand – a pre-trial decision concerning a person not yet convicted – is approved on a regular basis, the judicial process becomes a hollow formality. This phenomenon exposes the **injustice inherent in the Israeli military courts, which have been operating uninterrupted for the past 48 years as a key mechanism of the Israeli occupation.**

B'Tselem supported the dissemination of *Presumed Guilty* with a series of public actions, including: a [press release](#) which led to impressive coverage in outlets such as [the Washington Post](#), [the Washington Times](#), [the Jerusalem Post](#), and [Maariv](#); a briefing at B'Tselem's office for the diplomatic community attended by 15 diplomats from Europe and the US; and a public campaign on our social networks and our website which included [interview segments](#) featuring former military judges and a [promotional video](#).

## Backed by the System: Abuse and Torture at the Shikma Interrogation Facility

Sleep deprivation; prolonged binding; verbal and sometimes physical abuse; exposure to heat and cold; poor, meager food; small, foul-smelling cells; solitary confinement; unhygienic conditions. [The report](#), published in December by HaMoked and B'Tselem, shows these to be standard in interrogations at Israel



Security Agency's (ISA) facility at Shikma Prison. The report is based on affidavits and testimonials by 116 Palestinians

interrogated there from Aug. 2013 to March 2014, including at least 14 who had been interrogated under torture by the Palestinian Authority shortly before. The ISA's interrogation system is run with the approval of Israeli authorities, including the High Court of Justice. Our extensive advocacy and public outreach activities on this report took place during January 2016.

## Promoting Accountability for Human Rights Violations

During 2015, B'Tselem continued its efforts to promote accountability for human rights violations in the oPt – while introducing new strategic thinking to this core issue. We implemented our new strategy vis-à-vis "investigations" by the Military Advocate General (MAG) and military police of potential IHL violations by the Israeli military in Gaza by [refusing to assist the Israeli military investigation into Operation Protective Edge](#). In the coming months, B'Tselem intends to announce that **we will cease to rely on the existing investigative mechanisms in order to not lend credibility to a system that deserves none**. B'Tselem will change its strategy vis-à-vis Israeli investigative mechanisms not only concerning wartime violations in Gaza, but also for violations occurring under occupation in the West Bank.

B'Tselem is making this strategic shift to more effectively promote Israeli accountability for violations of human rights and IHL. The Israeli authorities' abysmal record of bringing to justice perpetrators of violations has proven to be systemic and endemic: B'Tselem finds the total disregard of the Israeli investigative mechanisms for minimum standards of accountability yet further evidence of their intention to provide impunity to violators.



On 30 December B'Tselem held a major public event for Israeli human rights organizations in Tel Aviv. The goal of the event was to invite them to join our new strategy vis-à-vis the Israeli military investigative authorities. Some 40 representatives of almost all the Israeli organizations operating in the oPt attended the event. The schedule included presentations by B'Tselem, including by B'Tselem's veteran field researcher Musa Abu Hashhash who shared his experience of over 15 years of work on violations in the oPt, as well as B'Tselem's Research Director Yael Stein who presented the position paper and B'Tselem Fatality Data Coordinator Itamar Barak who shared information on accountability for violations over the years. Following the presentations, two open sessions were held for questions and a discussion on the implications of this decision. We are hoping that B'Tselem's new strategy will lead a change in the way the entire human rights community in Israel relates to accountability for violations, not cooperating any longer with the continued whitewash, impunity and pretense of investigation.

B'Tselem's commitment to accountability is unwavering, and these changes reflect a new strategic expression of that commitment. While we continue our work to diligently monitor and document violations, B'Tselem reaffirms the need to demand real and effective accountability – not whitewash.

**Throughout 2015, B'Tselem closely monitored human rights violations in the oPt**, in order to provide accurate, unbiased data on the intolerable reality of the occupation and promote accountability for violations. B'Tselem's Palestinian field researchers in the West Bank and Gaza collected **901** testimonies on a wide spectrum of human rights violations, as well as **243** incident reports, based on investigations of incidents. B'Tselem's data coordinators in Jerusalem integrated the translated information into B'Tselem's disaggregated MIS (management information system) database, meticulously cross-checking it and supplementing information from a variety of sources, including the press, Israeli authorities and Palestinian institutions such as hospitals and morgues. The verified information was then used for public outreach and advocacy, pushing for accountability, and for requests for investigation in certain cases.

**B'Tselem's efforts to advance accountability involved ongoing and regular engagement with a range of Israeli authorities.**

During 2015, B'Tselem's data coordinators were in contact on various cases and issues with the MAG; the IDF Spokesperson's Unit; the Legal Advisor in Judea and Samaria; the IDF Judea and Samaria (West Bank) Brigade; the Department for the Investigation of Police (DIP); the Israel Prison Service (IPS); the Judea and Samaria Police District; and the Coordination and Liaison Administration for Gaza. Sarit Michaeli, B'Tselem spokesperson, also gave a lecture at the IDF Spokesperson Unit on human rights violations and B'Tselem's work.



**This engagement enables B'Tselem to closely monitor and evaluate the mechanisms for conducting investigations and prosecutions.** For years B'Tselem has been cautioning that the Israeli military does not properly investigate suspicions of illegal conduct and refrains from enforcing the law with regard to security services personnel, thus maintaining impunity for violations.

- B'Tselem submitted **26 requests for information** to Israeli authorities during 2015, under the Freedom of Information Law, on issues such as Palestinians in the custody of the IPS, closure days in the West Bank, restrictions on freedom of movement, and accountability in the Israeli military, including complaints, police investigations and indictments against soldiers who committed crimes against Palestinians.
- B'Tselem sent **9 principled requests** to the Israeli authorities on a range of topics. For example, a [principled request](#) was sent to the MAG and the Legal Advisor in Judea and Samaria demanding that the military cease using dogs to attack civilians, following a [filmed incident in which soldiers set dogs on Palestinian youth](#) in March. The MAG replied they are re-assessing the relevant

procedures. Another [principled request](#) was sent on the incident where [soldiers expelled Palestinians from pool](#) in Area A to enable settlers to bathe undisturbed. Another principled request concerned the [policy of using live ammunition to disperse demonstrators](#). A fourth principled request was a letter to the Legal Advisor to the Judea and Samaria Division concerning harassment of a family in Hebron by Israeli soldiers. Disciplinary proceedings were undertaken. A fifth principled request was a Letter to the Legal Advisor to the Judea and Samaria Division regarding detention and violence against minors under criminal age. The case is being checked.

- B'Tselem's Prisoners Data Coordinator shared **detailed statistics on Palestinian prisoners** in Israel, obtained through monthly Freedom of Information requests to the IPS, via a monthly email to relevant human rights organizations, diplomats, attorneys and UN agencies. In this context, three years after B'Tselem began requesting data about holding prisoners in solitary confinement, **the IPS informed B'Tselem that it will begin publishing this data on its own initiative, and that B'Tselem's requests were central to their decision**. Although the quality and frequency of the data to be published remains to be seen, B'Tselem is proud of this achievement for freedom of information.
- B'Tselem published comprehensive [statistical reports and analysis](#) on its website, providing detailed and reliable information on issues such as fatalities and inmates.
- B'Tselem provided **individual assistance** to researchers, diplomats, and journalists addressing human rights issues in the oPt. B'Tselem responded to dozens of information requests each month via meetings and email.

## Spotlight: Fighting Israeli Impunity for Fatalities in the West Bank

B'Tselem continued to closely [monitor](#) investigations of civilian Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank. According to the policy in place, the MAG must immediately launch an investigation by the Military Police Investigations Unit (MPIU) in every case in which a Palestinian not taking part in hostilities is killed in the West Bank.

B'Tselem's data coordinators submitted requests to Israeli authorities to investigate 49 West Bank fatality cases in 2015, based on testimonies and additional data. 46 requests were sent to the Military Police Investigations Unit, 1 to the Israel Police and 2 to Department for the Investigation of Police. 18 investigations were opened on these cases in 2015, and we are awaiting an answer on the majority of the rest (at least 3 will not be investigated at all, according to the authorities).



Examples of cases B'Tselem monitored and pushed forward in 2015 include:

- [B'Tselem appeals to State Attorney's Office against closing investigative files in case of Milad 'Ayash, 17, killed by gunfire from East Jerusalem settlement](#)
- [Internal information in the Yusef a-Shawamreh killing reveals: Commanders ordered live fire ambush of teens, though they posed no danger. The result: a 14-year-old killed, no one held accountable](#)
- Press Release: [Bassem Abu Rahmeh's mother demands decision in appeal on closing case of her son's killing](#)
- Press Release: [Video footage shows that Binyamin Brigade Commander shot and killed Muhammad 'Ali-Kosba, 17, while the youth fled after throwing a stone](#)

- Press Release: [B'Tselem investigation: No justification for multiple bullets that killed Hadil al-Hashlamun in Hebron](#)
- [Soldiers who shot 16-year-old in the back charged with "reckless and negligent act"; COs who ordered the stakeout will not be held accountable](#)

**The issue of Israeli impunity for fatalities in the West Bank received ample media coverage in Israel and internationally.** B'Tselem field research, data coordination and video analyses were used by Channel 10 in its [prime time extensive segment](#) on the killing of [Yusef a-Shawamreh](#). Broadcast in Channel 10's investigative journalism program, HaMakor, the story was produced with the cooperation of B'Tselem's spokesperson, data coordination team and field researchers, and relied heavily on B'Tselem's research, investigation and video analysis. A B'Tselem data coordinator was interviewed, and a B'Tselem field researcher located eyewitnesses to the event and appeared in the story. The HaMakor investigation corroborated B'Tselem's investigation and was critical of the IDF investigation into a-Shawamreh's death.

### **Shoot to Kill Policy**

Since the start of the escalation in violence, Israeli government officials and others in position of authority have been calling explicitly to ["shoot to kill"](#), so the lives of Palestinians suspected of perpetrating attack are forfeit, even when they no longer pose a threat. 89 Palestinians have been shot to death when perpetrating attacks or being suspected of perpetrating attacks. In contrast, while a number of Palestinian passersby have been attacked in several Israeli cities by Israelis, no one fired at their attackers, with police showing unaccountable restraint, or perhaps indifference.

On 14 October, B'Tselem published a [press release](#) together with 8 other human rights organizations in Israel (The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Amnesty International – Israel Branch, B'Tselem, Gisha, Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual, Yesh Din – Volunteers for Human Rights, Adalah – The Legal Center for the Rights of the Arab Minority in Israel and Physician for Human Rights – Israel), stating that politicians' calls to police and soldiers to shoot Palestinian attackers rather than arrest them endorse the killing of Palestinians. The press release noted that since the beginning of the current wave of violence, there has been a worrying trend to use firearms to kill Palestinians who have attacked Israelis or are suspected of such attacks. Several incidents have been documented and reported, raising concern that the chosen response to such persons is the harshest possible, with lethal or – at the very least – unnecessary consequences.

The press release stated that politicians and senior police officers have not only failed to act to calm the public climate of incitement, but have openly called for the extrajudicial killing of suspects. They have also urged civilians to carry weapons. No one disputes the serious nature of the events of recent days, nor the need to protect the public against stabbing and other attacks. However, too often, instead of acting in a manner consistent with the nature of each incident, police officers and soldiers are quick to shoot to kill. The political and public support for such actions endorses the killing of Palestinians in the oPt and in Israel.

The 9 human rights organizations further stated that rather than imposing collective punishment on Palestinians in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli government should act to end the reality of ongoing and daily oppression faced by some four million people who live without hope of any change in the situation, without any horizon for the end of occupation, and without prospects for a life of liberty and dignity.

On 25 November, B'Tselem sent a [letter to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu](#), demanding an end to the use of lethal force against people who either harmed, tried to harm, or were suspected of trying to harm others, once they no longer posed any danger. The letter demanded an end to the horrific string of summary street executions.

Yet there have also been encouraging instances in which members of the public have prevented lynching. Such instances help fuel the hope for a more human and humane future, even with the rising tide of fear and hatred. B'Tselem reiterates its condemnation of any and all attacks against civilians.

## Spotlight: Intensification of Punitive Home Demolitions

Since 1967, when the West Bank was occupied, the military has demolished and sealed hundreds of homes as a punitive measure against relatives of Palestinians who had harmed Israelis or were suspected of doing so. This policy has left thousands of people, including young children, homeless, though they themselves were not suspected of any offense, nor was anything alleged against them. In 2005, the military discontinued this policy, after a committee appointed by the security establishment reached the conclusion that its disadvantages outweighed its advantages. Home demolitions resumed in July 2014 shortly after the kidnapping and killing of three Yeshiva students in the Bethlehem area. Israeli authorities argued that the resumption was justified given the radical change in circumstances.



Since October 2015, Israel has stepped-up its use of house demolitions as a punitive measure. [In October, the authorities blew up](#) three homes (in the process, two adjacent apartments not slated for demolition were also destroyed) and sealed another apartment. [In November, authorities demolished](#) 14 apartments, eight of which were not slated for demolition. [In December, authorities demolished](#) six apartments, four of which were not slated for demolition. A total of 29 apartments were demolished or sealed by the authorities in the last three months of 2015. In addition, in recent months security forces have surveyed dozens of

homes belonging to families of individuals who committed attacks against Israeli civilians, or are suspected of committing or being involved in such attacks, with the intention of demolishing these homes in the future.

B'Tselem researched and documented all demolitions that **took place**. We published [6 updates](#) on home demolitions in 2015. We brought the issue to the public and decision-makers through website updates, social media posts, and media work, such as a [press release](#) stating that the demolition of attackers' family homes is essentially a government policy of vengeance against innocents that operates with the approval of the High Court of Justice (**HCI**), and an op-ed by B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad in Israeli daily *Haaretz*, [An Organized Barbarity Called 'Demolishing Terrorists' Homes](#).

## Spotlight: Expulsion of Communities

Throughout 2015, **B'Tselem worked intensively on the issue of expulsion of communities from Area C**. Thousands of people – residents of dozens of Palestinian communities located throughout Area C, the West Bank – face imminent expulsion by Israeli authorities on a variety of pretexts. B'Tselem field researchers collected up-to-date information, data, [photos](#) and [videos](#) from the communities on ground. This essential information was then verified by B'Tselem's data coordinator for Area C, Niv Michaeli, and then posted in a timely manner on B'Tselem's [Facing Expulsion Live Blog](#) and additional public outreach tools, as well as informing our advocacy efforts.





The live blog pools the regular updates we get from B'Tselem field researchers regarding the communities and any attempts by authorities to expel them. The blog features an interactive map with further information about the various communities facing the risk of expulsion. The information in the blog reflects the latest state of affairs known to us and is updated as we receive new data from the field.

2015 updates include the following examples:

- [June in the Jordan Valley: In 7 days of maneuvers, military temporarily displaces hundreds and causes fires in farmland](#)
- [Military again evacuates Khirbet Humsah residents for maneuvers, orders evacuation of three other communities](#)
- [Civil Administration demolishes homes of 4 Palestinian families in al-Mukasar, Jordan Valley](#)
- [Civil Administration confiscates 12 solar panels from the Khan al-Ahmar community close to Ma'ale Adumim](#)
- [Civil Administration again orders Ibziq residents to evacuate homes for military maneuver](#)
- [Civil Administration demolishes 'Ein Karzaliyah for the second time this winter](#)
- [Civil Administration dismantles, confiscates water pipes in Khirbet Yarza, Jordan Valley](#)
- [Khirbet 'Ein Karzaliyah: Israeli authorities continue persecution of a tiny community in Jordan Valley](#)
- [Civil Administration again demolishes all homes in Khirbet 'Ein Karzaliyah](#)
- [Kh. Um al-Jamal: Israeli military demolishes 5 families' tents mere days before the storm](#)
- [Civil Administration confiscates solar panels in Khan al-Ahmar Bedouin community](#)
- [Civil Administration demolishes 4 homes in Khallet Makhul, northern Jordan Valley](#)
- [Civil Administration continues demolition sweep: 14 Bedouin families left homeless in the Ma'ale Adumim area today](#)
- [Israel's Civil Administration steps up efforts to expel Area C Palestinian communities](#)
- [Israel forces dozens of Jordan Valley Palestinians to vacate homes for hours to allow for military training](#)

Of special concern during the period was the eminent threat of expulsion in **Khirbet Susiya**. B'Tselem launched a dedicated public campaign on this issue, detailed below.



## B'Tselem Camera Project - Reaching New Audiences

B'Tselem continued to harness the power of images for the benefit of the fight for human rights in the oPt. The camera project captures and publicizes images that give a face to human rights violations, making them tangible and concrete. It also deters violence against Palestinians and empowers communities at risk.

**B'Tselem continued to provide video cameras and training to 200 Palestinian volunteers living in high-conflict areas in the oPt**, with a view to bringing an unmediated view of the reality of their lives under occupation to the attention of the Israeli and international public. The volunteers sent dozens of hours of footage monthly during the period. In Gaza, B'Tselem's field researchers doubled as citizen journalists, sending in footage and filmed testimonies on life in Gaza in the aftermath of Operation Protective Edge, such as bringing the stories of [last summer's displaced persons still living in UN schools](#) and a testimony about life in the ruins in the town of [Khuza'a](#).

**B'Tselem catalogued and archived over 350 hours of video footage into its unique and comprehensive video archive**, making footage available for criminal investigations and to interested journalists, documentary filmmakers, and researchers. B'Tselem footage is often used in media projects and documentary films on the oPt, such as academy award nominees *5 Broken Cameras* and *The Gatekeepers*.

**Almost 160 volunteers were actively trained in 2015. B'Tselem held 15 workshops for video volunteers** in 2015, and recruited **18** new volunteers, **6** of them women. B'Tselem also distributed **49** new cameras during 2015, to new volunteers, to replace old or damaged cameras, and to strengthen key conflict areas, such as Khirbet Susiya.

**The use of visual material is an integral element of B'Tselem's strategy to reach larger audiences** and involve them in human rights advocacy, fighting impunity for violations. B'Tselem integrates video footage and short films in its press releases, newsletters, social media posts and in website items. In 2015, B'Tselem's video department **posted 30 videos** on our [YouTube Channel](#). One of the most popular non-profit channels in Israel, B'Tselem's YouTube channel has had **7,608,064** views since its introduction in 2006, and attracted a staggering **2,268,273** views in 2015.

Videos posted in 2015 on B'Tselem's YouTube channel include: [Soldiers escorting Yitzhar settlers on violent rampage](#); [Soldiers violently and wrongfully arrest a Palestinian youth, al-Bireh](#); [Solar panels confiscated from Bedouin community](#); [Israeli soldiers set dogs on Palestinian youth](#) and many more. We also produced a number of brief videos. For example, in August we made a short clip explaining about the [temporary displacement of Jordan Valley communities](#) for the benefit of military training. At the end of 2015, we compiled and produced a video about [a third generation being born into the occupation](#).

B'Tselem's most widely viewed Facebook posts are usually of footage captured by our Palestinian camera volunteers. The top posts in Hebrew in 2015 – viewed by our Israeli audience, whose perception of the occupation we most want to influence – were four pieces of raw video footage by B'Tselem video volunteers; three pieces of raw footage by other photographers or security camera footage, vetted and contextualized by B'Tselem (these got the most views); and two edited video clips, which were based on raw footage filmed by B'Tselem video volunteers. The data on our English

Facebook page reflects very similar results. Our top Hebrew post had a total lifetime reach of 2,379,613 and a lifetime organic impressions of 4,335,719. This is remarkable in a country with a population of only 8 million people.

A selection of the media generated by B'Tselem's video project during 2015 includes the following:

International media:

- A major [video article](#) about the video project itself was published in France's Channel Plus online magazine. The 8-minute video discussed different aspects of the video project, and included interviews with Yoav Gross (Video Department Director) and Palestinian camera volunteers, as well as Israeli settlers, and Israeli mainstream media staff who publish B'Tselem's videos.
- The Telegraph, 13 July: [Israeli officer shot fleeing Palestinian youth, human rights group says](#)
- BBC, 13 July: [Video 'raises doubt over Palestinian shooting claim'](#)
- NBC News, 26 July: [Residents of Susiya, West Bank, Await Demolition of Their Homes](#)
- Israel HaYom, 28 August: [Free speech doesn't mean equality](#). (English version of Israeli newspaper)

Hebrew articles published on Israeli mainstream news include:

- [London and Kirshenbaum](#), 21 July: Major Israeli TV news program) interview with B'Tselem's spokesperson on the fate of the village of Khirbet Susiya.
- Walla!, 24 February: [Curse of the Territories](#)
- Channel Two News, 2 March: [Documentation: Soldiers set dog on Palestinian boy](#)
- Walla!, 15 May: [Documentation: Settlers set fire to Palestinian fields after a vehicle attack](#)
- Walla!, 29 May: [Documentation: What were 40 soldiers doing on the roof of a Palestinian family in Hebron?](#)
- YNet, 12 July: [Palestinian threw stone at Binyamin Brigade Commander, fled and was shot dead](#)
- NRG, 24 August: [Right-wing activists to Regev: Prevent Gaza testimonies at the Cinematheque](#)
- Walla!, 30 August: [B'Tselem's Documentation Led to Indictment Against Noam Federman](#)
- Kol Yisrael, Radio B, 12 July: [B'Tselem: Binyamin Brigade Commander Col. Shomer Fired Illegally](#)

## Spotlight: Hebron City Center

B'Tselem video volunteers in Hebron have been consistently successful in capturing powerful and compelling images of their life under occupation. Israeli law enforcement authorities and security forces are making the entire Palestinian population suffer in the process of protecting Israeli settlement in the city. The authorities impose a regime openly based on the "principle of separation", the result of which is legal and physical segregation between the Israeli settlers and the Palestinian majority, and routine harassment of the Palestinian residents.

B'Tselem [reported in early November 2015](#) that further restrictions have been imposed on Palestinians in the area since October 2015, following the increase in attacks and attempted attacks against Israeli security forces and civilians. Among other steps, the military has installed concrete blockades at the entrance to some streets in the Old City, closed off the Tel Rumeidah neighborhood to non-residents, and introduced lengthy inspections at checkpoints, as well as erecting flying checkpoints with no prior warning. These new restrictions prevent residents from maintaining any kind of reasonable routine – on top of the daily challenge already posed by existing limitations on movement.

All Palestinian residents of these areas are subjected to these inspections, undergoing not only harassment and occasional degradation but also repeated delays. The elderly, women and children are not exempt, and schoolchildren are examined on their way to and from school.

Due to these restrictions, some 20 shops near the Tomb of the Patriarchs [al-Haram al-Ibrahimi] closed down as a result of Border Police orders to close shop for one to three weeks after every security incident that took place. The lengthy inspections also deter customers from coming to the area. Very few people can now be seen moving around the Old City and Tel Rumeidah, and there has been a marked drop in the number of Palestinian worshippers in the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Some shops have also stopped opening for business in the nearby market due to the absence of shoppers.

The IDF Spokesperson cited “security considerations” as justification for the new restrictions, but such considerations cannot justify the imposition of such broad and ongoing limitations on the lives of residents. More generally, the IDF Spokesperson regards the imposition of these restrictions as an isolated instance intended to provide a solution for a new reality – overlooking the longstanding policy implemented by Israel in the center of Hebron for many years, based on the “principle of separation” between settlers and Palestinians. Israel’s security establishment considers itself responsible solely for ensuring the security and wellbeing of the former. Protecting the daily routine of Palestinian residents of central Hebron, let alone their wellbeing and security, is not part of the considerations that guide Israeli policy in the city.

The policy of separation that Israel implements in Hebron has already destroyed the economy of the city center and led Palestinians to desert it in droves, unable to live under the strict restrictions imposed upon them. The new restrictions imposed since October give cause for concern that the authorities hope to push residents still living in the city center to leave their homes, with the aim of emptying yet more areas in Hebron of Palestinians.

The sweeping restrictions imposed by the security forces on the movement of Palestinians in Hebron constitute collective punishment of residents unfortunate enough to live or work close to areas where settlers have chosen to live. As such, these restrictions are immoral and unlawful.



B'Tselem actively monitored and documented the situation and produced several videos. An example is the video [Separation policy in Hebron: Military renews segregation on main street; Wide part – for Jews, narrow, rough side passage – for Palestinians](#). Notably, B'Tselem’s social media posts which included this footage by B'Tselem’s volunteers got unprecedented exposure in Israel and internationally, with [the English Facebook post](#) reaching 1,489,408 people and [the Hebrew Facebook post](#) reaching 893,696 people. This demonstrates the extraordinary power of film in reaching huge audiences and spreading B'Tselem’s message on daily life under Israeli occupation.

In addition, B'Tselem sent two principled requests on Hebron to Israeli authorities, using video footage. One request had to do with [soldiers repeatedly harassing a B'Tselem volunteers’ family in Hebron and threatening wrongful arrest of their teenaged son](#). The other dealt with [soldiers entering the home of B'Tselem volunteers in Hebron, waking and photographing their children, and confiscating footage filmed by the volunteers](#). In February 2015, several major news articles were published on the phenomenon of ‘night mapping’, or night incursions into Palestinian homes to document its residents, using B'Tselem’s video documentation ([Israel Channel Two News](#); [NBC News](#)).



## **B'Tselem Hebron researcher injured by rubber-coated metal bullet fired by security forces**

On Tuesday, 27 October, Manal al-Ja'bri, one of B'Tselem's Hebron researchers, was injured by a rubber-coated metal bullet fired by Israeli security forces, while documenting a demonstration in the city. The bullet fractured a finger in her left hand. Al-Ja'bri was documenting clashes between security forces and Palestinian youth in the vicinity of the Bab a-Zawiya Checkpoint, which began after the military forcibly dispersed residents who protested in the demand



that the authorities return for burial bodies of Palestinians killed by security forces. Al-Ja'bri was standing with a group of journalists, across the street and at a distance from the Palestinian stone throwers, and was filming events on a video camera. She was wearing a blue B'Tselem vest. There was no discernible reason for security forces to fire at her or at the other media present.

**B'Tselem's documentary short film, '[Smile and the World Will Smile Back](#)'**, which was spontaneously filmed by a family of B'Tselem video volunteers in Hebron during a night raid of their home, was nominated in February 2015 for the distinguished [European Film Awards 2015](#). In addition, [The Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival](#) chose 'Smile and the World Will Smile Back' for the 2015 Audience Award, and it was screened at 18 international film festivals in 2015, following 15 screenings in 2014, which also won it several awards.

The film had its [Tel Aviv premiere](#) in May at the Solidarity Festival at the Cinematheque. B'Tselem held an event entitled "[The Camera Changes Reality](#)" which featured a collection of powerful videos shot by Palestinian video volunteers, a screening of 'Smile and the World Will Smile Back', and then a screening of a work in progress – a new short film about the life of Muhammad Burqan, a Hebron boy. The screenings were followed by a panel discussion with B'Tselem staff and volunteers. B'Tselem's film screenings were covered by the media, including this [Tel Aviv Radio interview](#).

B'Tselem insisted on securing entry permits to Israel for some of our Palestinian field researchers and camera volunteers involved in the video project so they could attend the event in Tel Aviv. This required legal intervention, including a petition to the HCJ to allow the film's protagonist, 13-year-old Muhammad Burqan from Hebron, to enter Israel. The Palestinian group spent the day in Tel Aviv. For many of them, this was the first time they had ever seen the Mediterranean Sea.

## **International Advocacy**

In 2015, B'Tselem put a special emphasis on pro-active hands-on international advocacy to inform key officials and raise awareness of human rights and IHL violations in the oPt, with a key message of lifting the guise of temporariness of the Israeli occupation of the oPt, nearing its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Other advocacy priorities included communities facing expulsion and the military justice system. Our advocacy efforts included high-level briefings, meetings, field visits, advocacy missions abroad, and speaking at multiple events and panels.

B'Tselem cultivated its relationships with diplomats stationed in Israel and the oPt, as well as with leading international agencies and NGOs, and key policymakers and opinion shapers, aiming to reach the highest levels. We regularly responded to requests for information from key diplomats and the staff of embassies, consulates and representative offices, and we believe our information was widely used by the diplomatic community.

B'Tselem conducted more than 100 individual briefings and field visits to the oPt. B'Tselem staff also took part consultations and various events with a broad range of influential international officials,

including ambassadors, consul generals, representatives to the PA, political officers, and visiting government dignitaries. The officials we met with in 2015 included, among others: the ambassadors of the EU, U.S., France, Germany, Norway, Canada and Switzerland; the British Consul General; the U.S. Consul General; the Canadian Representative; the Danish Representative; the Norwegian Representative; a Delegation from Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; staff of the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process; the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (rank of Assistant Secretary General).

B'Tselem also organized substantial **briefings** on specific issues such as the release of B'Tselem reports *Black Flag* and *Presumed Guilty*, attended by dozens of diplomats and international agencies stationed in Israel and the oPt.

## Spotlight: Advocacy on Area C Palestinian Communities Threatened by Demolitions

B'Tselem reached out to a wide range of diplomats and representatives of foreign governments to inform them of the human rights impact of Israeli policies that make it virtually impossible for Palestinians to legally plan their communities and then threatens them with demolitions and dispossession when they are thus forced to build necessary structures without permits. The threat of demolitions and the freezing of development, is a constant fact clouding the present, and the future, of many Palestinian communities. Even worse – in many communities all over the West Bank, the threat is often realized, with demolitions a repeated reality, with terrible human consequences, affecting communities, families, and minors.

B'Tselem's director discussed the plight of the mobile pastoralist communities in area C in meetings with diplomats from the following countries: The European Union, The United States, Britain, Germany, France, Norway, Switzerland, France, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Office of the Quartet Representative.

B'Tselem's International Relations Director, International Relations Team, Field Research Director, Research Director or Data Coordinators met with diplomats from the following countries to share B'Tselem's concerns about Israeli policies of demolition and dispossession in Area C: The United States, Canada, France, Spain, Finland and Hungary.

B'Tselem staff also addressed these issues with international advocacy organizations and agencies like Oxfam, OCHA, OHCHR, the Norwegian Refugee Council, EMHRN and UNDP.

B'Tselem's advocacy efforts may have contributed to foreign governments awareness of the issues, and key governments and agencies referred to the threats to Palestinian communities in Area C or condemned demolitions.

Such references include:

**1. US Government Comments on Area C:** On June 25, 2015, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) at the US State Department published its 2014 country reports on the status of human rights in countries around the world including a report on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. B'Tselem briefed members of the department in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Washington to ensure the inclusion of B'Tselem's information and analysis. According to the DRL website, the reports are used by the Department of State and other government agencies. They also signal to the human rights defenders and activists that the U.S. government recognizes their struggle and stands with civil society in its unending effort to preserve human rights. The report stated the following with regard to Area C:

"NGOs expressed great concern over demolitions in Area C of the West Bank. As of December 29, Israel demolished 581 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and East Jerusalem, displacing approximately 1,180 persons, compared with 660 structures and 1,100 persons in 2013. Forced

displacement continued of Bedouin and herding communities in Area C, and many of these communities suffered from limited access to water, health care, education, and other basic services".

## 2. **Statements by Acting US Consul Dorothy Shea and State Dept Spokesman John Kirby:**

In July 2015, B'Tselem staff accompanied Acting US Consul Dorothy Shea to Susiya, who said: "Today I visited Susiya to signal US opposition to planned demolition of the village." (Source: Twitter). State Department Spokesperson John Kirby said: "We're closely following developments in the village of Susiya in the West Bank, and we strongly urge the Israeli authorities to refrain from carrying



out any demolitions in the village. Demolition of this Palestinian village or of parts of it, and evictions of Palestinians from their homes would be harmful and provocative. Such actions have an impact beyond those individuals and families who are evicted." (Source: Transcript of State Dept Briefing Jul 16, 2015). Israeli and international media reported on these significant statements. In addition to this tour, B'Tselem maintained regular contact with key people at the US Department of State and the National Security Council to ensure that they were up-to-date regarding developments in Susiya throughout the summer.

**3. Statement by US State Department Spokesperson John Kirby:** On August 17, 2015, US State Department Spokesperson John Kirby said during his daily briefings, the official, on the record response by the US Administration: "We are also very troubled by the recent escalation of demolitions and evictions, which include the destruction of dozens of structures and the displacement of over 150 people in the West Bank and East Jerusalem this month alone. Such demolitions and evictions are harmful and provocative and indicative of a damaging trend, particularly given settlement-related activity and continued construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem." This statement was given at an on-the-record press briefing during the summer wave of demolitions. B'Tselem published extensively on the demolition wave, including this press release on Area C.

**4. UN Press Release:** UN Officials call for an immediate demolitions freeze in the West Bank Jerusalem, 18 August 2015: "Today, the Coordinator for Humanitarian and UN Development Activities for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Robert Piper, and the Director of UNRWA Operations West Bank, Felipe Sanchez, expressed grave concern about demolitions that were carried out yesterday by the Israeli Civil Administration in vulnerable Palestinian Bedouin refugee communities in Area C, near East Jerusalem". The officials both called for an immediate freeze on demolitions in the West Bank. A total of 22 structures were demolished in four communities (Khan al Ahmar Abu Falah, Wadi Sneysel, Bir Miskoob and Az Zayyem Bedouin), displacing 78 Palestinians, including 49 children, the vast majority of whom are Palestine refugees. All four communities are located in and around the area of the planned E-1 settlement. According to UN records, this is the largest number of Palestinians displaced in the West Bank in one day in nearly three years. Concerns are also rising over reports of new displacements today in the Jordan Valley community of Fasayil al Wusta. "Yesterday's demolitions targeted some of the most vulnerable communities in the West Bank," Mr. Piper said. "The scale of displacement is particularly concerning - nearly 50 children lost their homes yesterday." "Many of these refugee families have now been displaced four times in the last four years" said Mr. Sanchez. The four communities are among 46 located in the central West Bank that are included in Israeli plans to transfer Palestinian Bedouin communities to three designated sites. The UN Secretary-General has

stated that the implementation of the proposed "relocation" would amount to forcible transfers and forced evictions, contravening Israel's obligations as an occupying power under humanitarian law and human rights law. "The strategic implications of these demolitions are clear," said Mr. Piper. "These demolitions are occurring in parallel with settlement expansion. The relocation plan for these communities would effectively remove Palestinian presence in and around the planned E1 settlement project. This settlement project anticipates the construction of thousands of new Israeli housing units in the West Bank on the outskirts of Jerusalem. E-1 has long been opposed by the international community as an obstacle to the realization of the two-state solution and a violation of international law."

**5. Local EU statement on demolitions in Area C and on construction work on the separation barrier at Cremisan, Jerusalem, 19 August 2015:** "The EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah are deeply concerned by an increasing number of demolitions of Palestinian structures in Area C in recent days.

The demolitions on 17 August in four localities in the Jerusalem periphery directly affected 78 people including 49 children, according to UN figures the largest displacement in a single day since December 2012. These localities are all in or close to the planned E1 settlement and affect particularly vulnerable Palestinian communities.

A further 42 people including 27 children were displaced by demolitions in Fasayel, North of Jericho on 18 August. Both demolitions took place at the height of a heat-wave further exacerbating the situation of the communities concerned.

The missions are also concerned at the beginning of works for the construction of the separation barrier in the Cremisan valley on 17 August with the uprooting of trees in an ancient olive grove. If built, the barrier will severely restrict access of 58 Palestinian families to their agricultural land and profoundly affect their livelihoods.

EU missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah recall the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 20 July 2015, in which the EU reiterated its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts, settler violence and restrictions of movement and access."

**6. Jeffrey Feltman, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East, August 19, 2015:**

"Israel's practice of demolishing homes and structures also continued. This month, 86 structures, including 26 residential structures, were demolished in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, displacing 177 Palestinians, including 89 children. On 17 August 22 structures were demolished in four communities in the planned E-1 area affecting in particular vulnerable Palestinian Bedouins which displaced 78 people, including 49 children. This was the largest number of Palestinians displaced in the West Bank in one day in nearly three years. And yesterday, 27 structures, including eight residential structures were demolished resulting in 42 displaced, including 27 children in the Jordan Valley Area C community of Fasayil al Wusta. The Secretary-General calls on the Israeli authorities to halt demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, to revoke plans that would result in the forcible transfer of Palestinian communities, and to implement an inclusive planning and zoning regime that will enable Palestinians' residential and community development needs to be met".

**7. Question Taken at the August 19, 2015 Daily Press Briefing, August 20, 2015, on Demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Office of the Spokesperson, Washington, DC.** (Attribution is on-the-record from Spokesperson John Kirby):

Question: "What is your reaction to recent demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem?"



Answer: We are deeply concerned over recent developments throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We continue to condemn all acts of violence, including recent attacks, and call on all sides to take steps to de-escalate tensions and restore calm.

We are also very troubled by the recent escalation of demolitions and evictions, which include the destruction of dozens of structures and the displacement of over 150 people in the West Bank and East Jerusalem this month alone. Such demolitions and evictions are harmful and provocative and indicative of a damaging trend, particularly given settlement-related activity and continued construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

We continue to urge all parties to refrain from problematic actions that undercut the possibility of peace and demonstrate with actions their commitment to a two state solution."

## International Advocacy Trips and Phone Briefings

During 2015, B'Tselem made several advocacy trips abroad, and presented information and analysis on a series of phone briefings organized in cooperation with key international partners (B'Tselem USA and J Street), which provided greater opportunity to reach geographically diverse audiences in the United States with timely and relevant updates on the status of human rights in the oPt. These included:

- **Operation Protective Edge** conference call briefing: In February, B'Tselem staff, in cooperation with B'Tselem USA, addressed ally organizations and members of the US government. The call focused on B'Tselem's report [Black Flag](#), which investigated the policy of attacking residential homes in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge. The speakers included B'Tselem USA director Chelsey Berlin (moderator); Executive Director Hagai El-Ad, Gaza Field Researcher Khaled al-Azaiza, Data Department Director Noa Tal, and Research Department Director Attorney Yael Stein.
- In March, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad traveled to **Berlin** for an advocacy trip at the invitation of B'Tselem's key partner Bread for the World. El-Ad met with decision-makers and leaders, including several briefings and discussions at the Bundestag, the Federal Chancery, The Foreign Office, Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).
- In April, B'Tselem spokesperson Sarit Michaeli traveled to **Copenhagen** by invitation of our key partner DanChurchAid (DCA), where she addressed [a conference](#) about technology and democracy and met with stakeholders, including DCA General Secretary Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen and staff at the Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. She also held meetings at the Danish Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Danish Institute for Human Rights.
- **48 Years of Temporary Occupation:** In May, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad and B'Tselem USA Director Chelsey Berlin participated in a series of policy briefings, events and private meetings in Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York scrutinizing the guise of temporariness through which Israel and the international community view the Israeli occupation. During the tour, El-Ad spoke at events and roundtable discussions at the Manhattan JCC, J Street, New Israel Fund offices in all four cities, OSF, the White House National Security Council, the State Department and with staff at Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the *New York Times*.
- **Area C** Conference Call: In May, B'Tselem staff spoke on a conference call and live Q&A session about the vulnerable Palestinian and Bedouin communities living in Area C. This call featured B'Tselem Field Research Director Kareem Jubran, B'Tselem Researcher Noga Kadman, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad and USA director Chelsey Berlin (moderator). An American rabbi who took part in the phone briefing wrote following it: "Thank you for an informative call this morning. I was aware of [another Israeli human rights organization] raising issues of unjust

demolitions in the past. I had no idea they were so extensive, and I really had no idea about the government's intended annexation of Area C and what that means for villages like Susiya. It's truly horrifying. Thank you for all your hard work, and great questions on the call!"

- In June, Executive Director Hagai El-Ad traveled to **Brussels** for a targeted advocacy trip organized in partnership with Oxfam. There, he met with various EEAS stakeholders.
- In July, B'Tselem's Video Department Director, Yoav Gross, traveled to **Mexico City** in order to participate in [Video4Change global conference](#) on human rights work through video. Representatives from 15 different countries and five continents came together for a vibrant exchange of skills and strategies.
- In July, J Street hosted B'Tselem's executive director on a conference call briefing focusing on "**Anti-Democratic Moves In Israel To Control NGOs**".
- In October, Executive Director Hagai El-Ad traveled to **London** and spoke at a panel hosted by the [European Council on Foreign Relations](#), attended by diplomats, journalists and academics. He also met with diplomats at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).
- **The West Bank after a wave of destruction:** In October, B'Tselem Director of Field Research Kareem Jubran and B'Tselem USA Director Chelsey Berlin participated in a series of policy briefings, events and private meetings in Washington and New York highlighting the wave of demolition and forced displacement that swept Area C in August. During the tour Jubran and Berlin spoke at events and private roundtables at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the White House, the State Department, Human Rights Watch and the New Israel Fund in DC and New York. Jubran and Berlin also spoke on campus at the University of Maryland College Park and Columbia University in New York.
- Recent Violence phone briefing: In November, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad, B'Tselem Hebron Researcher Musa Abu Hashhash and USA director Chelsey Berlin (moderator) addressed a conference call and live Q&A session to discuss the events of the fall with a focus on the return of punitive home demolitions, and settler violence and movement restrictions Hebron.
- In December, J Street hosted B'Tselem's executive director on a conference all briefing on "**Israelis' Civil Liberties Under Fire**".
- In December, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad returned to **Brussels** to participate in the 17th EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights, on Protecting and Promoting Civil Society Space. The forum brought together CSOs active in the fields of democracy and human rights from within and outside the Europe and representatives from Member States, the Council of the EU, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the EEAS, the United Nations, academia and think tanks. El-Ad brought the issue of the shrinking civil space in Israel for opposition to the occupation, already of great concern to the international community, to the forum.
- **Voice of Dissent: 48 years of Temporary Occupation:** In December, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad and B'Tselem USA Director Chelsey Berlin participated in a series of policy briefings, events and meetings in Washington, Boston, Florida and New York highlighting the human rights violations resulting from the recent wave of violence in Israel, including the resumption of punitive house demolitions, the killing of "neutralized" assailants, and the increasingly hostile environment facing Israeli human rights organizations. During this tour, El-Ad and Berlin participated in the Foreign Policy Magazine 100 Global Thinkers conference, the HaaretzQ Conference in partnership with the New Israel Fund, a lecture at the University of Florida and meetings at the US State Department, Oxfam America and the New Israel Fund – New England Region.

## Public Outreach

**B'Tselem uses a variety of innovative strategies to influence public opinion in Israel and internationally**, raising awareness of the human rights situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These efforts include close engagement with the Israeli and International press, a thriving new-media department, an engaging and informative monthly newsletter, and B'Tselem's renowned video outreach to the wide public through shorts and documentaries.

### B'Tselem Newsletter

**In 2015, B'Tselem distributed monthly newsletters** in English and Hebrew via email to over **22,300** individuals, with a steady average open rate of **22%**. The list includes diplomats, domestic and international policymakers, journalists, academics and interested individuals, providing them with current information and analysis on human rights violations in the oPt.

### B'Tselem Press Work

B'Tselem's research and documentation are well respected both domestically and internationally as a primary source of information for media correspondents. In 2015, B'Tselem issued **38** press releases (in Hebrew, English and Arabic) to over 2,000 local and foreign journalists. These, as well as hundreds of press calls and individual briefings, served to announce the release of new reports, issue data summaries, highlight specific incidents of IHL and human rights violations, and provide a human rights perspective on current events. B'Tselem also provided [assistance to journalists](#) in preparing stories on human rights topics.

B'Tselem's work is regularly featured in the Israeli and international media. B'Tselem is quoted regularly by dozens of mainstream publications such as *The New York Times*, the *Guardian*, the BBC and the *Washington Post*, as well as Reuters, the Associated Press and other news agencies, radio and TV stations. Media use both our information and data, as well as approach us for comments and the organization's positions on a wide range of human rights issues. The organization is in regular contact with international journalists based in Israel, and meets with visiting media.

Israeli media quote B'Tselem extensively, and video filmed by our video project volunteers appears extensively on Israeli media. B'Tselem staff are interviewed on Israeli electronic and printed media on a regular basis in central media outlets, including Channels 1, 2, and 10, Haaretz and YNET, and we contribute at least one op-ed a month for publication. In addition to news of B'Tselem's reports and positions, a sizeable portion of B'Tselem's Israeli media presence is in the context of attacks against the organization and against Israeli human rights NGOs and civil society as a whole.

An important and growing feature of B'Tselem's media presence is independent media and the blogosphere. Although this generally enjoys a smaller audience than mainstream media, it can break stories that are followed up by mainstream media, and can serve as a conduit for issues that the mainstream media deem non-newsworthy.

B'Tselem enjoys extensive coverage in Palestinian and Arabic language media, both as a trusted source of information, as well as provider of interviewees and commentary.

**In 2015, B'Tselem continued to be cited on a daily basis in the Israeli and foreign press**, with at least 1000 references in the Israeli press and hundreds of citations in the international press, including dozens of citations a month in major outlets. B'Tselem video footage also continued to be utilized



regularly in the press, including prime time news editions in Israel. In addition, B'Tselem's staff was frequently interviewed in the press and wrote op-eds in Israeli and foreign newspapers, including: Sarit Michaeli in [YNet](#); Hagai El-Ad in [Walla](#), the [New York Times](#) and the [Jerusalem Post](#); David Zonsheine in [Haaretz](#) (monthly), and Yael Stein in [YNet](#).

Media highlights include:

- *The Guardian*: [The battle to be Israel's conscience](#)
- *Taz* (German national publication) [Interview with Hagai El-Ad](#)
- *The New York Times*: [In Gaza and the West Bank, Love Struggles to Bridge the Separation](#)
- ABC Australia: [Israel faces backlash from human rights group over house demolition policy](#)
- *Haaretz*: [Late at Night at an IDF Checkpoint, One Palestinian Finds a Little Hope](#)
- *The Jewish Telegraph Agency*: [Watchdog posts video of Israeli troops allegedly beating Palestinian bystander](#)

In addition, Google Scholar alone lists [279](#) references to B'Tselem in academic articles just in 2015. These include articles on a variety of topics and in various publications, including *Berkeley Journal of Middle Eastern & Islamic Law*, *Race and Class*, *The Journal of Politics*, *Global Studies of Childhood*, and many more.

## B'Tselem Website

B'Tselem's web platform continues to serve as the focal point for B'Tselem's extensive body of information and data and as a central clearinghouse of human rights information. Its user-friendly interface and interactive map continue to integrate B'Tselem's video footage from the field with B'Tselem's more traditional forms of information (statistics, maps, testimonies, etc.). This is done in a way that conveys to the user every aspect of the context – geographic and legal – while making accessible the personal stories of right holders living under occupation.



**The site contains several mini-blogs and campaigns.** The [Eyes Wide Open Photo Blog](#) brings to life B'Tselem's multifaceted work for human rights in the West Bank and Gaza through candid photos of impossible situations. It features select photos taken by B'Tselem's staff and volunteers during their work in the oPt.

B'Tselem's website was visited **557,157** times in 2015, by **407,208** visitors. 72 % of the visits were from new visitors. **1,153,293** pages were viewed during 2015. **134** updates were posted on B'Tselem's website in 2015, on a wide range of issues, including: violence by Israeli security forces; Gaza in the aftermath of Operation Protective Edge; communities facing expulsion; Hebron; fatalities in the West Bank; and settler violence.

Yet, not everyone wants information about the occupation to be accessible to a global audience. Throughout 2015, B'Tselem dealt with a large number of DDoS, WordPress, Pingback and various other cyber-attacks. Some of these attacks can be directly attributed to hackers affiliated with the right-wing camp in Israel, who wish to hamper B'Tselem's ability to function. Although B'Tselem's server is protected by a Deflect network, and wasn't directly hit, it remained a challenge to preserve the quality and speed of browsing for the website users when the website was flooded by network attacks by thousands of computers around the world. We continue to develop solutions optimized for B'Tselem together with Deflect in order to combat attacks.



## B'Tselem's Social Networks

After nearly tripling in size in 2014, B'Tselem's social media also grew by leaps and bounds in 2015. Today, we have over **190,500** social media followers! This includes about 68,400 people on our Hebrew Facebook page, 87,500 on our English Facebook page, 26,600 on Twitter (nearly doubled, compared to last year) and over 8,000 on YouTube. B'Tselem's Facebook pages and Twitter updates actively reach out to the Israeli and international public, initiating discourse on pertinent human right issues and serve as a highly effective form of grassroots outreach. In 2015, on average, content from B'Tselem's [Hebrew Facebook page](#) was viewed by **50,000** people daily and the [English Facebook page](#) was viewed by **91,000** people daily.

Throughout 2015, B'Tselem's Public Outreach Department continued to extend the reach and resonance of its human rights message using new media and related multimedia technologies. B'Tselem actively used interactive social networking and other web-based tools to target Israeli and international audiences and to create a hub of public debate and engagement. These new media tools have significantly expanded B'Tselem's outreach, with hundreds of thousands exposed to B'Tselem's messages weekly, and individual posts reaching over a million and a half people. This strong voice of B'Tselem's in the new media is especially important in Israel, where information on the human rights situation in the oPt is strikingly absent from the mainstream press and the public agenda.

Reports and footage uploaded on social networks sparked discussion and encouraged members to share the information through their own networks, reaching millions in Israel and internationally. The most popular post on B'Tselem's Hebrew page was about a [Palestinian youth violently and wrongfully arrested for five days because the Israeli Police didn't bother to check his alibi](#), which reached a staggering people 2,379,613 in Israel, and was shown on mainstream news broadcasts. The [most popular post on B'Tselem's English Facebook](#) page of 2015 was on the separation regime in Hebron, reaching 1,489,408 people. The [second most popular post on B'Tselem's Hebrew Facebook](#) page during 2015 reached 1,514,496 people, which is astounding in such a small country. It reported the filmed incident in which soldiers set dogs on Palestinian youth. [The English post on this incident](#) also reached an astounding 1,157,632 people.

## Spotlight: #SaveSusiya

On 4 May 2015, HCJ Justice Noam Sohlberg denied a petition for an injunction that would freeze the implementation of demolition orders issued against homes in the village of Khirbet Susiya, which lies in the South Hebron Hills in the West Bank. The significance of Justice Sohlberg's decision is that at any moment, the Civil Administration can demolish all homes in the village. Demolition would leave the residents – some 250-350 people depending on the season, including many children – with no shelter in harsh desert conditions. They would be effectively expelled from their land in an act that is not only cruel but also illegal, serving as a dangerous precedent for expulsion of smaller, less established communities, with less access to the international community.

B'Tselem's efforts to help [#SaveSusiya](#) are part of the organization's overarching strategy to fight [expulsion of communities from Area C](#). Israel's treatment of Khirbet Susiya and its residents illustrates its systemic use of planning laws to prevent construction and development by Palestinians in Area C, which is under full Israeli control: most Palestinians in Area C live in villages for which the Israeli authorities have refused to draw up master plans or connect to water and power supplies, under various pretexts. With no other choice, the residents eventually build homes without permits and subsequently live under constant threat of demolition and expulsion. This policy is intended to serve the goal, explicitly declared by Israeli officials, of taking over land in Area C in order to formally annex it to Israel in a permanent-status agreement with the Palestinians, and annex it *de facto* until then.

**During 2015, B'Tselem launched several public campaigns**, which included mini-sites and multiple outreach strategies. The campaigns responded to current events, in addition to proactively promoting

issues on B'Tselem's agenda, such as the publication of research reports. Of special note during the period was B'Tselem's campaign on Susiya, which included several elements:

On 31 May B'Tselem launched a **mini-site** [#SaveSusiya - Stop the Expulsion!](#), in English, Hebrew and Arabic. The mini-site, with links to updated B'Tselem information on Susiya, was viewed nearly 6,000 times. It also calls for action and explains in simple and clear terms what the struggle is about through a series of questions: Why act now? Why were the demolition orders issued? Why does demolition constitute expulsion? Where's Susiya in the big picture? What can be done?

As part of the campaign, B'Tselem also published posts on Facebook and Twitter, which included photos and video footage filmed by B'Tselem's field researcher and resident of Susiya Nasser Nawaj'ah, which reached over 750,000 people in Hebrew and English.



B'Tselem also sent out two press releases on Susiya during the period:

- [Civil Administration maps Susiya – residents fear imminent demolition](#)
- [Palestinian village Khirbet Susiya under imminent threat of demolition and expulsion](#)

**Subsequently the issue received abundant coverage in the local and international press**, for example in the Guardian: [Israeli rights groups join battle to save symbol of Arab resistance to evictions](#).

## Spotlight: The NGO Law

Recent months have seen a sharp escalation in pressure on the civil society organizations that oppose Israel's 48-year occupation of the oPt. A wave of incitement against human rights NGOs aim to drain attention and resources from anti-occupation NGOs and their partners, and divert it from the real issue – the longest ongoing occupation in modern history – and to convince the public that the real problem is not that Israel has maintained control over the Palestinian population for 48 years, but that the NGOs trying to end the occupation, are "foreign agents serving anti-Israeli interests". This is one manifestation of an outright witch-hunt for an imagined enemy from within.

Since 2009, a succession of bills have been proposed in Israel's parliament, The Knesset, to limit foreign funding from official entities or to label those who get such funding as serving foreign interests. (Private money, foreign or domestic is not an issue). The first round of de-legitimization attacks ended with the legislation of a softened version of the original proposals, a bill requiring quarterly reporting of foreign entity funding. Throughout 2015, several versions of the NGO Bill were proposed. Recently, the NGO Bill, tailored specifically against B'Tselem and the other organizations that oppose Israeli government policy in the oPt and receive at least 50% of their funding from foreign entities, passed the first reading in the Knesset. B'Tselem seeks to reclaim the civil space that is slowly been taken away and maintain dialogue with Israeli society not only about human rights but also about democratic norms of free speech and freedom of associations. We hope to reinvigorate the debate in Israeli civil society, reframe the discourse of loyalty and treason to a debate about the occupation, and hold honest discussion about Israeli policy and accountability issues.

Government efforts to pass the law have greatly accelerated recently. In recent months, the Israeli government has taken several steps to halt EU support for Israeli human rights organizations. Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely has reportedly meet with EU member state ambassadors, demanding that they cut their state's support for Israeli human rights organizations. Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked

has also urged her European counterparts to cut funding to Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups.

In June 2015, three restrictive private "NGO bills" were submitted by Israeli parliament members. Two proposed bills, presented by the "Jewish Home" and "Israel is our Home" parties, were titled as "Foreign Agents" bills.

On 1 November, Justice Minister Shaked presented a new, governmental NGO bill titled: "Duty to Disclose Support from a Foreign Political Entity Act (Amendment) (Increased Transparency for a Supported Entity whose funding is primarily from donations by Foreign Political Entities)". A first reading of the law was approved by the Knesset in February 2016.

If approved, the proposed law will require NGOs whose budgets are composed of over 50% of foreign entity funding to: 1) Indicate the foreign funding sources on any publications and reports that available to the public. 2) Indicate that their primary support is from foreign political entities in all written and verbal communications with elected officials and with public servants, and 3) When contacting elected officials or public servants and in reports which NGOs generate and distribute, they shall specify, alongside indication of the foreign support, the names of the foreign political entities that have donated to it during the applicable years.

B'Tselem refused to let these attacks deter us from our mission of speaking out against the occupation. B'Tselem developed a response, in consultation and cooperation with the human rights community in Israel. Throughout 2015, B'Tselem has actively been working with a RoundTable of Israeli organizations that oppose the law. The RoundTable consists of Israel's leading human and civil rights organizations: The New Israel Fund, Shatil, The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Breaking the Silence, Yesh Din, Physicians for Human Rights, HaMoked – Center for Defense of the Individual, The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Amnesty International Israel, Gisha, Adallah, MachsomWatch, Bimkom- Planners for Planning Rights, and Akvot: The Institute for the Research of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Israeli Asylum-seeker and refugee organizations have also participated in meetings but are not part of the roundtable. The organizations most vulnerable to the law are the most active and form an informal executive committee.

B'Tselem has also informed the international community about the subject, and participated in diplomatic briefings on this issue. For example, in November, there was a briefing attended by representatives of human rights organizations and 10 diplomats that expressed concern about the progress which the anti-democratic measures are making in Israel.

B'Tselem did advocacy work with other Israeli civil society organizations and their leading figures, such as The Israeli Democracy Institute Adam, Teva V'Din, The Society for Protection of Nature in Israel, and Life and Environment - The Israeli Union of Environmental NGOs, we explained the organizations' potential vulnerability to the NGO Law or future incarnations and how similar laws can be used against them to stop environmental opposition to government interests such as building and development. Key B'Tselem staff also met, together with other Israeli human rights organizations, members of the Knesset from the Labor, Meretz, Joint List and Kulano parties.

B'Tselem's director, spokesperson, campaign director and USA office director have all been engaging international duty bearers, diplomats, American Jewish organizations and human rights organizations on this issue. These include the following actors:

Diplomats and international duty-bearers from the European Union and US are being informed on a regular basis. The EU is very pro-active on this issue and has initiated several forums to discuss it. B'Tselem's director Hagai El-Ad spoke on this issue at the EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights in December, that addressed the shrinking space for civil society.

B'Tselem has been meeting with representatives of US Jewry to explain the dangers to free speech in Israel and despite varying opinions about the occupation, there is widespread agreement that protecting free speech is of great importance to the American Jewish community. B'Tselem has met

with groups such as J Street, Americans for Peace Now, Partners for a Progressive Israel, and the New Israel Fund.

B'Tselem has also been informing human rights organizations of the situation. These include: the American Civil Liberties Union, The Open Society Institute, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International. We've also been meeting with strategic partners such as Oxfam. Oxfam arranged delegation of representatives from B'Tselem, Yesh Din and Gisha to the European Parliament, where they were able to speak with many European parliamentarians and duty-bearers.

Media exposure on this issue includes:

- +972 Magazine, [Israeli gov't votes to support bill targeting left-wing NGOs](#), December 27, 2015
- *The New York Times*, [Group Calls Israelis 'Foreign Agents' for Work on Behalf of Palestinians](#): December 15, 2015.
- Al-Monitor, [The Israeli justice minister's 'Transparency Law'](#), November 2, 2015
- YNet, [New legislation targets Israeli NGOs](#), November 6, 2015
- *The Guardian*, [Human rights groups face global crackdown 'not seen in a generation'](#): August 25, 2015

## Gender Mainstreaming

As always, B'Tselem remains committed to gender equality, both as a component of its work plan, and in the daily functioning of the organization. On the managerial level, four of the seven department managers are women. The board of directors currently consists of six women and five men. The staff of the organization consists of 17 women and 21 men.

**With regard to its human rights documentation and advocacy, all of B'Tselem's work now considers gender impact.** Core actions such as research and reports, give a differential analysis of numbers of men and women impacted and consider and discuss the unique effect of human rights violations specifically on women and men when possible. It should be noted that many of the violations that B'Tselem documents and works to address predominantly affect men most directly, taking place in situations such as protests or interrogations. Other violations such as home demolitions and denial of family unification have a unique impact on women.

**In addition, B'Tselem makes special efforts to find ways to enhance gender sensitivity in B'Tselem's video work.** B'Tselem continuously reaches out to Palestinian women who have the potential of becoming volunteers in our [video project](#). This outreach has succeeded in raising the number of women volunteers in the project to over 50, making up approximately a quarter of the volunteers. Furthermore, we offer the women training sessions designed specifically for their needs, and taking account gender sensitivities in Palestinian society.



Women's involvement in B'Tselem's video project has shown that women tend to produce some of the most powerful and valuable documentation of human rights abuses: When there are confrontations with settlers or security forces, usually women distance themselves from the event, while men often intervene. The women are left in the houses or near houses with the cameras to film the event from a good location, photographically speaking. In addition, security forces are usually less violent towards women who are filming, so they have an opportunity to film the events even when participating in them. This aspect of B'Tselem's work was mentioned in January in the prominent column by feminist writer Tsafi Saar in Haaretz, in an article titled "[Women take a camera and change their lives](#)".

**[International Women's Day 2015](#):** States of combat and human rights violations have a distinctive impact on women. It is important that we hear their voices. In honor of International Women's Day we asked Palestinian women to interview other Palestinian women about their hopes, dreams and sources of inspiration.



## Human Rights Community

B'Tselem is proud to be a leading member of the human rights community comprised of Israeli, Palestinian and international organizations promoting human rights in the oPt. In 2015, B'Tselem joined forces with several Israeli human rights organizations to coordinate a response to attacks against the human rights community and the NGO Bill. B'Tselem is working closely with a number of human rights organizations on this, including very close cooperation with [Breaking the Silence](#).

We are currently partnered in ongoing projects funded by the EU with the [Association for Civil Rights in Israel](#) (ACRI), [HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual](#) and [Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights](#). B'Tselem is also a member of the [Euro-Med Human Rights Network](#) (EMHRN) and the [FIDH](#) network, and participated in the annual meeting of Euro-Med Human Rights Network (EMHRN) in Brussels in June.

B'Tselem's Executive Director Hagai El-Ad participates in a forum comprised of executive directors of leading Israeli human rights organizations, regularly coordinating our work on a range of issues. B'Tselem's materials, information and expertise are always readily available to human rights advocates. B'Tselem staff is in regular contact with colleagues from other Israeli, international and Palestinian organizations, sharing information, consulting, and joining efforts. B'Tselem put special emphasis on coordinating work on the issue of Khirbet Susiya, mainly with [Rabbis for Human Rights](#) who filed a petition to the HCJ on behalf of the residents, as well as activist networks on ground.