



The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

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## B'Tselem 2002 Activity Report

### INTRODUCTION

The al-Aqsa Intifada, which began in September 2000, ushered in a severe deterioration in human rights in the Occupied Territories. Throughout 2002, we witnessed an even further regression from basic human rights principles and a dramatic increase in the level of violence in the Occupied Territories and within Israel.

Israel conducted widespread ground and air assaults in Palestinian population centers, restricted almost all movement for Palestinians within the West Bank, prevented access to medical treatment and humanitarian aid, and detained thousands of Palestinian civilians - in many cases arbitrarily. These policies have taken a devastating toll on all aspects of Palestinian daily life. Attacks on Israelis by Palestinian militants have also become increasingly frequent, with Israeli casualties mounting to more than 440 civilians and 160 members of the security forces.

The escalation in the use of military force has been accompanied by intensification in the propaganda war in which both Israeli and Palestinian sources have manipulated information to serve their own needs. The lack of credible information has been further exacerbated by limits on access to areas of military operations imposed by Israel.

Alongside the increased human rights violations, the Israeli public has become progressively more hostile and apathetic to any discussion of Palestinian rights. The vast majority of the public has mobilized to support "the war effort," and uncritically supports all military actions on the basis of security justifications. In this climate, attention to Israel's human rights record toward Palestinians is seen as a luxury that Israel cannot afford. The Israeli media are a clear victim of this mentality, and as a result there is virtually no attention to the Palestinian reality in the mass circulation newspapers. The U.S. response to the terror attacks of September 11 has been used by Israelis as further justification for their own country's policies.

The primary goals of B'Tselem remain to protect human rights in the Occupied Territories and to generate commitment among the Israeli public to human rights principles. The strategies to achieve these goals are the following:

- To provide information to the Israeli public and the international community about human rights violations in the Occupied Territories;
- To recommend and encourage policy changes to ensure greater protection of human rights;
- To foster debate and discussion among the Israeli public regarding human rights norms and specific policies in the Occupied Territories.

## **RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY AREAS**

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B'Tselem released thirteen new publications during 2002. All publications were produced in both Hebrew and English and distributed to the more than 8,000 individuals and organizations on B'Tselem's mailing list, including government and military officials, academics, diplomats, non-governmental organizations, journalists, and interested individuals. Electronic versions of the reports and Arabic summaries are available on B'Tselem's web site.

### ***Use of Force***

Since Sept. 2000, B'Tselem has published a number of reports examining various facets of the IDF's use of force, which is the most complicated issue in the current Intifada given the use of lethal force on the Palestinian side as well. In January 2002, B'Tselem released the final case study in a series of three that were published together: ***Excessive Force: Human Rights Violations during IDF Actions in Area A (Beit Jala, May 2001; Beit Rima, October 2001; Bethlehem Area, October 2001)***. This compilation of case studies provides an in-depth examination of Israel's use of force in combat situations.

### **Open-Fire Regulations**

In March, B'Tselem published a report entitled ***Trigger Happy***, analyzing the IDF's policy regarding open-fire regulations and discussing patterns of unjustified shooting. The military's policy is problematic in that regulations permit the use of live ammunition in some cases where there is no clear and immediate threat to life, soldiers are not given clear directives, and there have been few investigations into incidents of lethal force against Palestinian civilians. This policy has resulted in extensive injury to Palestinians who were not involved in acts of violence against Israel.

***Trigger Happy*** received coverage in the press including *Ha'aretz*, Voice of Israel Radio, BBC Radio, and Reuters. The issue of the use of lethal force was also addressed in B'Tselem's pocket-guide for soldiers and the newspaper insert on Operation Defensive Shield.

### **Enforcement of Curfew with Live Ammunition**

Throughout most of 2002, the IDF has imposed extensive curfews on Palestinian residents of major cities throughout the West Bank. In some cases, curfews remained in place for weeks and months on end, with only short breaks given to allow residents to stock up on basic supplies. The curfews have had a devastating impact on all aspects of Palestinian daily life. One particularly problematic aspect of the IDF's curfew policy is the use of live ammunition as a means of enforcing the curfew, which has left more than twenty Palestinians dead, including twelve minors, and dozens more injured. As IDF procedures for imposing and lifting curfews are unclear, Palestinians who have left their homes to stock up on supplies often find themselves under fire because they were unaware that curfew had been reinstated. In October, B'Tselem published a report on this topic entitled ***Lethal Curfew***, and issued a fax sheet.

***Lethal Curfew*** received extensive coverage on Voice of Israel Radio and in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper.

### ***House Demolitions and Destruction of Agricultural Land***

On January 10, 2002, IDF forces demolished a strip of houses in the Rafah refugee camp, near the Egyptian border. B'Tselem's investigation revealed that 60 houses had been completely demolished, leaving more than 600 Palestinians homeless. These statistics contrasted sharply with those of the IDF, which insisted that only 20 houses had been demolished, and that all of them were uninhabited. This incident and the discrepancy between the official Israeli reports

and those of B'Tselem and other international organizations received substantial media attention in Israel and abroad.

B'Tselem used this incident as a springboard to highlight the fact that this house-demolition was not a one-time incident, but merely one example of a widespread policy. Since the beginning of this Intifada, the IDF has demolished more than 600 houses in the refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, and razed thousands of acres of agricultural land. Victims of Israel's property destruction are given little or no warning of impending actions, no chance to appeal, and no compensation for their losses. This policy, which constitutes collective punishment, and its ramifications were described in B'Tselem's report *Policy of Destruction*, released in January. The report included aerial photographs of several sites in the Gaza Strip before and after the extensive IDF "razing" actions, providing a vivid illustration of the ramifications of this policy.

B'Tselem's press release on the house demolitions in Rafah and *Policy of Destruction* received coverage in the Israeli press including the Jerusalem Post, Israeli television Channel 2, *Ha'aretz*, *Ma'ariv*, as well as extensive foreign press including the Chicago Tribune, Toronto Star, New York Times, and Die Welt.



*The area surrounding the Jewish settlement of Morag  
January 2000*



*January 2002*

### ***Medical Treatment***

At the end of February 2002, the IDF initiated extensive operations in Palestinian refugee camps and cities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During these operations, IDF soldiers fired at ambulances, killing and wounding medical personnel and damaging ambulances. Medical treatment to the sick and wounded was prevented, and in some cases people were even left to bleed to death. Hospitals had difficulty functioning because of the damage to the electricity, water, and telephone infrastructure, and access to some of the hospitals was blocked - rendering them unable to receive the wounded and sick, or obtain food and medicine. In March, B'Tselem issued a report on the unprecedented attacks on medical teams and the prevention of medical teams from treating the sick and wounded (*Impeding Medical Treatment and Firing at Ambulances*).



*Don't Prevent Medical Treatment  
Stop Shooting at Ambulances  
Hands Off Civilians*

To coincide with the release of the report and highlight the urgency of these demands, B'Tselem organized a march from the A-Ram checkpoint to the Qalandiya checkpoint at the entrance to Ramallah, together with other human rights and

humanitarian aid organizations. Hundreds of people demonstrated and escorted a truck bringing six tons of humanitarian relief past the checkpoint.

The situation severely worsened during Operation Defensive Shield, and even after it ended, the prolonged curfews and sieges imposed on the vast majority of the West Bank continued to severely impact the ability of Palestinians to access necessary medical treatment. B'Tselem has therefore continued documentation and advocacy on this issue.

**Abuse and Ill-Treatment**

**Soldiers' Abuse of Palestinians in Hebron**

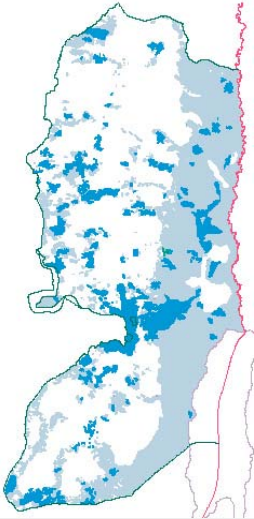
In December, B'Tselem uncovered a particularly serious incident in which soldiers entered a barbershop in Hebron, abused five men who were inside for more than an hour and used three of their victims as human shields, firing from over their shoulders at stone-throwers. B'Tselem's case study on this incident, *Soldiers' Abuse of Palestinians in Hebron, 3 December 2002*, attracted substantial foreign media attention, including AP, Reuters, and the Guardian, and was covered by Israeli Army Radio and major Israeli internet news sites. The Military Investigation Unit initially denied the involvement of soldiers in this incident, claiming those involved were Border Police officers. Following the press attention and substantial advocacy by B'Tselem the unit finally agreed to open an investigation into the incident.

Cases of abuse and beatings of Palestinians by Israeli security force personnel, which have become almost routine occurrences, have also been highlighted on B'Tselem's website and in email updates.

**Land Use**

Since September 2000, B'Tselem has devoted most of its attention to the urgent human rights violations being committed within the current conflict. Yet it is also essential to maintain research into the systemic violations that are both severe in themselves and also constitute the root cause of the current situation. Foremost among these is the issue of settlements. In May, following a year of research, B'Tselem released a comprehensive report on Israel's settlement policy, entitled *Land Grab*.

The report presents a unique map detailing the built-up areas and land reserved for future development of settlements in the West Bank. The map provides a stark illustration of both the vast amounts of land controlled by settlements (42% of the West Bank), and the strategic location of the settlements.



■ Settlement Municipal Boundary  
■ Settlement Regional Council

*Land Grab* highlights the fact that many of Israel's repressive measures against Palestinians – such as house demolitions and sieges – are integrally tied to Israel's settlement policy. Israeli settlements also prevent the creation of any viable Palestinian state. The report also describes the discriminatory practices of the Israeli authorities against Palestinians including the methods through which Israel has taken control of the land, the establishment of separate planning authorities for Palestinians and Israelis, and the unequal allocation of natural resources. Furthermore, while Palestinian residents of the West Bank live under an oppressive military occupation, settlers benefit from their status as citizens of a democracy, and are often granted additional benefits by virtue of living in a settlement.

Accompanying the publication of this report, B'Tselem launched an extensive advocacy campaign to generate media and public attention to the human rights implications of land use in the Occupied Territories. Some highlights of the campaign included press conferences for local

and foreign media; briefings for the diplomatic community in Israel; speaking engagements at various forums for the Israeli public; and presentations for policymakers, think tanks, and NGOs in countries including the US, Norway, Denmark, France, and England.

These activities resulted in coverage in all three Israeli newspapers and on radio, as well as extensive foreign coverage, including major articles in the New York Times, the Washington Post, Le Monde, Reuters, Associated Press, and interviews on CNN and BBC.

*Land Grab*, and particularly the accompanying map, received extensive attention and were in high demand, particularly as they provide information not available elsewhere. B'Tselem received numerous requests for briefings on Israel's settlement policy, and policymakers, journalists, and members of the public have reported that B'Tselem's map is an invaluable resource.

## ***Operation Defensive Shield***

### **Daily Briefings**

Operation Defensive Shield, initiated at the end of March 2002, brought unprecedented military incursions on civilian population centers throughout the West Bank. During the operation, all access for journalists and human rights workers was prohibited to areas in which military operations were being conducted, and the Israeli press entirely refrained from covering the Palestinian reality. As a result, virtually no information was available on the widespread human rights violations being committed and the impact of IDF actions on the Palestinian civilian population.

Since B'Tselem's fieldworkers were unable to reach victims and eyewitnesses in order to collect testimonies in person, the decision was made to gather information by telephone and verify all reports to the greatest extent possible by cross-referencing the testimonies of multiple witnesses. While B'Tselem does not normally use information conveyed by phone, this was deemed essential to ensure the availability of accurate and reliable information to the public and policymakers.

On the basis of this information, B'Tselem initiated a daily briefing with the cooperation of three other Israeli human rights organizations. These briefings provided individual stories of the suffering of the civilian population as a result of the IDF invasions, and were distributed to journalists, Members of Knesset, foreign diplomats, and the over 4,000 subscribers to B'Tselem's email distribution list. The briefings were widely praised as a rare source of accurate information and were extensively circulated by e-mail and in some cases reproduced in full by the foreign press.

### **Newspaper Insert**

B'Tselem produced a publication drawing attention to the range of violations committed throughout the West Bank within the context of Operation Defensive Shield, including the obstruction of medical treatment and humanitarian assistance, firing at civilians, the wanton destruction of the civilian infrastructure, mass detentions, and the imposition of prolonged curfews. The publication provided testimonies of Israeli soldiers in addition to those of Palestinian civilians, which is a particularly effective way to reach an Israeli audience. Soldier testimonies have also served as an important resource in other B'Tselem materials, such as advertisements.

In addition to B'Tselem's mailing list, the Hebrew version of *Operation Defensive Shield* was distributed as an insert to the *Ha'aretz* daily newspaper and local weeklies to over 120,000 households, and 12,000 copies of the English version were distributed to visiting groups and

through international organizations with which B'Tselem cooperates. This publication drew a large wave of responses from the public.

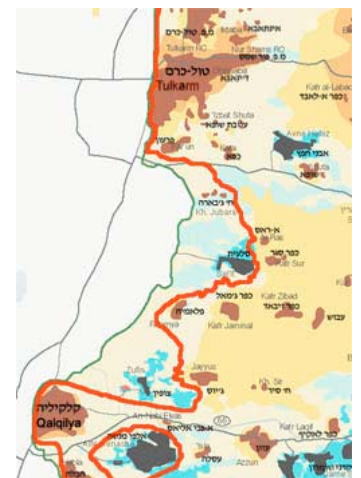
### **Case Study: Death in Custody**

Murad 'Awaisa, age 17, was detained by the IDF at the beginning of Operation Defensive Shield. The morning after his detention, his body was taken from the building with two bullets in it. In June, B'Tselem published a case study entitled *Death in Custody* on the circumstances of 'Awaisa's death. B'Tselem contended that even though it is impossible to definitively ascertain who shot 'Awaisa, the fact that he was killed while in IDF custody is sufficient grounds to place the responsibility for his death squarely on Israel. Following B'Tselem's publication of this case study, the Military Prosecutor opened an investigation into the incident, and B'Tselem continues to follow up on the case.

### **Separation Barrier**

In 2001, Israel began moving forward with a plan to construct a barrier to physically separate its territory from the West Bank. B'Tselem does not take a position on the building of a barrier itself, but rather has focused on the planned route for the barrier. In many locations, the route lies well within the territory of the West Bank rather than along the Green Line, and as such is in violation of international law.

The barrier's route also has serious human rights implications for the tens of thousands of Palestinians who live in proximity to the barrier. Several thousand acres of privately owned land have already been seized by Israel to enable the development of this barrier. At least eight Palestinian villages, with more than 10,000 residents, will remain to the west of the barrier, and thus will effectively be cut off from both Israel and the rest of the West Bank, including nearby urban centers on which they rely for their basic services. Thousands of Palestinian farmers will be separated from their land. While they will remain to the east of the barrier, they will likely encounter substantial difficulties in accessing their agricultural land which will be on the other side.



*A map of one portion of the planned route of Israel's security barrier.*

In September, B'Tselem issued a position paper and conducted a campaign on the separation barrier. A press tour was organized to coincide with the release of the publication, and was attended by over thirty local and international media correspondents from agencies including the Washington Post, Associated Press, Agence France Presse, The Economist, *Ha'aretz*, Army Radio, Voice of Israel, and The Independent. The highlight of the tour was a meeting with residents of Kibbutz Metzger and the adjacent Palestinian village of Qaffin. The residents of Kibbutz Metzger submitted a request to the Minister of Defense that land for the fence's construction be taken equally from the two communities, and not solely from Qaffin as is planned. Following the wave of media attention on this topic, Kibbutz Metzger received many requests to meet and tour the area from government and military officials.

B'tselem's Arabic Outreach Coordinator Najib Abu Rokaya also conducted tours on the topic of the separation barrier for dozens of journalists and peace organizations.

B'Tselem will continue monitoring this topic, and plans to produce an updated policy paper in 2003 to address continuing developments and new information regarding plans for the barrier's route, as well as the barrier under construction in the Jerusalem area.

## ***Human Shields***

Since the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, and particularly during Operation Defensive Shield, B'Tselem has received testimonies from Palestinians and soldiers regarding the IDF's use of civilians as human shields. Soldiers have compelled Palestinian civilians to walk in front of them as protection against gunfire, to enter houses to check if they were booby-trapped, or to remove suspicious objects from the road. B'Tselem's documentation of this phenomenon provided the basis for a petition submitted in May to the High Court of Justice by a coalition of human rights organizations including B'Tselem, calling on the Court to forbid this practice.

In its response to the petition, the State neither confirmed nor denied the existence of such practices, though it did state that it would forbid the use of "human shields" in IDF actions in the Occupied Territories. However, the State argued that ordering Palestinians to direct other Palestinians to leave their house, termed the "neighbor procedure," does not constitute using them as human shields. B'Tselem continued to receive testimonies indicating the continued use of this procedure.

The danger entailed in the "neighbor procedure" was clearly demonstrated by an incident on August 14, in which Nidal Abu Mukhsan, aged 19, was shot and killed by Hamas activist Nasser Jarar, after IDF soldiers ordered him to knock on Jarar's door and get him to leave his house. Following this incident, the organizations returned to the Court, which issued a temporary injunction prohibiting any use of Palestinian civilians in military operations.

Following the Court's injunction, there was a marked decrease in the number of cases in which soldiers used the procedure. However, B'Tselem continued to receive testimonies of Palestinian civilians who were forced to serve as "human shields" in violation of the injunction. In November, B'Tselem published a report entitled ***Human Shield*** presenting testimonies from five such incidents. On the basis of this report, the group of human rights organizations filed a motion for contempt of court against the Israeli army and government.

In December, seven months after the initial petition was filed, the State submitted its response to the Court. It repeated its contention that use of the "neighbor procedure" was legal, gave the procedure a new name, and introduced several cosmetic changes in an attempt to gain approval for this procedure that has been criticized by the Court and the media. Together with the coalition of human rights organizations, B'Tselem will continue the legal battle against this new procedure, and advocate for comprehensive investigations into complaints on the use of human shields.

B'Tselem's work regarding human shields, and particularly the report on the violation of the Court's order, has generated press coverage locally and internationally, including in *Yediot Ahronot*, Army Radio, *Ha'aretz*, the Jerusalem Post, BBC, The International Herald Tribune, The Guardian, and Agence France Presse.

## ***Settler Violence and the Lack of Law Enforcement***

Since the beginning of the current Intifada, B'Tselem has been monitoring and reporting on attacks by settlers against Palestinians and the lack of law enforcement on violent settlers. In 2002, B'Tselem published two reports on this topic.

### ***Rioting in Hebron***

On 26 July 2002, Palestinian militants shot at Israeli cars traveling near Hebron, killing four Israelis and wounding two others. Shortly after the shooting, settlers began attacking Palestinian residents of Hebron. In the course of the rioting, which lasted three days, settlers killed a 14-year-old girl, wounded more than ten Palestinians, and damaged property in some

twenty houses. Settlers also attacked Israeli security forces in the city. In August, B'Tselem released a case study entitled *Standing Idly By* on this incident.

### **Olive Harvest**

Settler attacks on Palestinians during the olive harvest have been an annual occurrence in recent years, with two Palestinians killed and dozens shot or beaten since 1998. At the beginning of the olive harvest, B'Tselem submitted an urgent request to the OC Central Commander, and Shai District (Samaria and Judea) Police Commander, calling on them to take all steps necessary to ensure that the olive harvest in the Occupied Territories was carried out without disruption. The success of the olive harvest was of particular urgency as thousands of Palestinian households rely on the sale of olives or their by-products as their sole remaining source of income. In November, after the harvest had ended, B'Tselem published a report entitled *Foreseen but not Prevented*, assessing law enforcement efforts during the harvest.

B'Tselem's investigations into the rioting in Hebron in July and attacks on olive harvesters revealed that despite the fact that settler attacks could have been anticipated in both of these instances, once again law enforcement authorities failed to take sufficient steps to prevent or halt settler attacks. In many instances, Israeli security forces stood by and watched as the violence took place, and failed to intervene. B'Tselem's reports on settler violence were covered by Voice of Israel and Army Radio and in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper.

## **ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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B'Tselem conducted advocacy and public education activities regarding a range of human rights issues. These activities included organizing public events, placing paid advertisements in the Israeli press, lobbying Members of Knesset and mobilizing the international community to speak out human rights issues. In addition to advocacy on the topics addressed by B'Tselem reports, B'Tselem also engaged in advocacy on issues including the following:

***Detentions*** - During Operation Defensive Shield, which began in March 2002, and Israel's subsequent military operations, thousands of Palestinians have been detained, many of them arbitrarily. Detainees have been subjected to harsh holding conditions and are frequently the victims of abuse by soldiers. Israel has made extensive use of administrative detention orders, to continue holding these individuals. By the end of 2002, over 950 Palestinians were being held in administrative detention without having been charged or tried, and with all material used against them kept classified.

***Protection for Civilians*** - The obligation to protect the civilian population is a message that B'Tselem has consistently emphasized over the past two years. B'Tselem has highlighted the heavy civilian toll that has been exacted since the outbreak of the Intifada, and called on both sides to take all measures possible to prevent harm to civilians.

***Freedom of Movement*** - B'Tselem began a pilot project to deploy Israeli monitors to IDF checkpoints to document, intervene, and prevent human rights violations. The checkpoint monitors will be the centerpiece of a major public education and advocacy campaign to be carried out in 2003 addressing the vast restrictions on movement imposed by Israel on the Palestinian population.

***Collaborators*** - Palestinians suspected of collaborating with the Israeli security forces face brutal treatment and even lynching by the Palestinian public. Those arrested by the Palestinian Authority are frequently subjected to torture, denied a fair trial, and often receive a death sentence. In press releases and advocacy with the diplomatic community, B'Tselem has called



on the PA to ensure due process, eliminate the death penalty, and to provide protection for those suspected of collaboration. B'Tselem also criticized the Israeli security services, which regularly pressure Palestinians into collaborating, and in doing so endanger their lives. B'Tselem has initiated research on collaboration for a future report on this topic.

**Pocket-Guide for Soldiers** - In March, B'Tselem produced a pocket-guide for IDF soldiers informing them of their responsibilities under international law and official IDF policy. B'Tselem activists distributed 6,000 copies of the pocket-guides to soldiers throughout the country. Publicity surrounding the guide highlighted that although the rules in the guide accord with IDF orders, the military has failed to ensure that soldiers know and enforce these directives intended to minimize harm to the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Territories.



*Beating, abusing, degrading, or "punishing" Palestinian residents is forbidden.*

**Intervention and Assistance to Individuals -**

While B'Tselem's main focus is not the provision of individual assistance, the organization receives regular requests for help from Palestinian victims of human rights violations. These requests peaked during Operation Defensive Shield. Dozens of calls came from individuals whose family members were trapped under the rubble of demolished houses, relatives of detainees who did not know where their family members were being held and if they were safe, and people trying to evacuate the sick and wounded. B'Tselem was able to offer assistance in some cases, particularly during the period of extensive military operations, although the traditional channels for action, including MKs, the civil administration, and foreign diplomats, were frequently ineffective. B'Tselem also participated in a number of urgent efforts to provide humanitarian aid due to the dire circumstances faced by Palestinians, despite the fact that this type of activity is not a regular part of B'Tselem's work. These efforts also served as a means to highlight the severe impact of Israel's siege and closure policies, and to draw media and public attention to this issue.

**Advocacy with Policymakers**

**Israeli Policymakers**

B'Tselem engages in on-going correspondence with government and military officials in order to provide them with information about incidents that B'Tselem has documented, and to receive their information and responses on these cases. In addition, B'Tselem's reports are sent to all Members of Knesset, government ministries, and a wide range of IDF officers and officials, the Border Police, and the Israel Police. During 2002, B'Tselem also met with a variety of government and military officials in order to discuss specific concerns and offer recommendations for changes in policy:

In 2002, B'Tselem increased its advocacy efforts with members of Knesset, focusing primarily on the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, and the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. B'Tselem briefed MKs on human rights issues, requested their intervention in urgent humanitarian cases, and participated in Committee meetings. Among the issues addressed in Knesset advocacy was legislation that would deny Palestinian victims of negligence or wrongdoing by Israeli security forces the right to sue for compensation in Israeli courts, and legislation to legalize the administrative detention of "illegal combatants." The climate



in Israel made advocacy on these issues extremely difficult, and despite extensive lobbying both laws passed in the Knesset plenum.

### **International Advocacy**

Over the past year, B'Tselem has laid the groundwork for increased advocacy on the international level to complement its on-going work with the diplomatic community in Israel and visiting foreign policymakers. As part of this endeavor, B'Tselem has initiated a fax sheet that provides a brief overview of various human rights issues. Five fax briefings were issued during 2002, and B'Tselem has continuously monitored the feedback and increased the list of recipients so as to improve this new tool and increase its impact.

During 2002, B'Tselem met with delegations of policymakers that were visiting Israel from Norway, Finland, Denmark, Canada, and Japan, and conducted briefings for policymakers as part of speaking tours in countries including England, Scotland, Holland, Belgium, France, and the U.S. B'Tselem also met with the members of the inquiry commission appointed by the UN Human Rights Commission to address the occupied Palestinian territories, and the US special envoy to the region, William Burns.

B'Tselem participated in meetings with local UN agencies interested in increasing their advocacy work within Israel, in order to share information and resources and coordinate efforts. B'Tselem also submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Committee to coincide with its review of Israel's second periodic report on compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and a report on the topic of ill-treatment of prisoners to the UN Committee against Torture, which had added Israel as a special item to the agenda for its May meeting. B'Tselem also appeared before the UN Human Rights Commission.

B'Tselem has begun to increase its outreach to the Diaspora Jewish community, focusing on the Jewish press and the Reform rabbinate as initial target audiences.

### **RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTER**

B'Tselem continues to serve as the leading source of information about human rights in the Occupied Territories for researchers, diplomats, and the Israeli and international public. B'Tselem's role as a provider of accurate and reliable information increased in importance this year due to limits placed on access to areas of military operation, the lack of attention to Palestinian suffering in the Israeli press, and the rampant manipulation of information by Israeli and Palestinian sources.

Four data coordinators monitored the daily press, government statements and other sources of information and compiled comprehensive statistics on a wide range of human rights issues.

Over the past year, B'Tselem responded to hundreds of information requests, provided easily accessible information through its trilingual web-site and regular email updates, briefed international and local policymakers, and gave lectures in tens of forums in Israel and abroad.

B'Tselem also increased the use of its website as a means to highlight individual stories of human rights violations, providing full testimonies of victims and eye witnesses. B'Tselem expanded its electronic mailing list, which now distributes to over 4,000 subscribers, and upgraded the format and content of the updates sent to this list. The new, eye-catching, newspaper format enables the distribution of printed and fax versions of the newspaper. B'Tselem now sends the updates by fax to all Members of Knesset and the diplomatic community, and distributes copies of the printed version on university campuses and at public

events. The newspaper also provides a means for publicizing testimonies and statistics gathered by B'Tselem that are not included in reports.

The organization's research and documentation are a primary source of information for media correspondents. B'Tselem issued press releases to over 500 local and international media correspondents, fieldworkers regularly accompanied journalists to collect information for feature stories on a variety of subjects, and staff members were frequently interviewed for up-to-date information on human rights issues. B'Tselem fieldworkers have also been equipped with digital video cameras, and trained in their use. Footage taken by fieldworkers was made this material available to local and international media sources.

B'Tselem received extensive media coverage by the local and foreign press with hundreds of articles appearing in 2002, particularly in response to B'Tselem's statistics on the Rafah house demolitions, the settlement report and map, and on the organization's documentation of the use of human shields in violation of the High Court's injunction. B'Tselem also began to increase its work with the international Jewish press, providing them with information on a regular basis and submitting articles and opinion pieces.

## **GENERATING COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS**

Since launching an ambitious project in 1998 to educate the mainstream Israeli public about human rights principles and their observance in the Occupied Territories, public education and advocacy have been integrated into virtually all of B'Tselem's activities. The project is designed to engage the public in dialogue, mobilize advocates for human rights, and ultimately change attitudes.

Over the past two years, additional emphasis has been given to B'Tselem's public education work in response to the erosion of public support for human rights of Palestinians. B'Tselem has focused on the issue of human rights in times of armed conflict, emphasizing the relevance of human rights even in the current situation and countering the security rhetoric used to justify such violations.

In the current climate in which attacks on Israeli civilians have become a regular occurrence, we have witnessed increasing hostility among the public toward any discussion of Palestinian rights. Uncritical support for all military actions and the desire not to know also characterize the Israeli public. Furthermore, as the grave human rights violations that once captured headlines have now become part of the routine to which Israelis are accustomed, the public and media have become apathetic to such incidents. While B'Tselem's reports are generally mentioned briefly in the press, they now generate less public discussion and debate.

***Weekly Human Rights Corner*** - In addition to on-going work with the media, B'Tselem initiated several innovative strategies in response to the challenges of the current situation. Among these strategies were the production of daily briefings, the Operation Defensive Shield newspaper insert, and the publication of weekly advertisements in the Ha'aretz newspaper. The six-month ad series, which was initiated in March, was intended to provide a human rights perspective on current events and stimulate public debate on human rights issues.



***The Slaying of the First Born***  
194 Palestinian and 47 Israeli children  
have been killed in Israel and the Occupied  
Territories since Sept. 29, 2000.  
(March 27, 2002 – First night of Passover)

B'Tselem's high-profile public campaigns clearly touched a nerve, and hundreds of responses to these initiatives were received from Israelis from across the political spectrum: threats and insults, as well as requests for additional information, thank you letters and financial donations. Many people called to criticize our publications and advertisements and finished the conversation by requesting additional materials.

***Presentations*** - B'Tselem staff continued to provide lectures to Israeli audiences in various forums, educating the public about human rights topics in the Occupied Territories. During 2002, B'Tselem gave ten lectures in public forums, as well as nine lectures to groups of security forces members, including officers from the Navy, Education Corps, Border Police, Civil Administration, and the IDF spokesperson's office, reaching more than 500 people.

***Volunteer Activism*** – B'Tselem continues to foster engagement by the Israeli public in human rights issues. B'Tselem's volunteers were involved in the distribution of the pocket guide for soldiers throughout Israel, a demonstration at the checkpoints into Ramallah, and advocacy against proposed legislation that would result in human rights violations. Volunteers also collected money as well as non-perishable food and clothing for B'Tselem's urgent humanitarian aid project, and have staffed information booths. B'Tselem also continued to provide support and assistance to the ADAM human rights chapters on university campuses, who have initiated a variety of educational forums and advocacy campaigns and have been active in B'Tselem's advocacy campaigns and public events.

***Arabic Outreach*** -B'Tselem has increased its Arabic outreach efforts, with particular emphasis on the Palestinian press. All press releases are now issued in Arabic, and distributed to more than 100 Arabic-language media correspondents. B'Tselem has also placed paid advertisements in the major newspapers in the Occupied Territories on topics including Israel's attack on a residential building in Gaza, the use of human shields, and collaboration. In addition to condemning human rights violations, the advertisements have called on victims or eyewitnesses of such violations to contact B'Tselem. Over the summer, B'Tselem produced a brochure describing the organization and its work in Arabic, which has been widely distributed by B'Tselem fieldworkers, and the checkpoint monitoring team.

***Building Organizational Capacity*** - B'Tselem has provided training and assistance for Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations, as well as international civil society organizations conducting human rights advocacy work in the Occupied Territories.

## **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND HIGHLIGHTS**

In 2002, B'Tselem released thirteen new publications, addressing the use of lethal force; house demolitions and destruction of agricultural land; access to medical treatment; Israel's settlement policy; lack of law enforcement on violent settlers; Operation Defensive Shield; the separation barrier being constructed by Israel; violence by security forces; and the use of human shields. All publications were produced in both Hebrew and English and distributed to more than 8,000 individuals and organizations.

B'Tselem also produced a unique map detailing the land controlled by Israeli settlements that received extensive attention and was in high demand, particularly as it provides information not available elsewhere. The map and accompanying report were also the focus of an extensive advocacy campaign including press work, briefings for the diplomatic community as well as foreign policymakers, think-tanks, NGOs, and speaking engagements for the public.

B'Tselem has given additional emphasis to advocacy at both the local and international level over the past year. Advocacy has addressed the issues mentioned above, as well as protection for civilians, detentions, freedom of movement, collaborators and proposed legislation to deny compensation for Palestinian victims of wrongful or negligent acts committed by Israeli security forces. Advocacy has included organizing public events, meetings with military and government officials, lobbying Members of Knesset, and the submission of petitions to the High Court of Justice. B'Tselem also initiated fax briefings that are sent to hundreds of foreign policymakers, and increased outreach efforts to the Diaspora Jewish community.

B'Tselem's role as the leading source of information about human rights in the Occupied Territories has increased in importance in recent months, as a result of limits on access for journalists and the manipulation of information by Israeli and Palestinian sources. B'Tselem's extensive work with the media, which included issuing press releases, accompanying journalists, giving interviews, and a press tour on the separation barrier, resulted in hundreds of appearances in the local and foreign press.

B'Tselem's trilingual website continues to receive thousands of visitors per month, and information and updates are sent by email to over 4,000 subscribers. B'Tselem has responded to dozens of information requests each month and provided briefings for diplomats, visiting foreign policymakers, and delegations from around the world.

B'Tselem responded to dozens of requests for assistance from Palestinian victims of human rights violations, particularly in cases of urgent need during Operation Defensive Shield, and participated in efforts to provide humanitarian relief to Palestinians in need of basic food supplies.

B'Tselem was especially active in the sphere of public education in 2002, and initiated a number of innovative strategies in response to the challenges of the current situation. These strategies included the publication of a weekly advertisements in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper, and production of daily briefings during Operation Defensive Shield. The briefings were widely praised as a rare source of accurate information and were extensively circulated by e-mail and in some cases reproduced in full by the foreign press. Following Defensive Shield, B'Tselem produced a newspaper insert drawing attention to the range of human rights violations committed within the context of the operation. The newspaper, which includes testimonies from Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians, was distributed to over 120,000 households as an insert to the *Ha'aretz* daily newspaper and local weeklies. In addition, 12,000 copies of an English version of the publication were distributed to visiting groups and through international organizations. In response to these strategies, B'Tselem has received hundreds of responses from Israelis from across the spectrum.