

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



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B'Tselem continued collecting and publishing credible and current information and analysis of the impact of Israeli policies on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt)

- B'Tselem field researchers **collected** 139 field reports and 980 testimonies from Palestinians (754 men and 226 women) who experienced or witnessed human rights violations.
- B'Tselem wrote **87 short research reports**, which were posted on B'Tselem's [website](#) and [social media](#).
- **41 updates** about attempts to expel Palestinian communities from Area C through demolitions, confiscations and temporary displacements for military training were published on our [Facing Expulsion](#) blog.
- B'Tselem made **26 Freedom of Information** requests to Israeli authorities
- B'Tselem compiled **statistics** on [fatalities](#) and [home demolitions](#), based on field work, and published official figures on [Palestinian detainees and prisoners](#) in Israeli custody.
- B'Tselem published **three comprehensive research reports**, [Fake Justice: The Responsibility Israel's High Court Justices Bear for the Demolition of Palestinian Homes and the Dispossession of Palestinians](#), [Playing the Security Card: Israeli Policy in Hebron as Means to Effect Forcible Transfer of Local Palestinians](#), and [Just the Tip of the Iceberg: One Victim a Year, Times Thirty Years](#), also presented in a [digital platform](#).
- B'Tselem published **a position paper**, [11 Military Police investigations](#), [1 charade](#)
- B'Tselem published [He Looked for Justice, but Behold, Oppression](#), a **collection of four legal analyses**.
- B'Tselem published **an innovative interactive map**, [Conquer and Divide](#), developed together with 'Forensic Architecture' illustrating Israel's fragmentation of the occupied territories since 1967.

B'Tselem provided the media data and analysis about Israeli policies in the oPt. B'Tselem's materials, respected in Israel and around the world as a primary source of information for media, received wide media coverage.

- B'Tselem issued **24 press releases** in Hebrew, Arabic and English to 2,200 journalists and members of the international community.
- B'Tselem conducted **10 field visits** for Israeli journalists.
- B'Tselem brought **10 journalists** from Europe and America on a 4-day field tour of the occupied territories.
- B'Tselem had **hundreds of citations** in the Israeli, Palestinian and international media, including major publications like the [New York Times](#), [The Washington Post](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Independent](#), [The Associated Press](#), [Le Monde](#), [The Nation](#), [Israeli channel 2](#), [Haaretz](#), and [the Jerusalem Post](#).
- **180 interviews** with B'Tselem staff were published in the media.
- **11 op-eds** by B'Tselem staff and board members were published in the media, including [The New York Times](#) and the [Washington Post](#).
- **50+** op-eds written by journalists, commentators and politicians cited B'Tselem, including the [New Yorker](#), [The Washington Post](#), [Haaretz](#), and the [Jewish Forward](#).

B'Tselem continued to harness the power of video for the struggle for human rights, with the help of 167 Palestinian volunteers who document their lives under occupation.

- B'Tselem produced a **full-length feature documentary**, [Of Land and Bread](#), which premiered at the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam.
- B'Tselem worked with **167 Palestinian volunteers**, 113 men and 54 women, in the video camera project.
- B'Tselem held **16 group training workshops** and **34 mentoring sessions** for Palestinian volunteers. 49 women and 89 men participated in group workshops, 19 women and 15 men were mentored.

- B'Tselem catalogued and added **271 video titles** to our video archive.
- B'Tselem held 2 public film screenings at the Solidarity Festival, and 5 screenings of Of Land and Bread at the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam.

B'Tselem's social media informed millions in Israel and internationally about human rights in the oPt:

- Pages on B'Tselem's trilingual website (Hebrew, Arabic, English), were viewed 1,125,829 times by 439.5 K users. 434.5 K, or 87% of users, were new visitors.
- Conquer and Divide, an interactive mapping of Israel's fragmentation of the occupied territories since 1967 was viewed 87.4 K times by 37,750 people.
- B'Tselem's social media network grew to 303.5 K followers, including 83 K on the Hebrew Facebook page, with 129 posts, 116 K on the English Facebook page with 84 posts, 58 K on Twitter, with 548 posts, 42.5 K on B'Tselem's YouTube channel, with 45 videos uploaded in 2019.
- B'Tselem posted **45 videos** on B'Tselem's digital platforms.
- B'Tselem's videos were viewed **8,287,376 times** on our YouTube channel.
- B'Tselem's videos were viewed **1,431,400 K** times on Facebook (**901.1K** in Hebrew and **530.3 K** in English),
- The highest viewed videos on Facebook in English were Playing the Security Card, reaching 59.3 K, Soldiers seize 9 year-old at elementary school, reaching 56.6 k, and The demolitions in Wadi al-Humos, reaching 39.5 K.
- The highest viewed videos on Facebook in Hebrew were Security forces detain four children, reaching 76 K, Soldiers fatally shoot Mahmoud Nakhleh, reaching 68 K, and Engineering a Jewish majority, reaching 50K.
- The most viewed Facebook posts in English were Conquer and Divide, reaching 88K, a post about Israel targeting buildings in Gaza, reaching 72,525 people, and a call to stop the next war in Gaza, reaching 53, 375 people.
- The most viewed Facebook posts in Hebrew were settlers execute Muhammad 'Abd al-Fatah, reaching 88 K, Conquer and Divide, reaching 68 K, and the killing of 'Omar al-Badawi, 22, reaching 54 K.
- B'Tselem posted 528 tweets on Twitter, with 6.441 million cumulative exposure to tweets in 2019. July was the month with maximum exposure, with 978 K views.
- B'Tselem sent out 6 newsletters to 22,885 K people in English and 7,485 people in Hebrew.

B'Tselem advocated for action to end the occupation by the international community

- B'Tselem commemorated its 30th anniversary and launched Tip of the Iceberg in an event for Palestinian civil society and the international community in Khan al-Ahmar and the Israeli public and international community in Tel Aviv.
- B'Tselem staff shared information and analysis and advocated its positions with hundreds of diplomats, officials, and policy experts in 115 meetings, briefings, and events for the international community, including government entities, think tanks, UN agencies, and international organizations from the European Union and 23 countries.
- B'Tselem staff led 25 **field visits** to the West Bank for **185** members of the international community.
- B'Tselem brought **10 authors, researchers, and policy analysts** from Europe and America on a 3-day field tour of the occupied territories.
- B'Tselem staff travelled to **16 cities** to meet with policymakers and civil society.
- B'Tselem staff met with 35 groups of **students, faith groups and activists** (550 participants)
- B'Tselem met with 9 groups of **Israeli pre-military academy students** (320 participants)

Letter from the Executive Director

Our thirty-year education – Excerpts from B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-AD's speech in Khan al-Ahmar at our 30th anniversary event for Palestinian civil society and the international community.

When you work for thirty years you learn a few things. Here's what we've learned since 1989.

We've learned the noble principles that are the foundations of our work: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which decrees that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood", and the biblical verse that inspired our name, B'Tselem – literally, in the image: "And God created humankind in His image. In the image of God did He create them".

We've learned, too, that rather than serving as principles to be fulfilled, they can also be drained of meaning after Israeli lawyers trample them under foot and then market it to the outside world as "justice".

We've learned that there is not an inch of Palestinian land that Israel can't find justification to take over and do with whatever it pleases. We've learned that there is no Palestinian home the demolition of which an Israeli judge won't justify with lofty legal verbiage. We've learned that there is no Palestinian victim – a three-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old youth, a whole family – whose killing the Israeli system cannot expertly whitewash.

We've learned there's hardly any aspect of Palestinian life that Israel can't arbitrarily subject to a permit, a checkpoint, a paper-pusher or a soldier. We've learned that demographic reengineering of physical space – with decrees, expulsions or demolitions – can be official government policy. We've learned that a Palestinian can go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning with a wall separating him from his city; that a Palestinian can go to sleep at night and be woken before dawn by soldiers in his bedroom demanding he wake up his young children; that a Palestinian can go to sleep at night and be startled awake from an Israeli bomb that shattered her home and family.

We've learned that moral blindness is a bottomless pit; that even after 500 children have been killed in Gaza, it is still said that there are no innocent people there and that everyone in Gaza, including the children, are terrorists. We've learned you can shoot unarmed protesters and still pat yourself on the back for being moral.

Then again, we've also learned other things. We've learned that against all odds, despite every Israeli state apparatus working against them, Palestinians hold on to life and to the land. We've learned that even after realizing that Israeli law enforcement won't deliver justice, the human desire for it does not – and will not – abate.

We've learned that you can say a million times that the territory isn't occupied, that the settlements are legal, that Gaza isn't under blockade, that there is no Palestinian people – but, drinking from this well of lies only poisons the mind, without changing the facts; because tomorrow morning we'll all still be here – Palestinians and Jews, seven million and seven million – two peoples, one connected future.

After thirty years, these are our humble conclusions. Without fear or fatigue, we are ready for the hard years ahead, and the better ones that will follow. We've learned that a Palestinian will be able to go to sleep at night and wake up to see not a wall or a soldier but the morning light on the horizon, waking up free and equal in value and in rights. That is the only self-evident moral future: one of full and equal rights to everyone on this land. That morning will come.

To commemorate B'Tselem's 30th anniversary, B'Tselem published a retrospective publication reviewing cases B'Tselem investigated since its establishment in 1989. The report examined 30 cases, a case from every year of B'Tselem's existence, in which soldiers killed, injured or beat a Palestinian. The publication presented the original testimony taken by B'Tselem after the incident, juxtaposed with current testimony from the victim or their family, illustrating the long-term impact of the violation, and a summary of the Israeli authorities handling of the case.

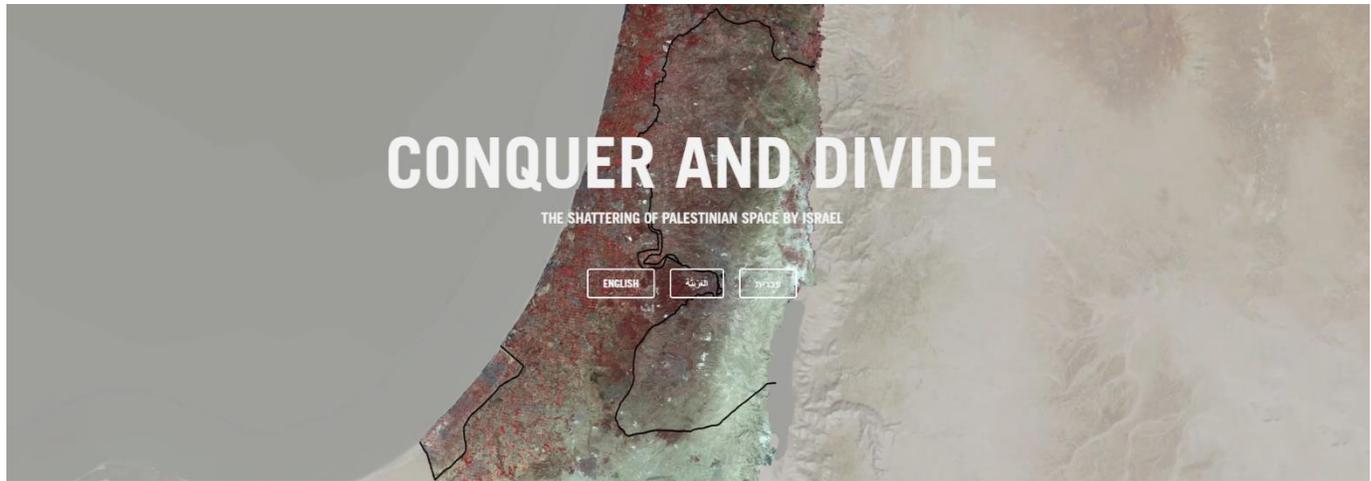
The report, presented in print and on a [digital platform](#), also includes an explanation of Israel's policy of [whitewashing](#) – without which there could be no occupation or control.

The report was launched at two public events. On December 5, B'Tselem commemorated 30 years of work with Palestinian civil society, activists, and the international community at Khan al Al-Ahmar, a Palestinian community that Israel seeks to demolish and transfer its residents. Addresses were given by Eid Abu Khamis, the leader of the Khan al-Ahmar community, Jessica Olausson, Consul General of Sweden in Jerusalem, Ashraf abu-Haya, Advocacy Director of Al-Haq, [Amin Hamdan](#), who was beaten by IDF soldiers in 2003, and B'Tselem's executive director, [Hagai's El-Ad](#). Video testimony from the parents of [Hadil Ghiben](#), who was killed aged 7, in 2006, in an Israeli artillery shelling in the Gaza strip was delivered by video.

On December 10, B'Tselem held an event for the Israeli public and the diplomatic community attended by 250 people, hosted by Israeli comedian Yossi Zabari. B'Tselem's first director Zahava Gal-on, David Zonsheine, the chair of the board of directors, Ilana Hammerman, an Israeli activist, and Salma a-Deeb, B'Tselem's Nablus area field researcher, addressed the event. a-Deeb stated, "We will persevere resolutely despite the hardships, wounds and pain that plague us every day, until the end of the occupation and the realization of justice, freedom and equality. We want our children to grow up in security and peace ... We want them to learn that the sky is for fireworks and not for grenades and missiles, and that the dirt is for planting flowers rather than for burying the dead."

Ahead of the event, Zahava Gal-On published an [op-ed](#) explaining how B'Tselem came to understand that simply informing the Israeli public about human rights violations is insufficient to end the occupation, and that B'Tselem has made courageous decisions turning its own actions into acts of disruption and internal resistance. B'Tselem received a dozens of messages of support from members of the public, including statements like, "Thank you for your crucial work. The determination felt in the room was palpable, despite the uphill battle", from the Ambassador of a European country, "Thank you warmly for sharing ... the painful process of deciding how to mark the occasion, and then the heart rending and revealing journey through the archives", "I am so glad that you are reminding us of these injustices, as the Prophets of Israel did in their own times", and "You are the great hope for the future, dark though it seems at present. Truth and justice has to win... or we are all lost". An Israeli professor said "B'Tselem continues to be at the forefront of the struggle for justice and is a ray of light in the darkness that gives hope to many in both nations, and the international community".





On June 5, 52 years since Israel occupied the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, B'Tselem [launched](#) an interactive joint project with [Forensic Architecture](#) illustrating Israel's encroachment upon Palestinian space over the decades, shattering the land into isolated units, and separating Palestinians from one another and from Israelis.

[Conquer and Divide](#) traces how government resolutions, military orders and state planning created ever-expanding Israeli settlements and infrastructure, promoting Israeli interests at the expense of Palestinians' rights. This visualization of the occupation shows how a combination of measures – annexation, establishment of settlements, declaration of “state land,” firing zones, nature reserves and national parks, construction of the Separation Barrier, division of the West Bank into Areas A, B and C with varying forms of control, and severing the Gaza Strip from the West Bank – has broken up Palestinian space into separate units that are easier to control in isolation.

B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad expressed concern that political capital was wasted on empty statements instead of concrete action to change the reality on the ground, and added: “Since the occupation began, governments have come and gone. Yet one thing has remained unchanged: all the people who live between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea have been ruled by a single government – one elected only by Israeli citizens, who enjoy... political rights, which Palestinian subjects do not. Israel has chipped away at Palestinian space, breaking it up into conveniently exploitable pieces, the easier to control and oppress. But the future of all 14 million people who live here cannot be founded on Israeli dominance – and separation and oppression of Palestinians. We invite you... to see reality for what it is – and demand an entirely different future.”

[Conquer and Divide](#) was distributed by [press release](#), [newsletter](#), [social media](#), and presented in briefings for dozens of Israeli lawmakers, diplomats, decision-makers, policy experts, and the international community, at think tanks and the United Nations.

[Conquer and Divide](#) was viewed 87.4 K times by 37,750 people. It was recognized as a valuable resource for understanding the occupation and commended by journalists such as [Nathan Thrall](#) and [Batya Unger-Saron](#), politicians such as [Zahava Galon](#) and [Ayman Odeh](#), analysts such as [Jamil Dakwar](#), and [Martin Konecny](#) and organizations like [J Street](#), [The New Israel Fund](#), [Partners for Progressive Israel](#), [Peace Now USA](#) and [Just Vision](#). B'Tselem's [tweet](#) announcing the project was retweeted 742 times, the most retweeted tweet of 2019.



Fake Justice was published February 6. The report explains how Israel's Supreme Court validated the state's planning apparatus in the West Bank, enabling it to continue implementing illegal policies. Over the years, Palestinians have filed hundreds of petitions with Israel's High Court of Justice (HCJ), seeking to overturn demolition orders issued by the Civil Administration. The report is based on examination of hundreds of High Court cases, on the demolition of Palestinian homes in the West Bank. The justices rejected every argument of principle they heard on Israel's planning policy. B'Tselem's did not find a single case in which the justices granted a petition Palestinians filed against the demolition of their home. The justices consistently adopted the state's position that the cases were simply a matter of law enforcement.

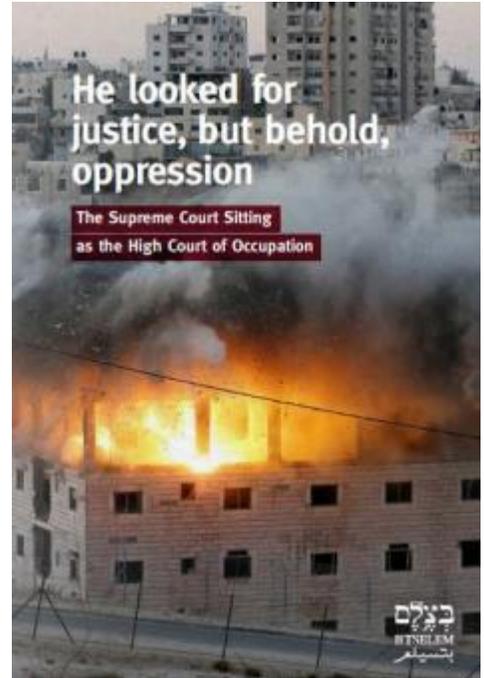
While the Court does not write laws, make policy or implement it, it could play a crucial role in protecting human rights. When the state implements a policy that systematically abuses the human rights of thousands of people who have no representation, the justices have both the authority and the duty to find the policy unlawful and prohibit its implementation. Instead, time and time again, the justices choose to grant it a legal seal of approval and validation. In so doing, the HCJ plays a pivotal role in cementing the occupation and settlement enterprise, and in further dispossessing Palestinians of their land.

Israel's HCJ justices have lent a guise of fairness, validity and lawfulness to an illegitimate system of organized dispossession. Particularly blatant is the justices' disregard of the fact that implementation of the Israeli planning policy violates the absolute prohibition on forcible transfer, which also applies to cases of people leaving their homes involuntarily, if the authorities made living conditions unbearable. Violation of this prohibition is a war crime. Thus, the HCJ justices, along with the prime minister, senior ministers, the chief of staff and senior military officers, bear personal liability for the commission of these crimes.

To bring the High Court's complicity in the dispossession of Palestinians to the public's attention, the executive summary was distributed in 90 K copies to 300 K readers of the Haaretz Hebrew edition, and by digital newsletter, and the report was distributed by mail in English and Hebrew and promoted by social media. B'Tselem provided journalists and the international community analysis of Israeli policies, and led field visits to Khan al Ahmar and other communities threatened with dispossession with the High Court's approval. B'Tselem published a press release and held a press conference, triggering publication of articles in Le Monde, the Jerusalem Post and The Middle East Monitor. B'Tselem published a Facebook post in English, which reached 30 K people and 2 in Hebrew reaching 50 K, plus Twitter posts. B'Tselem presented the report at several briefings to the international community. B'Tselem research director and the chair of the board of directors published an op-ed in Ha'aretz, and Haaretz published several columns on the report.

In December, B'Tselem issued a [publication](#) comprised of four analyses of the Supreme Court rulings that B'Tselem published in 2019, demonstrating how easily the court accepts the state's position and engages in legal acrobatics in order to sanctions severe violation of human rights.

These rulings are just four examples of many in which the Supreme Court refrained from giving effective judicial review and failed to constrain security forces when it comes to Palestinians and the violation of their rights. Over the years, the court has proven its willingness to sanction almost any injustice or violation of the human rights of Palestinians and permitted nearly every kind of human rights violation that Israel has committed in the occupied territories. Above all, the Supreme Court chooses to ignore the broader context: The Palestinian petitioners are part of a population that completely lacks representation, whose lives have been governed by a harsh military regime for over half a century, whose political rights are denied, and who can't participate in the most basic decisions concerning their lives. According to both common sense and international law, these circumstances should drive the court to provide increased protection to the very population that needs it so much. Instead, the Supreme Court chooses to defend the perpetrators. By refusing to prohibit the application of a policy that illegally and unjustifiably harms the human rights of Palestinians, Israeli's highest legal authority not only condones these human rights violations – but also the occupation itself.



The publication opens with legal analysis about Israel's High Court of Justice [upholding the ban on family visits for Gaza Hamas prisoners from Gaza](#) that B'Tselem published in July. B'Tselem published the analysis on Facebook, reaching 8.7 K. On 22 July 2019, B'Tselem published [video documentation](#) and [legal analysis](#) on the [Wadi al-Humos demolitions](#) the very day that Israeli authorities began demolishing buildings in Zur Baher in East Jerusalem. The demolition was witnessed and documented by B'Tselem's international advocacy officer. B'Tselem published the legal analysis on [Facebook](#) reaching nearly 40 K, and in several [Twitter](#) posts, reaching over 30 K. In October, B'Tselem published a legal analysis about how the Israeli High Court [facilitated interrogation of Samir 'Arbid under torture](#). B'Tselem published the analysis on [Twitter](#), reaching 13 K. In October, B'Tselem published legal analysis on the Israeli High court approval of [holding Palestinian bodies as bargaining chips](#). B'Tselem published this analysis on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), reaching 18 K.

The publication was printed and distributed to the Israeli public and international community. B'Tselem also made 17 Facebook posts on the four legal analysis, reaching tens of thousands of people, and the analysis of the [demolitions in Wai al-Humus](#) was distributed by newsletter to 30 K. Print copies were distributed to the international community.

To enhance the understanding of diplomats and journalists, B'Tselem held briefings with diplomats and foreign decision-makers. The complicity of the Israeli legal system as one of the essential elements perpetuating the occupation and the role it plays in denying Palestinians justice and accountability is an essential part in B'Tselem's international advocacy.



B'Tselem produced a full-length documentary film entitled 'Of Land and Bread' using footage shot by field researchers and volunteers in our video camera project. The images they captured convey the experience of Palestinians living under occupation, of having your daily life governed by organized state violence, of watching your land being deliberately broken up, of seeing illegal Israeli settlements being built on your land, of enduring abuse by settlers and seeing them granted rights you are denied. It is the story of a vulnerable life, where your only defense is the camera. In accepting the film for presentation, the International Documentary Film Festival said "...the film is incredibly important in its unflinching subjective point of view. Every scene stands as a vignette that lingers - each one compounding the next, impressing upon the viewer the reality of the injustice to which Palestinians in the occupied territories are subjected. Through their images and perspective, the viewer is asked to witness and experience the fear and vulnerability they experience at the hand of mostly young, indoctrinated footsoldiers of a totalitarian state. While the footage has urgency and power, I also felt that your assembly of the material has a poeticism that encourages reflection as much as shock, and that there is something quite powerful that happens when these clips - typically seen online as individual incidents - are presented together as a work of cinema... Your film was very compelling and moving for all of us". The documentary premiered at the IDFA in Amsterdam from November 20 – December 1.

The Israeli Open-Fire Policy in Gaza



The Gaza Great Return March Demonstrations

Since March 2018, Palestinians in Gaza have been holding the March of Return protests along the fence with Israel, demonstrating for an end to the siege of the Gaza Strip and the implementation of the right of return. During these protests, Israeli forces use extensive live fire against demonstrators, in a way that is both unlawful and immoral, killing 222 protesters, among them 45 minors, and 8K injured. In April 2018, B'Tselem urged soldiers to refuse to shoot at unarmed protestors.

In January, B'Tselem reports that Israeli forces killed Amal a-Taramsi, 44, and 'Abd a-Ra'uf Salahah, 13, in the March of Return protests. On February 28, 2019, The UN Commission of Inquiry into the protests along the Gaza perimeter fence, stated that Israel's rules of engagement, which permit firing at unarmed protestors who pose no threat, are unlawful. B'Tselem reiterated its call to change the rules of engagement and its call on soldiers to refuse to comply with illegal orders. Ahead of the 18 March UNHRC meeting on the findings of the UN commission of inquiry, B'Tselem issued a position paper, explaining why Israel's "investigations" into the deaths of 11 protestors is mere propaganda. B'Tselem's director called upon the commission to reject Israel's facade of justice while killing more unarmed protestors.

In August, B'Tselem reported that seven of the 222 Palestinians killed, including 4 minors, died from a direct hit of a teargas canister to their head or face. B'Tselem stated that firing tear gas canisters directly at protestors is part of an illegal and immoral open-fire policy, and that using lethal fire against protestors, the vast majority of whom pose no danger to security forces, is another expression of Israel's disregard for Palestinians' lives and bodily integrity.

In November, B'Tselem again called on the UN Security Council to act in the absence of credible investigations into deaths of unarmed protestors. B'Tselem sent letters to several countries on the UN Security Council asking SC members "to raise before the UNSC the impunity in which Israel is acting in the Gaza Strip with regard to the Great March of Return protests – an issue already discussed by the Council on April 26, 2018. This request follows the most recent glaring demonstration by Israel's so-called law enforcement system of its utter disregard for Palestinian lives". The letter cited the 2018 shooting death of 14 year old 'Othman Hiles. In a plea bargain, an Israeli soldier was convicted, not of killing Hiles, but of exceeding authority in a manner that endangers human life and health. The soldier was sentenced to one month's military labor, a suspended sentence and demotion to the rank of private.

May Hostilities Between Israel and Militant Organizations in the Gaza Strip

From 3 to 6 May 2019, another round of hostilities took place between Israel and militant organizations in the Gaza Strip. The military branches of Hamas and Islamic Jihad fired 700 rockets at Israel and numerous anti-tank missiles, killing four Israelis and wounding 123. Israel launched airstrikes and fired shells at 350 targets in Gaza, injuring 153 people and killing 25, including 13 people, among them two minors, who were uninvolved in the hostilities and were unaffiliated with the militant groups, while deliberately targeting homes in Gaza.

On May 5, B'Tselem called on Israel and Hamas to stop firing at civilians, and on Israel to lift the blockade. B'Tselem stated that waging another war in the Gaza Strip is a folly that will merely exacerbate the suffering of civilians on both sides. The Israeli government must lift the stifling blockade it has imposed on the residents of the Gaza Strip; Hamas must cease firing at civilians. B'Tselem conveyed its condolences to the families who lost their loved ones and stated that the deliberate targeting of civilians undermines every moral, legal and human standard. There is no possible justification for such attacks, and they are a war crime under international humanitarian law.

In July, B'Tselem released research on the bombing of commercial and residential buildings in the May hostilities, and testimonies from four tenants on the devastating impact of the attacks on their lives. Israeli bombardments destroyed 100 units, and rendered uninhabitable 52, leaving 327 people, including 65 children under five, homeless. These air strikes were founded on an erroneous and morally corrupt interpretation of international law. Yet Israel will again pay no price whatsoever for its policy regarding bombings in Gaza.

November Hostilities between Israel and militant organizations in the Gaza Strip

November 2019 saw yet another round of hostilities in the Gaza Strip. This time, Israel killed 35 Palestinians, among them, 14 civilians, including three women and eight children, in operation branded an ‘impressive success’. During the fighting, Palestinian armed groups fired 450 rockets and mortar shells at Israel, injuring several civilians. Thirteen of the civilians who did not take part in the fighting were killed in three different attacks. In two of these attacks, two members of the military wings of Palestinian armed groups were also killed. No official source said the two men were the targets of the assault. As far as B’Tselem is aware, they were killed unintentionally along with their family members.

Among the dead were nine members of the a-Sawarkah family, including five children. The IDF Spokesperson stated in Arabic that the target was an Islamic Jihad member, Rasmi Abu Malhus, information that proved erroneous, and based on social media. Media reports ultimately revealed that contrary to the military’s official statements, the target – the a-Sawarkah family compound – had not been reassessed for months, and no attempt was made to make sure no civilians were on site prior to the attack.

This information shed light on Israeli bombings in Gaza, including that contrary to claims made over the years, targets are added to the “target bank” in an almost arbitrary process and the military rewards personnel for naming targets. It also emerged that prior to bombing a site in its ‘target bank’, the military rarely checks if it is actually used for military purposes, or if civilians are present. It also sheds light on the bombings of hundreds of other Gaza homes over the years, including in Operations Cast Lead, Pillar of Defense and Protective Edge, which killed thousands. The military law enforcement system investigated only a handful of the thousands of deaths caused by these bombings, and all of the investigations thus far completed have ended in nothing, with the military finding that “at the time the decision was taken, it was considered that the collateral damage expected from the attack would not be excessive in relation to the military advantage anticipated from it” and “this assessment was not unreasonable under the circumstances”. However, the information that was revealed about the military’s practices shows that its processes are much less meticulous than previously stated, and that it is unlikely that the extent of the “collateral damage expected from the attack” had, in fact, been assessed. These new revelations also raise questions about the nature of this alleged “assessment”, the information on which it was based, and the information on the basis of which the site was initially added to the target bank. All of this corroborates the fact that this is simply a whitewashing mechanism.

The Israeli Open-Fire Policy in the West Bank

In January, B’Tselem published a summary of 2018 Palestinian fatalities. B’Tselem found that Israeli security forces killed 290 Palestinians in 2018. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli forces killed 34 Palestinians, including 7 minors. Thirteen of the fatalities, including five minors, were killed in protests and stone-throwing incidents. Eleven Palestinians, including a 17-year-old, were killed while attacking, attempting to attack, or allegedly attempting to attack Israeli security forces or civilians. Israeli civilians killed three Palestinians, including a 17-year-old, who were attacking or allegedly trying to attack Israeli civilians. A Palestinian woman, ‘Aishah Rabi, was killed by Israeli civilians who stoned her car. B’Tselem’s fatalities data was cited by Israel Channel 12.

B’Tselem opened 2019 by publishing an investigation into the December 2018 deaths of three Palestinians on the false claims that they ran over Israelis, in incidents that never occurred. B’Tselem found that all three were killed although they were not endangering lives. Also in January, B’Tselem published video documentation of Israeli soldiers killing Mahmoud Nakhleh. B’Tselem’s investigation was published in Ha’aretz.

In February, B’Tselem reported that Israeli Border Police fired a sponge round at 16-year-old from less than 10 meters away, fracturing his skull and endangering his life. In March, B’Tselem published video documentation of a Palestinian car hitting Israeli troops and the fatal shooting of two of the car’s passengers that raises grave concerns that the Palestinians were needlessly killed. Video documentation shows that nine out of ten shots fired were shot

4.5 minutes after the car hit the Israeli troops. [Haaretz](#), the [Jerusalem Post](#) and the [Middle East Monitor](#) published B'Tselem's investigation of the incident. In April, B'Tselem reported on the killings of [Muhammad Shahin](#), [Sajed Muzhar](#), and [Ahmad Manasrah](#), and published video documentation of the killing of [Muhammad Dar 'Udwan](#) from behind as he was fleeing. B'Tselem brought these four unjustified killings to media attention in a press release on [expendable lives](#).

In June, B'Tselem reported on the death of [Abdallah Gheith](#). In July, B'Tselem's investigation proved that contrary to military statement, ['Abd a-Rahman a-Shteivi, 9](#), was shot in the head with live ammunition while playing in the entrance to a home in Kafr Qadum during the weekly demonstration in the village, and now suffers brain damage. In December, B'Tselem published video documentation of the killing of ['Omar al-Badawi, 22](#), while extinguishing a fire started during a clash between soldiers and Palestinian youths. Later in December, B'Tselem documented an incident in which [soldiers wantonly shot](#) at children and teens, injuring two.

In October, B'Tselem notified the media that the [Israeli MAG Corps closed 3 more cases of Palestinian fatalities](#) from 2018 without holding anyone accountable. B'Tselem investigated the killings of [Ali Qinu](#), [Layth Abu Nai'm](#) and [Yassin a-Saradih](#), and found that all three killings were unjustified. The decision is part of the MAG Corps policy of whitewashing violations that led B'Tselem to cease cooperating with the military law enforcement system. B'Tselem's experience of 25 years in trying to promote accountability through the system shows that the system does not truly seek to uncover the facts, rather, it defends the perpetrators, while creating the illusion of a functioning system to deflect criticism.

The Gaza Strip

In 2007, after Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, Israel used its control over the crossings to put Gaza under a blockade, turning almost two million people into prisoners inside the Gaza Strip, effecting an economic collapse and propelling Gaza residents into dependence on international aid. As part of the blockade, Israel prohibited travel in and out of Gaza, the import of goods into Gaza, and export to Israel, the West Bank or foreign countries.

In February, B'Tselem reported on the [plight of Gaza fishermen](#). B'Tselem's data was reported in [Haaretz](#). In March, B'Tselem reported that 4.5 years after [Israel destroyed thousands of homes](#) in Operation Protective Edge, due to Israeli policy, 13,000 Gazans remain homeless, and published testimonies and [photos of six families](#) who remain homeless to this day. B'Tselem's data was published in [the Independent](#), [i24News](#), and B'Tselem's executive director published an [op-ed](#) on life in Gaza. In March, B'Tselem reported that Israel bars wounded [Gazan protesters'](#) access to [medical care](#). In June, B'Tselem published analysis of the impact of the siege on the Gaza economy and testimonies from Palestinian residents of Gaza who worked in Israel until 2000, who described how their lives were impacted by [unemployment](#). B'Tselem's analysis on Gaza was shared with the Israeli public in op-eds in [Hebrew](#) and [English](#).



In September, B'Tselem published a report on [Hebron, Playing the security card: Israeli Policy in Hebron as Means to Effect Forcible Transfer of Local Palestinians](#). It describes how for 25 years, Israel has openly implemented a policy of segregation in the center of Hebron, in order to allow a handful of Jewish residents to live as though they had not settled in the middle of a bustling Palestinian city, in the heart of an occupied territory. This policy completely ignores the needs of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and sentences them to an unbearable reality, with the hope that they will leave their homes ostensibly, of their own free will. This reality was demonstrated in a field briefing on the report attended by the diplomatic community. The report was launched with an [updated map](#) of Hebron city center, showing restrictions on Palestinian movement imposed by the Israeli military, a [video](#) and distributed to the media by [press release](#), on our [social media network](#) of 303.5 K followers, and print copies distributed by mail.

B'Tselem also published 7 [short research reports](#) on Hebron with 20 testimonies from Hebron residents who were harmed by security forces, 6 pieces of [video documentation](#) and several social media posts. For example, B'Tselem published video documentation of [Security forces detaining four children](#), a [Facebook post](#) describing how armed police officers illegally detained children below the age of criminal liability without informing their parents, of [Israeli soldiers seizing a 9-year-old](#), the [obstruction of the evacuation of a patient](#) in an ambulance, of [Israeli soldiers detaining 13-year-old Palestinian](#) and parading him in the streets blindfolded and [of attacks by settlers and soldiers](#) on residents of the al-Harika neighborhood.

Settler Violence Backed by the State

For years, Israeli settlers have used violence, including blocking roads, throwing stones, raiding villages and farmland, torching fields and olive groves, damaging crops and property, assault, hurling Molotov cocktails or using live fire, in order to gradually dispossess Palestinians from more and more areas in the West Bank, facilitating Israel's seizure of land and resources. Over the years, widespread violence toward Palestinians has resulted in injuries to life and limb, and damage to property and land. These incidents are not aberrations, rather, it is conduct that is commensurate with Israel's ongoing policy in the West Bank, since such acts of [violence serve its interests](#) and help it achieve its goals.

In January, B'Tselem published video documentation of the December 2018 [settlers riot](#), supported by the military. On December 13, a Palestinian killed two soldiers and wounded another soldier and a civilian. Following the attack, settlers attacked Palestinians throughout the West Bank. B'Tselem investigated 10 incidents. In half the incidents, soldiers were present, but did not prevent the settlers from attacking Palestinians, nor arrest any of them.

Later in January, B'Tselem documented an [armed settler rampage](#), with Israeli security forces present, in Al-Mughayir, [killing Hamdi Na'asan](#), who was hit in the back, and injuring 9. In April, B'Tselem published video documentation of a [violent settler rampage](#) after a Palestinian killed an Israeli soldier, and later shot a settler, Achiad Ettinger, who died the next day, while Israeli security forces did nothing. During this [five-day rampage](#), settlers attacked people in cars; and raided villages, accompanied by soldiers who not only failed to stop the settlers, but joined in on the attack, firing rubber-coated metal bullets and live rounds at Palestinians. Settlers also staged night raids into Palestinian villages, vandalized cars and defaced a mosque.

In May, B'Tselem reported that Israeli settlers and military [intensified attacks against Palestinian shepherds](#) in al-Farisiyah. Shepherds in the Jordan Valley reported an [upsurge in the frequency and severity of attacks](#) by settlers, usually witnessed or assisted by soldiers. Later in May, B'Tselem published a [press release](#) with [video documentation](#) of settlers torching Palestinian fields in Burin and 'Asirah al-Qibliyah with support of the military. B'Tselem's documentation of the incident was published in [i24 News](#), the [Jewish Telegraph Agency](#), Israeli channels [11](#), [12](#), [13](#) and [Walla](#). In [June](#), B'Tselem reported that [settlers vandalized Palestinian property in ten villages](#) in the West Bank, burning some 1,800 trees and dozens of dunams of grain fields, uprooting more than 700 vegetable seedlings and damaging at least 55 cars and painting hate graffiti on buildings.

A Routine Founded on Violence

B'Tselem published 9 [#Occupation365 - Updates from the West Bank routine](#), which tracks arrests, home raids and flying checkpoints made by Israeli security forces in each of the five districts of the West Bank, Hebron, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus, the Jordan Valley and the northern West Bank based on data collected from Palestinian District Coordination offices and B'Tselem field researchers.

Restricting the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank is a means that Israel routinely uses to control the Palestinian population. Of the many arbitrary measures Israel employs, road closures have a particularly broad impact, severely disrupting the lives of many Palestinians. This constitutes collective punishment of thousands of residents through arbitrary exploitation of the military's power.

In January, B'Tselem reported that the [military blocked a main road](#) serving more than 20 villages north of Ramallah for over a month. B'Tselem reported that in [March -April](#), the military closed off the entrances to four villages when Israel alleged that young men threw stones or Molotov cocktails.

B'Tselem also reported that armed soldiers seeking a wanted man broke into the house of a blind, diabetic, kidney-diseased Palestinian relative in bed, [beat him and threatened his family](#) although they knew that the wanted man was already on his way to give himself up.

Palestinian Communities at Risk of Expulsion

For years, dozens of Palestinian communities in the Maale Adumim settlement area between Jerusalem and Jericho, the Jordan Valley, and the South Hebron Hills have been subjected to Israeli planning policies designed to drive them out of Area C. B'Tselem tracks attempts to expel Palestinians from Area C on the [Facing Expulsion](#) blog. In 2019, B'Tselem published 41 updates on the blog, 10 [YouTube](#) videos of video documentation of demolitions and confiscations, and numerous social media posts to our network of 303.5 K followers, exposing Israeli and international audiences to the ugly realities of Israeli policies in the oPt.

For example, in January, B'Tselem [reported](#) that during extreme weather, the Israeli CA demolished a caravan housing a six-person family, including four children in Fasayil al-Wasta in the Jordan Valley. The forces later demolished a structure slated to house a six-person family, including four children, who were living in tents, in

Nuwei'mah a-Tahta in Jericho. In February, B'Tselem published video documentation showing that twice in two weeks, Israeli CA dug trenches to prevent access to Masafer Yatta. Also in February, B'Tselem published video documentation of the CA disconnecting 12 Palestinian communities from the water supply in Masafer Yatta. The forces confiscated a five-kilometer pipe which was laid to supply water to twelve communities with a population of 1,000 that previously relied on water supplied by tankers. B'Tselem also published video documentation of the CA temporarily displacing 50+ families, numbering 291 people from the Jordan Valley. In March, B'Tselem documented demolitions in Masafer Yatta, which left 9 homeless. In Khirbet Susiya, which has been struggling for its survival for years, B'Tselem documented the demolition of a rainwater cistern, and four tent confiscations.

In May, B'Tselem published four updates about temporary displacements of 15 families living in Khirbet Humsah for military training in the oppressive heat, during the fast of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr holiday. Numerous fires erupted as a result of the military training, destroying hundreds of dunams of pastureland and dozens of dunams of cultivated farmland. In June, B'Tselem published video documentation of the demolition of homes of four families in Masafer Yatta. On 17 June, CA officials came to Khirbet Khilet a-Dabe' in the South Hebron Hills and demolished a home to a family of 12, including 7 children, and confiscated a solar panel. The troops then went to Khirbet al-Halawah to demolish three homes, leaving 21 people, including 11 children, homeless. In July, B'Tselem documented the uprooting of 800 trees in the South Hebron Hills and the demolition of four water cisterns used to irrigate them. Later in July, B'Tselem reported on the demolition and confiscation of tents housing 17 people, including 7 children, livestock pens and a truck in the Jordan Valley.

In September, B'Tselem published video documentation of the CA demolishing homes of four families, leaving 18 people, including eight children, homeless, and for the fifth time this year, blocked communities' access to the town of Yatta. In November, B'Tselem documented the demolition of a house of a family of 12, including 9 children in Khilet a-Dabe', in Masafer Yatta. The demolition was carried out pursuant to Military Order 1797, which was issued in April 2018, and canceled the façade of judicial review. In December, B'Tselem reported that CA demolished two water cisterns in Khirbet 'Einun, also pursuant to Military Order 1797, and that CA demolished residential structures and livestock pens in several al-Quds District communities. B'Tselem stated that these demolitions are abusive measures by authorities in an attempt to expel Palestinians from the area.

East Jerusalem

Immediately after occupying the area in 1967, Israel unlawfully annexed thousands of hectares in and around Jerusalem. Ever since, it has instituted policies designed to drive Palestinians out of the city and to create a demographic and geographic reality that would frustrate any challenge to Israeli sovereignty there. The policies, which disrupt every aspect of life, include isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and deliberate underdevelopment and underservicing that result in overcrowding, poverty and substandard infrastructure.

The prevalence of construction without permits in East Jerusalem is a result of these policies, which deliberately created an acute construction crisis for the city's Palestinian population, while Jewish neighborhoods enjoy massive development and substantial funding. As part of this policy, Israel expropriated more than a third of the land it annexed from the West Bank and built 11 neighborhoods exclusively for Jews (under international law, the status of these neighborhoods is the same as the Israeli settlements throughout the West Bank). B'Tselem reported that from 2004 until the end of 2019, Israel demolished 978 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem. 3,177 people, including 1,710 children, lost their homes. The threat of demolition looms over tens of thousands of others.

On Jerusalem Day, in June, which celebrates the annexation of 7000 hectares from the West Bank to Jerusalem, B'Tselem published a video describing the Israeli policy of engineering a Jewish majority by driving out Palestinians.

B'Tselem reported that 2019 saw a significant increase in the number of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem who were forced to demolish their own home, or part of it, after building without a permit. The residents elect this path

to avoid paying the city thousands of dollars in fines they would incur had municipal authorities carried out the demolition. B'Tselem published [video documentation](#) on the website and [social media](#) of several homes being demolished by their owners. B'Tselem's data was published by [Global Research](#). In June, B'Tselem reported that as part of its policy of maintaining a Jewish majority, Jerusalem Municipality plans to demolish the entire Palestinian neighborhood of [Wadi Yasul](#), leaving 500 people homeless. On 30 April, the city [demolished two homes](#) in Wadi Yasul, leaving 11 people, 7 of them minors, homeless. B'Tselem's analysis was published in the [Middle East Monitor](#).

Al-'Esawiyah

In July, B'Tselem [reported](#) on the police harassment of residents of the al-'Esawiyah neighborhood in East Jerusalem. The campaign includes daily law enforcement and collective punishment raids, ostensibly in response to stone throwing, issuing traffic tickets for spurious infractions, detaining of residents returning from work, serving house demolition orders, acts of violence, and detentions – particularly of minors. During one raid, 21-year-old [Muhammad 'Abeid](#) was killed without any justification.

From June to August, the police arrested `350 residents of the neighborhood, including minors. In clashes that erupted between neighborhood residents and Israeli security forces during the raids and detentions, the security forces used violence, fired black sponge-tipped rounds and teargas canisters and stun grenades, and used pepper spray. B'Tselem's field researcher examined ten incidents in which the forces used severe violence against neighborhood residents without any justification.

The police harassment of al-'Esawiyah residents, including 'Abeid's killing, is an inseparable part of Israel's policy in East Jerusalem of securing a demographic majority for Jews in the city. This goal is pursued by devoting resources to making life in the city unbearable for Palestinians, so that they will leave, ostensibly of their own will.

Dialogue with Israeli Society

B'Tselem informed and challenged Israeli society about the realities of the occupation and triggered crucial debate within Israeli society in different ways, including events, film screenings, [media interviews](#), publication of [op-eds](#), and social media posts. B'Tselem took ten Israeli journalists on field visits around the West Bank, issued 24 [press releases](#) in Hebrew to 495 Israeli journalists, and held a group field press briefing on [Fake Justice](#). B'Tselem created important dialogue with the Israeli public with hundreds of posts on social media on [Hebrew Facebook page](#) with 83 K, 58 K on [Twitter](#), and 45 videos on 41 K on [B'Tselem's YouTube channel](#). B'Tselem met with 320 young Israelis in pre-army academies and educational frameworks.

On International Children's Day, B'Tselem participated in an [event](#) in Tel Aviv organized by Parents Against Child Detention. B'Tselem's executive director made remarks on how Palestinian children allegedly enjoy double protections – both as Palestinians, protected residents under IHL, and as children from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, like B'Tselem, was born 30 years ago in 1989 ... yet in practice, Palestinian children are twice exposed, both as Palestinians and as children, to Israeli state violence in a manner that empties the meaning of international law and conventions. B'Tselem recruited 12 prominent human rights lawyers and activists to read aloud testimonies collected by B'Tselem field researchers and verified by data coordinators and filmed the testimonies for distribution on [social media](#). B'Tselem published 11 Facebook [posts](#) with the spoken testimonies in Hebrew, aimed at the Israeli audience.

In December, B'Tselem held two film screenings for the Israeli public at the Solidarity Tel Aviv Human Rights Film Festival. An 80-minute collection of [video documentation](#) depicting the violent routine of the occupation captured by B'Tselem's video camera project volunteers, was screened. B'Tselem staff answered questions, followed by a discussion with the audience. 'Let's Talk about Gaza', an 80-minute collection of documentary footage of deadly attacks that killed civilians, shooting at demonstrators, and the harsh ramifications of the siege of Gaza, followed by

a video discussion between B'Tselem's field researcher in the Gaza Strip, Khaled al-'Azayzeh, and the Israeli audience, in Hebrew.

On December 10, B'Tselem held an event for the Israeli public and the diplomatic community attended by 250 people, hosted by Israeli comedian Yossi Zabari. B'Tselem's first director Zahava Gal-on, David Zonsheine, the chair of the board of directors, Ilana Hammerman, an Israeli activist, and Salma a-Deeb, B'Tselem's Nablus area field researcher, addressed the event.

The Shrinking Space for Human Rights Work in Israel

B'Tselem continued to work within a gradually constricting civil space in Israel. For years, the Israeli government has sought to silence criticism – from both its own civil society and the international community - of Israeli policies in the territories it has occupied in 1967. Efforts to stifle criticism trickle down from Israel's highest echelons of power – the Prime Minister and his coalition government. Entities within the government, the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, the Foreign Ministry, ambassadors around the world, and Go(NGO's) cooperate in crafting and repeating misleading messages based on dubious research that seeks to discredit Israeli NGO's working to end the occupation. Laws that intend to burden and restrict the work of human rights organizations legislated by the *Knesset* and approved by the High Court of Justice create the facade of the rule of law and a functioning democracy, while in essence the legislative and judicial branches of government entrench and legitimize the occupation agenda set by the government. This symbiotic relationship is encapsulated by the deportation of the Israel and Palestine director of Human Rights Watch, whose deportation request made by the Ministry of the Interior based on [Amendment No. 28 to the Entry Into Israel law](#) passed by the *Knesset* in 2017 was upheld by the High Court of Justice in 2019, supported by Go(NGO's) that echo government positions.

B'Tselem staff continued to be subjected to harassment and attacks, particularly, our Palestinian field researchers. On August 4, Israeli soldiers stopped B'Tselem field researcher [Nasser Nawaj'ah](#) at a checkpoint near Khirbet Susiya, while a soldier confirmed from his superiors that B'Tselem reports Nawaj'ah had in his car “do not constitute incitement material”. On October 31, B'Tselem Field Researcher 'Aref Daraghmeh was arrested at the Tayasir Checkpoint in the Jordan Valley. He was taken to a military post, where a soldier hit him, was left in the sun until he fainted, and was taken to a hospital. At 10:00 p.m. he was taken to the police station in the Ariel settlement, where he was questioned for hours about a demonstration where he documented security forces' conduct towards protestors. He was released at 4:00 a.m. The authorities refused to disclose his location or condition, despite requests.

For the first time, according to B'Tselem's 2018 financial reports published in mid-2019, the most recent amendment to the [NGO Law](#) ("Foreign Government Funding Law" - Law on Disclosure Requirements for Recipients of Support from a Foreign State Entity) applied to B'Tselem. The 2016 amendment requires NGOs who receive more than half of their funding from foreign state entities to disclose this on the organization's website, and in communications with Israeli government officials. Since in 2018, 52% of B'Tselem's organization's income came from foreign state entity sources, B'Tselem made the following disclosure - our version of compliance with the law - on our website and in our printed reports: “In compliance with the Israeli government's anti-NGO law that seeks to equate the receipt of foreign funding with disloyalty, please note that we may, or may not, be primarily funded by foreign state entities. Either way, we remain loyal – to human rights values, freedom, democracy, and an end to the occupation.”

In April, when Jerusalem's District Court allowed the state not to renew the work permit of Human Rights Watch Israel and Palestine director Omar Shakir, B'Tselem [stated](#) that “the government seems to expect all those arriving in Israel to swear allegiance to its policy of endless occupation, settlements and blockade, basically stating: take it, or leave. It is telling the world: nothing will change – violations of human rights will continue.” B'Tselem's [tweet](#) with this message reached 153 K and was the highest viewed tweet of 2019. B'Tselem noted that the verdict exposed Israel's place in the infamous club of countries that restrict human rights organizations. The strategy of the Ministry for

Strategic Affairs hinges on the ludicrous belief that one can hide information about grave violations to the life and rights of millions of people from the world. In November, when the Human Rights Watch petition to the High Court of Justice challenging Shakir's deportation was rejected, B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad said: "The decision perfectly reflects the state of affairs at the highest judicial institution in Israel - not rule of law, but legal propaganda at the service of the occupation. In essence, the HCJ's ruling grants a legal seal of approval to the further shrinking of the already limited space in Israel to oppose the occupation. For decades, this space is non-existent for Palestinians; now, it will be diminished further for international stakeholders; and soon, also for Israelis". B'Tselem stated that together with the human rights community, we will go on and provide the public – in Israel and all over the world – the facts, and ensure that the reality of occupation will be heard everywhere - until its end.

In July, B'Tselem and six other Israeli human rights organizations, wrote to Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, president of the Bundestag, the German federal parliament, to express concern about the motion adopted by the Bundestag that condemns the BDS movement and unfairly equates it with antisemitism. The organizations stated that "although we ourselves are not part of the BDS movement, we are extremely concerned about the growing trend to claim that those who support Palestinian human rights are antisemitic, and we totally reject the idea that BDS as such is antisemitic. In fact, the BDS movement explicitly opposes, "all forms of racism, including antisemitism." Antisemitism is real and present. It ought to be fought – and defeated – wherever it occurs. But it is a disservice to the true fight against antisemitism to equate it with BDS, which is a nonviolent tactic and movement initiated by Palestinian civil society, and supported by tens of thousands of people internationally, as part of the struggle to end the Israeli occupation and to act for equality, freedom, dignity and justice for all Palestinians. While one may disagree with the BDS movement, attempts to silence it or to delegitimize it categorically violates the right to freedom of expression and critical dissent, which are essential for a thriving civil society and a democratic future. Further, the official position of the European Union is that BDS is protected by freedom of speech rights, and UN human rights experts point out that expressing support for, or opposition to, BDS, is fully guaranteed by the rights to freedom of opinion, expression and association"

In August, when entry was denied to US Democratic Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, El-Ad said in the Washington Post, "Though the law's title suggests it controls entry into Israeli territory, it goes much further: Because Israel controls border crossings in and out of the occupied West Bank, it also dictates who is allowed to enter and exit Palestinian territory... Restrictions on the movement of U.S. lawmakers may be shocking, but it's a daily reality for the 2 million Palestinians caged off in the Gaza strip. Publicly attacking members of Congress may make international headlines, but for some 5 million Palestinians living without political rights under Israel's half-century-long occupation, it's all too familiar — with no end in sight. And trying to hide, censor and lie about the brutal oppression of an entire people is a long-standing Israel strategy, not one invented to please Trump..."

Israel's record of killing or injuring Palestinians with impunity, systematically taking over their land and controlling the lives of millions through an arbitrary system of permits - while claiming that all this is "legal" and democratic — is part of the infamous status quo. So is its habit of attacking and trying to ban those who criticize its behavior. And U.S. foreign policy in the face of these injustices has vacillated between disastrous and naive, acting as the cornerstone that enables Israel and provides it with almost blanket impunity".

At the end of December, B'Tselem, together with The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its members in Palestine and Israel, Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), and Adalah welcomed the findings of the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, that the opening of an investigation into alleged war crimes in the situation in Palestine is warranted. "Israel's political, military, and legal leadership got used to enjoying blanket impunity while criminally oppressing Palestinians in broad daylight," stated El-Ad: "To date, the consequences have been most directly felt by Palestinians, while...gradually undermining international law, with potential negative consequences rippling far beyond the occupied Palestinian territories. Hopefully, recent developments from the Hague are the beginning of the end of this unacceptable reality."

B'Tselem brought the systematic violation of rights in the occupied territories to the attention of the international community. B'Tselem staff shared information and analysis and advocated its positions in 115 meetings, briefings, and events for the international community, including diplomats, government officials, UN agencies, clergy and international organizations from the European Union and 23 countries. B'Tselem staff led 25 field visits to the West Bank for 185 members of the international community, including diplomats, parliamentarians, and civil servants, particularly to communities threatened by expulsion, like Khan al Ahmar, and Silwan in east Jerusalem. B'Tselem also led a July field visit to the Jordan Valley, where diplomats visited communities threatened with expulsion to see how they survive in the oppressive heat without running water or connection to the electricity grid. In September, B'Tselem led a field briefing for diplomats in Hebron to see the reality depicted in our recent Hebron [report](#). [Fake Justice](#) was presented to the international community at several briefings, and [Conquer and Divide](#) was presented in briefings for the international community, think tanks, and at the United Nations.

In 2019, B'Tselem launched a new initiative to expose influential people to the impact of Israeli policies in communities vulnerable to expulsion, as a central element of the occupation. B'Tselem developed an occupation 'crash course' to cultivate meaningful media coverage and analysis of Israeli policies in the occupied territories, and the systemic human rights violations that they entail. B'Tselem brought journalists, researchers, and policy experts from Europe and the USA to communities whose struggle for survival and dignity illustrate human rights violations under occupation, explained the mechanisms perpetuating the occupation and facilitated meetings with Palestinian communities, NGOs, and activists working to end the occupation.

B'Tselem staff travelled to 16 cities to meet the international community. For example, in October, B'Tselem executive director Hagai El-Ad spoke at the J Street conference on a panel about the shrinking space for dissent in Israel and briefed congresspeople, policy experts, and activists in Washington DC and New York. In these encounters, B'Tselem provided data and analysis describing how the gradual [fragmentation](#) and *de facto* annexation of the territories Israel occupied since 1967 has, over half a century, created a one-state reality. We described how controlling millions of people without political rights is intrinsically violent and undemocratic, and that an almost total absence of accountability serves to perpetuate an indefinite occupation void of consequences for Israel. B'Tselem called on the international community to take concrete action to end the occupation, as the only viable non-violent path to end Israel's systematic violation of International Humanitarian Law.

Ahead of the April 9 elections, El-Ad wrote in the [NY Times](#), "It's hard to see how the "deal of the century" will be anything other than an extension of the deal of the half-century...Unless the international community takes the deal of the half-century off the table, making Israel finally choose between further oppression of Palestinians and facing real consequences, the occupation will continue. The Trump administration, clearly, isn't up to this task. But the United Nations, including the Security Council, key member states of the European Union — Israel's largest trading partner — and international public opinion all have ample leverage. Americans who sincerely believe in human rights and democracy, not just as empty slogans or bargaining chips but as genuine demands, need not wait until 2020 to flex their political power. Together with the systemic overtaking of lands and the imposition of restrictions on freedom of movement, the denial of political rights was one of the cornerstones of apartheid South Africa. That country, too, considered itself a democracy. Many Israelis will consider April 9 a celebration of democracy. It's not. This Election Day should be nothing more than a painful reminder of a deeply undemocratic reality, one that the Trump administration seems pleased to perpetuate - and which the rest of the international community will continue to allow until it finally stops looking the other way. We, the nearly 14 million human beings living on this land, need a future that is worth fighting for: one based on the common humanity of Palestinians and Israelis who believe in a future of justice, equality, human rights and democracy — for all of us".