

Annex I. Letter to Israeli Authorities (June 10, 2024)

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June 10, 2024

Public Diplomacy Office
Israel Defense Forces

cc:

Mr. Yoav Gallant, Minister of Defense

Public Enquiries Unit, Ministry of Defense

Office of Public Inquiries, Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

Dear Minister Gallant,

To Whom it May Concern at the IDF Public Diplomacy Office and Office of Public Inquiries,

I am writing on behalf of Human Rights Watch, a nongovernmental organization that investigates violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by states and non-state armed groups in about 100 countries around the world, including Israel and Palestine, where we have worked for more than three decades.

Human Rights Watch is currently investigating the impact of hostilities in the Gaza Strip on access to clean water and sanitation. We have carried out research into the Israeli government's apparent destruction of or damage to several water and sewage facilities throughout Gaza, including the Mekorot lines, ground wells, desalination facilities, portions of the water pipeline network, sewage and wastewater treatment facilities, as well as the government's apparent obstruction of repairs to water infrastructure, including the killing of individuals responsible for repair by airstrikes and shelling, and airstrikes on and shelling of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility warehouse in Khan Younis and headquarters in al-Zahra.

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We would appreciate your responses to the following questions by **June 24, 2024**, to reflect your views and information in our forthcoming report.

We are investigating the following incidents of destruction or damage to water infrastructure since October 7, 2023:

1. Complete destruction of the solar panels at the three wastewater treatment plants less than 500 meters from the eastern Gaza strip border located at the following coordinates:
 - a. 31°30'12.9"N 34°30'39.2"E
 - b. 31°25'35.7"N 34°25'02.0"E
 - c. 31°16'18.7"N 34°19'56.3"E
2. Destruction of facility buildings in the Central Gaza Wastewater Treatment plant (31°25'35.7"N 34°25'02.0"E) before January 20, 2024, the destruction of some solar panels at the Central Gaza Wastewater Treatment on October 10 or 11, and the destruction of all remaining solar panels between November 3 and 5. Imagery show traces of razing by Israeli forces bulldozers.
3. Damage to facility buildings in the North Gaza Wastewater Treatment plant (31°30'12.9"N 34°30'39.2"E) between December 20, 2023, and January 10, 2024.
4. Destruction of facility buildings in the Skiekh Ejleen Wastewater Treatment plant (31°29'13.7"N 34°25'27.6"E) in northern Gaza on March 20 or March 21, 2024, where satellite imagery shows traces of razing by Israeli forces bulldozers.
5. Damage to the sewage pumping station (31°29'59.9"N 34°26'56.9"E) in al-Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza city on or before January 21, 2024.
6. Damage to Sheikh Zayed Reservoir (31°32'00.8"N 34°30'36.0"E) in northern Gaza on or before January 22, 2024.
7. Damage to the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility warehouse (31°21'17.7"N 34°16'44.5"E) in Khan Younis on January 21 and 22, 2024 during attacks by Israeli forces that killed four displaced people and injured ten others.
8. Destruction of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility headquarters (31°28'22.4"N 34°23'59.0"E) in al-Zahra neighborhood in northern Gaza on or before March 24, 2024.

In relation to each finding of damage or destruction of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities listed above, we would appreciate detailed answers to the following questions, as well as any relevant information and investigations you may have undertaken:

1. Is the IDF aware of the multiple attacks that occurred in the given location? Did the IDF conduct the attacks described? If so, please confirm the attack date(s) and specify the weapons used. Please also provide the legal basis for the attacks.
2. What was the intended target and outcome of the attacks? Please provide as much detail as possible.
3. Were the attacks on a pre-planned target or were they carried out in response to developing events on the ground?
4. Before conducting the attack, what steps did the IDF take to ascertain whether there were civilians or civilian objects in the vicinity of the attack sites? On what information was this assessment based?
5. What precautions, if any, did the IDF take to minimize civilian harm including the choice of means and methods of attack?
6. Did the IDF issue a warning to civilians before the attack? If yes, please share the details of what the warning included, how it was shared, to whom, in what language, and how long before the attack. If not, why not?
7. How did the IDF assess the expected damage to or destruction of civilian structures due to the attacks, and its proportionality to the direct military advantage resulting from them?
 - a. Did this assessment include the impact of the attacks on civilians' ability to access objects indispensable to their survival in Gaza, including drinking water, both in terms of the individual strikes and the cumulative impact of the strikes?
 - b. Did this assessment include the short- and long-term impact of the damage to civilian infrastructure?
8. Has the Israeli military investigated the impact of the attacks on civilians and civilian objects individually and cumulatively? If yes, what were the findings? On what information were these findings based?

In addition to the above questions related to damage and destruction of water infrastructure, Human Rights Watch would also appreciate information regarding what Israeli authorities are doing to mitigate the impacts of the hostilities on water and sanitation infrastructure,

including facilitating allowing in water- and sanitation-related materials as aid into the Gaza Strip.

Several UN and humanitarian agencies have reported Israeli authorities blocking water filtration systems, except where they were part of a set-up temporary healthcare facility, from entering Gaza and barring tap-stand kits, microbiological water testing kits, and chemical water testing kits. What is the reasoning for rejecting these items? Could you provide a full list of rejected items and clarify the standards that you use for rejecting items?

Thank you for considering our questions. We would be pleased to reflect your written responses in our published report if we receive them by June 24, 2024.

Should you have any questions or comments, please contact me at [REDACTED]. We remain available to discuss these issues with you or appropriate colleagues.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Adam Coogle
Deputy Director
Middle East and North Africa Division
Human Rights Watch