

Annex II. Letter to Israeli Authorities (November 29, 2024)

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1/2



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November 29, 2024

Public Diplomacy Office
Israel Defense Forces

CC:

Mr. Israel Katz, Minister of Defense,
Public Enquiries Unit, Ministry of Defense,
Office of Public Inquiries, Israel Defense Forces,

Dear Minister Katz,

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.

As previously mentioned in a letter requesting information sent to your offices on June 6, Human Rights Watch is investigating the impact of hostilities in the Gaza Strip on access to clean water and sanitation.

We are currently investigating the Israeli military's destruction of a water reservoir in Tal-Sultan neighborhood of Rafah in southern Gaza. A video that surfaced on social media in late July shows combat engineers in the Israeli military preparing and setting explosive charges at the reservoir. The video ends with a wide shot of the reservoir being destroyed in an explosion. Based on Human Rights Watch analysis of the video, the forces destroyed the reservoir through a controlled demolition. Satellite imagery analyzed by Human Rights Watch of the location of the reservoir (MGRS: 36RXV1871664789) shows that the destruction happened sometime between July 24 and 27. According to [Haaretz](#), a commander from 401st Brigade of the Armored Corps had approved the demolition but there was no approval from senior commanders in the IDF Southern Command, prompting the Israeli military to open an initial probe into the incident.

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We would appreciate your detailed responses to the following questions in relation to the above incident by December 6, 2024, to reflect your views and information in our forthcoming report.

1. Is the Israeli military aware of the incident in the given location? If so, please confirm the date of the incident, whether 401st Brigade of the Armored Corps carried out the detonation, and please specify the weapons used. Please also provide whether there was an intended target or military advantage, including the legal basis.
2. How did the Israeli military assess the expected destruction of the civilian structure and its proportionality to the direct military advantage resulting from the incident?
 - a. Did this assessment include the impact of the incident on civilians' ability to access water, both in terms of the individual incident and its cumulative impact?
 - b. Did this assessment include the short- and long-term impact of the damage to civilian infrastructure?
3. What precautions did the Israeli military take to minimize civilian harm including the choice of means and methods of incident?
4. What is the status of the initial probe reportedly opened by the Israeli military? Please provide detailed information.
5. Has the Israeli military investigated the destruction of the water reservoir in question? If yes, what were the findings? Please provide details of the investigation and conclusions.

Thank you for considering our questions. We would be pleased to reflect your written responses in our published report if we receive them by December 6, 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.

Regards,

Adam Coogle

[REDACTED]
Deputy Director
Middle East and North Africa
Human Rights Watch