

Al-Khalil (Hebron), Palestine

Since the arrival of the Golani Brigade in Hebron on December 27th, international accompaniment organizations (Christian Peacemaker Teams, International Solidarity Movement, and others) have documented an increase in the number of serious human rights violations against the Palestinian people, particularly youth and children in the Old City and Tel Rumeida.

All recorded incidences have been documented through first-hand observation and/or the victims' testimony. The following report demonstrates a sharp increase in harassment, violence, and human rights violations by the Israeli military towards the Palestinian population of Hebron. Contrary to given justifications, none of those involved were observed to voice or pose any threat to the soldiers. As the Golani Brigade is expected to remain in Hebron another two to five months, members of these international observer organizations fear that such abuses will escalate and make life unbearable for the Palestinians living under occupation in Hebron.

1. Incidences involving the detention, intimidation, abuse, or arrest of children and youth.

Tuesday, January 3rd: Fifteen Golani soldiers approached a group of children playing outside in the Tel Rumeida neighborhood, looking for children that were throwing stones. They had started to arrest a 15 year-old boy when elders, women, and family members came outside to stop them. In response, soldiers hit a woman, a three year-old boy, and a 70 year-old man before firing three sound grenades and detaining two men. These men were taken to the military base and held for two hours.

Saturday, January 7th: Patrolling Golani entered an internet cafe in the Old City and made an apparently arbitrary arrest of a young teenager for not having his ID.

Thursday, January 12th: Soldiers dragged a developmentally disabled young man into an alley and hit him repeatedly after he knocked on the checkpoint door, which they closed in front of him. This occurred near his home next to the Qiton checkpoint. When his father ran to the alley, the soldiers stopped and released the boy. That same evening, the Golani soldiers entered the family home to attack his mother and beat the boy with nightsticks and fists. The boy's brother, hearing a noise, came downstairs, where he was grabbed and beaten in the same way. The soldiers then threw him to the ground, searched him, and beat his head with rifles. Both boys were brought to the police station where they held were for an hour and a half. They then released the developmentally disabled young man to his home and transported his brother to Jabara prison, from which he was released later that night. His family took him to the hospital to receive care for a cracked skull, sutures, and care for his hands, which he could not move.

Friday, January 20th: Golani held a 10 and 12 year-old boy behind the gate of the Beit Romano settlement. Soldiers told witnesses and family members, who were present outside the gates, that the boys were detained for "throwing rocks". A witness said the boys had been wearing ski masks because of the cold weather, but had not been throwing rocks. When the parents arrived at the gate, soldiers approached them with a list of five other boys from the Old City, saying that if the parents brought them to the gate, their sons would be released. The parents did not, but the boys were released two hours later.

Saturday, January 21st: During the settlers' tour, around 4 pm, Golani soldiers took the 15 year-old brother of the two detained boys from his house and detained him. He was released later that day.

Thursday, February 2nd: Fifteen Golani soldiers detained two children, ages 12 and 13, for 45 minutes on Shuhada Street near the entrance to the Muslim cemetery. Later, six of the soldiers brought the boys up through the cemetery to a military base. In all, they were held for two hours. Both boys were too young to have IDs.

Saturday, February 4th: Eight Golani soldiers in Bab al Baladia grabbed four boys all around the age of nine and detained them in an alley, claiming one of the boys had thrown a stone. No witnesses saw them throw the stone. International observers told the soldiers that the boys were not old enough to be arrested, and the soldier replied that in that case he would "arrest their fathers." They released the boys 30 minutes later.

Monday February 6th: Six soldiers detained two 11 year-old boys at Quortuba School in Tel Rumeida as school was letting out, telling them that they would be arrested for throwing stones. Several teachers and the principal of the school told the soldiers that they boys were not throwing stones. The soldiers replied, "we will let the boys go this time, but if they ever threw stones against the Israeli people again, we will arrest them and cause problems for your entire school."

[During the calendar month of January 2012, international observers witnessed a sharp increase in the number of Palestinian teenage and school-age boys body-searched by Israeli forces, who had reportedly agreed that soldiers would not search bags of children attending school. This number has not been documented through the course of this report but is clear to observers on the ground. Furthermore, according to residents, compared to previous brigades stationed in Hebron, the Golani have greatly increased this type harassment.]

2. Incidences in which Golani soldiers arbitrarily detained Palestinians and/or denied them access to roads or walkways.

Wednesday, December 28th: A Golani soldier prevented several members of the Youth Against Settlements organization from walking down a path from their center towards their homes. The soldier claimed that this prevention was because settlers were walking up the path, though none were seen, and further explained, "They must wait when anyone walks past. Even if a dog walks, they must wait."

Friday, January 6th: A soldier stopped a 19 year-old resident of Shuhada Street and ordered him to show what was in his boots, unzip his jacket, and put his face and hands against the wall. When the soldier began to hit the man, a neighbor and international observers began to film, after which the soldier stopped, but detained the man and his neighbor another 15 minutes. The youth said the same soldier had stopped him to check his ID four times in one week.

Saturday, January 7th: Golani soldiers held a Palestinian for over three hours at Checkpoint 56. The soldier explained that he was detaining the man because "he did not like him." The two

soldiers at the check point continuously reminded the Palestinian man of his detainment by asking him, “How long have you been here?” and forced him to urinate where he stood rather than allowing him to leave.

Tuesday, January 17th: Golani patrolled through the busy Palestinian market in H1 at midday. As they marched, they forced everyone to stand aside and randomly stopped two Palestinian men to check their identifications. A younger man had to stand with his hands raised high on the wall for six minutes to check his ID.

Monday, January 23rd: Golani enter into H1 to search cars in Haret i-Sheik.

Monday, January 23rd: Golani denied a Palestinian man access to return to his home in the Old City because they said entrance was closed after 9 pm. Internationals observed for 40 minutes, as the soldiers denied him access at multiple checkpoints, forcing him to walk back and forth carrying a heavy sack. The soldiers insisted it was the man’s own fault, but finally appeared to relent and took the man on an alternative route.

Tuesday, January 24th: Golani soldiers stopped the Abu Aisha family at Gilbert Checkpoint as they were on their way home and refused to allow them through the checkpoint. They did not tell the family why they were not allowed to pass. After some time, they told the family to take a much longer route home, which they did.

Tuesday, January 24th: Soldiers at Checkpoint 56 harassed Palestinians leaving H2 by “playing” with the electric doors of the container box. After people entered the structure, soldiers closed all the doors simultaneously, trapping them inside, and then opened and closed an exit repeatedly. Finally the soldiers opened the door from which the people had entered, forcing them back out the way they had come.

Monday, January 30th: Golani soldiers held a man outside in very cold rain for one hour because he was fixing the satellite on the roof of his house in Tel Rumeida. They told him that they had seen him on his roof through a camera, and that in the future he would need special permission to be there.

3. Incidences in which Golani have injured and/or threatened detained Palestinians.

Monday, January 9th: A group of Golani in the Old City approached a merchant sitting at his stand and asked him, “Why are you looking at me like that?” They immediately detained him, binding him with plastic ties, and took him to Avraham Avinu. While in custody for 2½ hours, they blindfolded him and slapped him on the head.

Sunday, January 15th: Six Golani soldiers entered a home in Tel Rumeida at 12 a.m., forcing the father outside in the cold, while pointing the gun at his head. They then forced the seven other family members, including three children, into one room. The soldiers searched the house for about an hour. Before leaving the Golani told the family, “Next time, look behind you. We will kick you out from the house, and we will take it.”

Two nights later on Tuesday, January 17th, around 1 a.m., eight Golani soldiers shot three sound bombs at the outside walls of the same house.

Sunday, January 15th: In the early morning, Golani soldiers sat in a jeep and watched as settlers torched a Palestinian family's car, parked in a lot behind Tel Rumeida near the family's home. Neighbors witnessed the vandalism from their apartment building, situated uphill from the parking area about 100 yards away and with a clear view of the lot. They report that soldiers did nothing to intervene or prevent the settlers from completely destroying the car.

Tuesday, January 17th: The Golani entered a man's home at night, and forced the family to go outside, including their one and a half year-old son. The soldiers hit the father in the head with the butt of a rifle, for which he later received medical treatment. International observers read the medical report.

Saturday, January 21st: Eight Golani soldiers invaded the offices of the *Youth Against Settlements* organization in Tel Rumeida. They arrested a human rights defender, who is also the leader of the organization. The soldiers blindfolded him, bound his hands, put him against the wall, and hit him twice in the stomach. Later they took him to the military base where they held a gun to his head and told him, "You are not safe here and next time we will shoot and kill you." Afterwards, they marched him through Beit Hadassah, allowing settlers to kick and spit on him, while chanting, "Each Arab dog will have his day." The soldiers then took him back to an abandoned house where they released him.

Saturday, January 28th: Six Golani stopped a young man in the morning in the Old City to demand his ID, which he did not have. When he told them he would go home to get it, they followed him back to his house. Immediately after showing his ID, soldiers tied his hands and blindfolded him. The soldiers then ransacked his room, even tearing up his carpet. They took him to Beit Romano and detained him one hour before releasing him onto Shuhada Street. The young man's mother told international observers that her son had visible "marks" on his body, evidence of the soldiers' beatings.

4. Incidences in which the Golani have used religious references to insult, intimidate, or provoke Palestinians.

Sunday, January 7th: Golani mockingly shout the Islamic call to prayer through loudspeakers at Checkpoint 56. They also closed the gate, forcing passersby to listen to the Golani anthem.

Friday, December 30th: Two soldiers entered the Ibrahimi Mosque courtyard while Palestinians performed Friday prayers. When asked to leave, they proceeded to the roof top and pointed guns at the crowd of men praying.

Thursday, February 2nd: At 6 pm, eleven Golani soldiers entered the Al-Qazzazin Mosque near the chicken market in the Old City. International observers witnessed the soldiers walk into the mosque without removing their boots, shout at Palestinians, and remain there for 20 minutes.

5. Incidences of Golani soldiers entering Palestinians homes and property:

Monday, January 16th: During a night patrol in the Old City, six Golani soldiers invaded a home without a search warrant, claiming a rock was thrown on them from above.

Tuesday, January 17th: Internationals observed six Golani soldiers attempt to enter a home without a search warrant. The soldiers asked the home owner, “Why do you allow tourists on your roof?”

Thursday, January 19th: Golani entered a home without a search warrant, informing the owner of the home that they would come the next day to weld shut her door, which exits on to Shuhada Street. The soldiers have yet to return.

Tuesday, January 24th: Golani entered a home without a search warrant and proceeded to the roof, thereupon crossing over several roofs and entering outdoor spaces belonging to the occupants.

Monday, January 30th: Golani surrounded a Palestinian home on Tel Rumeida, trampling freshly planted vegetables and pointing laser sights at members of the household. Residents report that the Golani have trained in and around their property for twenty days, including frequently shouting and pointing laser sighted guns at residents. They also reported that soldiers fired sound grenades into their yard at 3am and, that on at least one occasion, soldiers entered their house to practice home raids.

Wednesday, February 8th: In the early morning hours (approximately 12:30-7:30), an unknown number of Golani soldiers and Israeli border police conducted raids on at least 30 homes in the Old City. They beat in doors and windows with rifles and boots, forced locks with pry-bars, and ransacked or damaged belongings. They ordered a family of eight, including two small children, into a single room of the home, where they were forced to wait for four hours and could not use the bathroom. In another case, they locked an ill and developmentally disabled child into a room alone while her family had to wait outside. Two women alone with five children were also sent out into the street for four hours while soldiers broke every door in the house. One man, a father of two children under 4 years of age, reported that soldiers came into his house searching “for rock throwers.” Other families reported being forced to wait for as long as four hours, locked in bathrooms or outside in the cold.

6. Incidences where the Golani have harassed and/or prevented international observers from documenting human rights violations.

Tuesday, January 3rd: A tour with Breaking the Silence (an organization of Israeli veterans who share their experiences of occupation) was stopped by soldiers on its way through Shuhada street three times. Soldiers interrupted the tour at the entrance to the Muslim cemetery, at Checkpoint 56, and at the entrance to the Tel Rumeida settlement. Each time the soldiers held up the tour for 15 to 20 minutes. On every occasion, the tour guide called his lawyer and then spoke to the police.

Friday, January 6th: Offering no specific reason, Golani detained a Palestinian and international observers on a cold night for a total of five hours between Gilbert Checkpoint and Checkpoint 56. When observers responded to a call from a Palestinian man already held for two hours, soldiers demanded their passports. Although the man was released 30 minutes after, soldiers held observers' passports, effectively detaining them another three hours.

Tuesday, January 10th: A Golani soldier stood by and watched as a settler woman on Shuhada Street attacked two international activists less than 30 meters away. The settler woman grabbed the two internationals by the neck and attempted to choke them. Later, she grabbed a rock and threw it at them, but missed. When the activists reported the incident, police and soldiers began to mock, cat call, and sexually harass the international women.

Wednesday, January 11th: When the same two Internationals stopped to observe a detention, on their way to make a police report, Golani detained and again sexually harassed them. They shouted, "You are sucking Arab cock, yes?" and made rude gestures in front of a crowd of Palestinians.

Thursday, January 19th: After thoroughly searching international observer's luggage at a checkpoint and failing to find anything notable, Golani attempted to have him arrested for possession of green tea, which they claimed was "drugs." Although Border Police initially refused, the Golani succeeded in having him arrested by insisting that they had been assaulted by the volunteer farting in the presence of the soldiers.

Saturday, January 21st: Attempting to access a roof, Golani broke through the stairwell door to the international observers' office and apartment.

Tuesday, February 7th: At 5pm, Golani soldiers at Checkpoint 56 arrested an international observer after telling him there was a "new law" prohibiting the filming or photography of soldiers. He stopped photographing, but soldiers had him arrested anyway "for interfering with military operations". They released him after their own video refuted the allegations. Later that night they arrested him again, and detained another observer for one and a half hours—also for supposedly taking photos. Both were released close to 11:30 p.m.

In conclusion, although this report does not account for every documented case, we believe that the number of documented abuses constitutes only a small portion of what is actually occurring. As these human rights violations continue unabated, internationals observers working in Hebron have called for an immediate withdrawal of the Golani Brigade. If the Golani remain for another two to five months, abuses will likely continue to escalate and make life unbearable for Palestinians of Hebron.