

# Rubber Bullet Eye Injury During COVID-19 Pandemic and the Situation in Palestine: A Case Report

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** To present the clinical features of eye trauma following rubber bullet injury during the COVID-19 pandemic to increase the awareness of the public around the world about what is happening in Palestine and how severely any man can be injured and be left with a disability for the rest of his life. **Method:** Retrospective observational case report. **Results:** We report a case of 37 years old male patient who presented to our emergency department immediately after he received a rubber bullet in his right eye while he was praying in Jerusalem by an armed Israeli soldier. Detailed examination of the patient, extensive history, physical examination, investigation, and brain imaging revealed a right eye ruptured globe with lost eye contents and a skull fracture. **Conclusion:** Rubber Bullets can cause a vision-threatening injury that can lead to blindness; this report presents novel data on the course of subjects with rubber bullet injuries during the COVID-19 pandemic in Palestine. International guidelines on the use of crowd-control weapons are deemed necessary to prevent unnecessary injuries, disabilities, or deaths, international guidelines must apply to the state of Israel which repeatedly uses excessive force against the Palestinian people. Restricted use of force can lead to stability in the region, we recommend that every organization working for research and human rights call upon these actions where people can have their right to live peacefully and see freely.

**Keywords:** Rubber Bullet; Eye injury; Human rights; COVID 19; Israel; Palestine.

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## 1. Introduction

Rubber bullet eye injuries have been a major cause of disabilities for many years, moreover, in 2021, no law can prevent soldiers from shooting runner bullet injuries, in many cases, permanent disabilities and sometimes deaths resulted from shooting to the head and neck (49.1% of deaths and 82.6% of permanent disabilities). Anatomical site of impact, timely access to medical care, and firing distance were correlated with injury severity and risk of disability or death [2].

Over the years and more recently, attention has risen towards the number of popular demonstrations or protests challenging governments and officials [3], [4]. In several cases, security forces and police have responded violently and sometimes randomly in ways that significantly undermine freedom of peaceful assembly, which lead to escalations using unnecessary and disproportionate force [5].

Such random use of force often involves crowd-control weapons (CCWs) that cause preventable injury, disability, and death. Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) is an enveloped, positive-sense, RNA virus, belonging to the family Coronaviridae, genus Betacoronavirus, was firstly identified and reported in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province in China, in December 2019 and reported as the causative agents of the severe respiratory illness termed COVID-19 [6].

## 2. Case Report

A 37-year-old Palestinian bystander lost his eye on Wednesday afternoon in Jerusalem after being shot with a rubber-tipped steel bullet fired by an Israeli soldier, the Israeli army could neither confirm nor deny the matter. On behalf of the Israeli Occupation Forces IOF, the spokesperson did not deny the possibility and admitted that Israeli soldiers had fired rubber bullets at a crowd of Palestinian citizens nearby.

"There was a violent protest, including stone-throwing and stone-slinging, and the military responded with riot dispersal mechanisms, including rubber bullets," the Israeli military spokesperson said, other cases have been published [7]. The injured is a 37 years old male who has lost vision in his right eye, after admission to the hospital for eye evisceration and consequently, an eyeball was inserted to reduce the risk of sympathetic ophthalmia [8].

## 3. Discussion

Many studies noted that the firing distance of the weapon was less than designated or directly related to the severity of the injury [9], [10]. It was impossible to assess the exact distance in most cases, but data and forensics revealed that the firing distances were less than those recommended by manufacturers. Several authors stressed the difficulty of assessing firing distance both forensically and in real-time when police work is dynamic and conditions are changing quickly. many studies reported instances in which Kinetic Impact Projectiles (KIPs) weapons, also referred to as rubber or plastic bullets which are used in crowded settings, unintentionally injured bystanders and non-violent demonstrators instead of the specific individuals that were targeted [11], [12].

Given the history of the inaccuracy of KIPs, potential for misuse, and associated health consequences of severe injury, disability, and death, it is widely argued that KIPs are not appropriate weapons for use in crowd-control settings [13].

In trying to contain the spread of the pandemic and protect their citizens, countries found themselves fighting the virus on their own during COVID-19. This necessary focus on countering Corona Virus had led to prioritizing health needs that correspond to the virus and less focus was shed on the abuses of human rights especially in conflicted zones like Palestine, where we witnessed an increased policy of collective punishment and unnecessary excessive and random use of force by the Israeli military against the Palestinians. Palestine faced a double lockdown, being deprived of sovereignty and resources, Palestine had to suffer from the spread of COVID-19 cases and also from the Israeli occupation policies [14].

Care International in Palestine noted that COVID-19 made the two societies: Israel and Palestine, act as one public health community. Israel realizes that if Palestine gets fully embroiled by the disease, this would prevent Israel from following through on a prudent public health policy [15].

Therefore, international organizations expected Israel to realize that they are dealing with one public health community and to automatically respect its responsibility through cooperation with the Palestinian health authorities in countering the pandemic and guarantee the safety of this interrelated community to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Instead, the Israeli government prioritized politics and was busy building coalitions. PM Netanyahu's priority was to secure his political legacy and legal escape, and COVID-19 provided this opportunity.

Some might argue that Israel did cooperate with Palestine by allowing the entry of testing kits to the Palestinian territories including the West Bank WB and the Gaza strip, or by allowing thousands of workers to stay in Israel for a two-week quarantine period if they wished to. As part of its cooperative measures, Israel allowed Palestinians returning to the WB to enter via Ben Gurion airport and released some of the Palestinian tax revenues which were long withheld by Israel. Despite these cooperative measures, it should be noted that Israel continued to violate international law even during the pandemic. Israel's violation of international law and its failure to meet its obligations as an occupying state. For example, Palestinian workers in Israel were not provided with the necessary health measures before their return to Palestine, and when those workers were forced to return to their homes in occupied Palestine, including the sick ones, Israel failed to coordinate with the Palestinian authorities, and consequently, they returned without being tested or even given any medical attention for the coronavirus, actions which led to accelerating the spread of the pandemic inside the Palestinian territories.

Moreover, Palestinian prisoners inside Israeli jails were not released or given any medical precautions, nor did Israel bother to provide supplements, hygiene, or protective measures. In response, the Palestinian government called upon the international community to oblige Israel to respect the Fourth Geneva Conventions, specifically Article 91 under Chapter IV on hygiene and medical attention. This includes the provision of adequate healthcare under the direction of a qualified doctor, with treatment and an appropriate diet [16].

While the state of Israel is now embarking on its 3rd doze vaccination strategy, only 20% of the Palestinian people are vaccinated.

During the first month under COVID-19, Israel maximized its violations of international humanitarian law; the occupation forces killed three Palestinians; the Israeli army demolished or confiscated 47 structures; Israel continued its raids inside Palestinian cities amounting to more than 238 incursions by the Israeli occupation army inside Palestinian territory; 267 Palestinians were arrested and settler attacks amounted to 87 [17].

Raising awareness on the issue is crucial as studies showed that public opinion matters when it comes to more willingness to use military force when the public was in favor and believed that contravening public opinion would entail heavy political costs, studies suggest that policy is affected by citizens by determining who gets elected. Targeting Palestinian civilians has been the case for Israeli political victories [18].

Israeli practices affecting the human rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Territory were shed light on in the United Nations report 2020, with a particular focus on the use of force by Israel, arrest and detention practices, and the application of collective punishment measures across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The report provides details on how the lack of accountability for such violations feeds the cycle of violence and compromises prospects for sustainable peace and security. Restrictions on use of force can contribute to peace in the region.

Some of the limitations we faced while writing was: Living in occupied territories, Media restrictions and Not all victims accept to declare their injuries, for the fact of being scared from the Israeli military orders and persecution against them.

#### 4. Conclusion

Rubber bullet injuries are common in Palestine, eyes are a deliberate target, blindness is the result of most injured people, need to establish a law by all human rights organizations to prevent civilians shooting in public places to reduce injuries and disabilities towards more political stability.

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### Author Queries

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