**Leiden IHL Clinic – Report Palestine trip 25 November – 2 December 2017**

**For the Leonhard-Woltjer Stichting**

In the period between 1 October 2017 and 31 January 2018, the Leiden International Humanitarian Law Clinic (IHL Clinic) undertook a research project on questions of international humanitarian law (IHL) with its cooperation partner Al-Haq. The research team consisted of four LL.M. students from Leiden University and two supervisors. Al-Haq invited them to participate in a field trip in order to get an impression of the situation on the ground, to meet with relevant actors, and to enhance their understanding of IHL. The research visit took place over the course of seven days, from 25 November until 2 December 2017.

The first part of the trip consisted of meetings with the Israeli human rights NGO B’Tselem and an Israeli human rights lawyer, Michael Sfard. These meetings provided the students and their supervisors with a valuable overview of the relevant legal framework and gave us an insight into the most pressing human rights and humanitarian law issues on the ground. The second part consisted of field visits to various locations in the West Bank (East Jerusalem, the so-called Area C, Hebron and Bethlehem) and the Golan Heights. These visits included the Wall and the Old City of Jerusalem, industrial, tourist, and agricultural settlements, a refugee camp, and sections of the old city of Hebron under Israeli military control. The visits were accompanied by field researchers with expert knowledge of the situation on the ground. The field trip has proven to be instrumental in broadening our understanding of the conflict in the Middle East and the pertinent issues of IHL in a way that would not have been possible with remote desk research and/or teaching.

The impressions from the field trip have substantially enhanced the students’ understanding of the political and legal situation in Israel/Palestine and broadened their horizons on a level which would have not been possible without this unique first-hand experience. The visit was furthermore of great academic value as most of the students are specializing in IHL and have now chosen thesis subjects that are related to international humanitarian law and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On a more personal level the research trip was very rewarding, as it allowed the students to meet and learn from new people, experience a new culture, and tighten their team spirit. The students were very impressed with the people they met and the incredible work they are doing under difficult circumstances. This has inspired them to continue working towards a future in which international law is respected by all actors.