

HRW says Israel ‘systematically repressed’ Palestinians in 2020



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New York, January 15 (RHC)-- Human Rights Watch (HRW) says the Israeli regime “systematically repressed and discriminated” against Palestinians last year. HRW said in a report on the year 2020 that the Israeli regime’s practices “far exceeded the security justifications” it often gave.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem al-Quds, Israeli troops killed 20 Palestinians and injured at least 2,001 as of October 5, HRW cited figures presented by the United Nations (UN) Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

“Israeli authorities have rarely held accountable security forces who used excessive force or settlers who attacked Palestinians,” HRW said. It also cited the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center as saying that Israel held, as of September, the bodies of 67 Palestinians killed since 2015.

The Israeli regime said in September last year that it would use the bodies of deceased Palestinians as bargaining chips to have the bodies of Israeli soldiers purportedly held by resistance factions in Gaza released.

The HRW also criticized Israel’s 13-year-old siege of the Gaza Strip and other restrictions imposed on the Palestinians in the enclave. “These restrictions, not based on an individualized assessment of security risk, robbed with rare exceptions the 2 million Palestinians living there [the Gaza Strip] of their right to freedom of movement, limited their access to electricity and water, and devastated the economy,” the organization said.

The HRW denounced the Israeli move to tighten the restrictions in August as “unlawful collective punishment.” The report added: “Egypt also sharply restricted the movement of people and goods at its Rafah crossing with Gaza.”

The New York-based group also said that the Israeli regime facilitated the further transfer of Israelis into settlements constructed in the occupied West Bank, slamming the practice as “a war crime.” The HRW referred to a report by Peace Now in which the Israeli rights group said Israel last year approved the construction of more settler units in the West Bank — 12,159 as of October 15 — more than in any other year since the group began tracking those statistics in 2012.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they are built on occupied land.

The HRW also cited OCHA as saying that Israel demolished 568 Palestinian houses and other structures in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem al-Quds, as of October 19, 2020, leaving 759 people displaced.

Most buildings were demolished under the pretext of lacking Israeli building permits, which are almost never given. Referring to about 600 checkpoints and other permanent obstacles set up by Israel within the West Bank as of June, the Human Rights Watch report said: “Israeli forces routinely turn away or humiliate and delay Palestinians at checkpoints without explanation.”

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