

Israeli forces follow orders to occupy, burn Palestinian homes in Gaza

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Palestinian firefighters work to extinguish a fire in a house after an Israeli attack in Khan Yunis

in the southern Gaza Strip on December 9, 2023 (Photo by Reuters)

Gaza City, February 2 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have set fire to Palestinian homes in the Gaza Strip, following direct orders from their commanders to "burn Gaza" -- a move considered yet another war crime in the South African-led genocide case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz on Wednesday reported that Israeli forces have occupied and then burned hundreds of Gaza homes and everything in them, on direct orders of their commanders, without the necessary legal permission to do so.

Some Israeli troops have posted videos on social media, which showed them taking part in acts of home burning, which they described as revenge for fellow soldiers' deaths or the "October 7 Hamas-led attacks on Israel."

"Until last month, the army's combat engineering corps mostly used mines and explosives, and in some cases heavy machinery such as D9 bulldozers, to demolish structures. Setting fire to homes belonging to noncombatant civilians, for the mere purpose of punishment, is forbidden under international law," Haaretz wrote.

"Civilians and civilian infrastructure are not a target. They must be protected. Everywhere. At all times," the United Nations account on X platform posted. "Wars have rules that must be respected by all sides. Humanitarians must be able to safely deliver aid."

Previous UN reports have indicated that Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip have displaced more than 90% of the territory's population and destroyed or damaged over 60% of the infrastructure there.

In the occupied West Bank, the same case is happening, where settlers regularly attack Palestinian people and property and burn their houses. For decades, Israel's policy of destroying the homes of relatives of Palestinian resistance fighters has been condemned as illegal collective punishment.

Meanwhile, international human rights groups have documented Israeli troops conducting systematic looting of Palestinians' homes across Gaza, stealing their property, vandalizing Palestinian businesses and even burning humanitarian aid supplies, including food.

Several Israeli officials, including the deputy speaker of the Knesset, Nissim Vaturi, who is a member of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, have called for the destruction, burning, and even nuclear annihilation of Gaza, advocating the policy to "Burn Gaza Now."

Some of their statements have been used as evidence in the South African-led genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague as deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are forbidden under international humanitarian law.

The ICJ last week called on Israel to prevent genocidal acts in its ongoing war in Gaza but stopped short of ordering a ceasefire. It also ordered the regime to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches the population in Gaza.

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