

UN experts warn of Israeli violations against Palestinian women and girls



A woman rests next to a damaged building, as Palestinian arrive in Rafah after they were evacuated from Nasser hospital

UN experts are raising concerns over allegations of human rights violations against Palestinian women and girls [Mohammed Salem/Reuter

Geneva, February 22 ((RHC)-- United Nations experts have expressed alarm over allegations of human rights violations against Palestinian women and girls in Gaza and the occupied West Bank since Israel launched its genocidal war of aggression on Gaza on October 7th.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said in a statement on Monday that it had received information that Palestinian women and girls have “reportedly been arbitrarily executed in Gaza, often together with family members, including their children”.

The UN experts said they were “shocked by reports of the deliberate targeting and extrajudicial killing of Palestinian women and children in places where they sought refuge, or while fleeing. Some of them were reportedly holding white pieces of cloth when they were killed by the Israeli army or affiliated forces.”

Israel has launched a devastating bombardment and ground invasion that has displaced more than 80 percent of Gaza’s population and reduced much of the territory to ruins. More than 29,000 people have been killed in the Israeli assault, according to Palestinian authorities.

In the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, Israeli forces have intensified raids since October 7th, killing hundreds of Palestinians and detaining thousands of others. The UN experts expressed alarm over the arbitrary detention of hundreds of Palestinian women and girls including human rights defenders, journalists and humanitarian workers in Gaza and the West Bank.

Many have reportedly been subjected to inhuman treatment, denied menstrual pads, food and medicine and also suffering severe beatings, the OHCHR said. On at least one occasion, Palestinian women detained in Gaza were allegedly kept in a cage in the rain and cold, without food.

“We are particularly distressed by reports that Palestinian women and girls in detention have also been subjected to multiple forms of sexual assault, such as being stripped naked and searched by male Israeli army officers. At least two female Palestinian detainees were reportedly raped while others were reportedly threatened with rape and sexual violence,” the experts said.

They noted that photos of female detainees in degrading circumstances were also reportedly taken by the Israeli army and uploaded online.

An unknown number of Palestinian women and children, including girls, have reportedly gone missing after contact with the Israeli army in Gaza, the experts said. “There are disturbing reports of at least one female infant forcibly transferred by the Israeli army into Israel, and of children being separated from their parents, whose whereabouts remain unknown,” they said. They called for an independent, impartial and effective investigation into the allegations and for Israel to cooperate.

“Taken together, these alleged acts may constitute grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and amount to serious crimes under international criminal law that could be prosecuted under the Rome Statute,” the experts said.

“Those responsible for these apparent crimes must be held accountable and victims and their families are entitled to full redress and justice.”

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