

*UN experts appalled by reported rapes and abuse of Palestinian women and girls by Israeli troops*

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United Nations, February 22 (RHC)-- UN experts have expressed alarm over “credible allegations” of egregious human rights violations that Palestinian women and girls continue to face in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Anadolu Agency reports.

“Palestinian women and girls have reportedly been arbitrarily executed in Gaza, often together with family members, including their children, according to information received. The experts 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.

“On at least one occasion, Palestinian women detained in Gaza were allegedly kept in a cage in the rain and cold, without food,” said the experts. “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.”

The experts said that at least two female Palestinian detainees were reportedly raped, while others were allegedly threatened with rape and sexual violence. They said some of the women were reportedly holding white pieces of cloth when the Israeli army or affiliated forces killed them.

The experts are Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls; Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967; Dorothy Estrada Tanck (Chair), Claudia Flores, Ivana Krstić, Haina Lu and Laura Nyirinkindi, from the Working group on discrimination against women and girls.

The experts expressed grave concern about 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 and degrading treatment, denied menstruation pads, food and medicine, and severely beaten. “They also noted that photos of female detainees in degrading circumstances were also reportedly taken by the Israeli army and uploaded online.”

The experts expressed concern that an unknown number of Palestinian women and children, including girls, have reportedly gone missing after contact with the Israeli army in Gaza.

“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.

“We remind the government of Israel of its obligation to uphold the right to life, safety, health and dignity of Palestinian women and girls and to ensure that no one is subjected to violence, torture, ill-treatment or degrading treatment, including sexual violence,” the experts said.

They called for an independent, impartial, prompt, thorough and effective investigation into the allegations and for Israel to cooperate with such investigations. “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.

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