

UN experts appalled by Israeli military's sexual violence against Palestinian women



Palestinian women react following Israeli bombardment in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on April 29, 2024. (AFP)

United Nations, May 11 (RHC)-- United Nations experts say they are "appalled" that Israeli military forces continue to sexually assault Palestinian women in the Gaza Strip. In a joint statement, UN Special Rapporteurs "expressed profound dismay at the reported targeting of Palestinian women by Israeli forces."

They underscored "continued reports of sexual assault and violence against women and girls, including against those detained by Israeli occupation forces."

"We are appalled that women are being targeted by Israel with such vicious, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, seemingly sparing no means to destroy their lives and deny them their fundamental human rights."

A UN report in March said there were "reasonable grounds" to believe sexual violence, including rape, was committed in multiple locations across the besieged Palestinian territory. The Special Rapporteurs had earlier warned the regime that these inhumane acts could "amount to serious crimes under international criminal law that could be prosecuted under the Rome Statute."

An eyewitness says Israeli military soldiers were raping Palestinian women before killing them at al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City after they raided the medical complex last month.

UN experts also said the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, exacerbated by widespread destruction of housing and infrastructure, disproportionately affects women and girls.

They cited the challenges faced by pregnant and lactating women, including Israel's direct bombardment of Gaza hospitals and denial of access to healthcare facilities, that has led to a surge in miscarriages and infant mortality.

The Special Rapporteurs are independent experts – part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council – whose mandate is to follow and report on the human rights situation of a specific country or thematic issues in all parts of the world.

Israel has killed more than 34,600 people, 70% of whom women and children, in Gaza since early October, according to the Gaza health ministry.

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