

United Nations-backed commission accuses Israel of war crimes



United Nations, June 12 (RHC)-- An inquiry by a United Nations-backed commission has found that Israel has committed war crimes in the vicious war in Gaza, as it also accused Tel Aviv of “crimes against

humanity.”

The report, released on Wednesday by the independent Commission of Inquiry (COI), constitutes the UN’s first in-depth investigation into the events since October 7th.

The use of the term “crimes against humanity”, as in the report against Israel, is usually reserved for the most serious international crimes knowingly committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilians.

The findings, based on interviews with victims and witnesses, submissions, satellite imagery, medical reports and verified open-source information, were swiftly condemned by Israel, extending the antagonism between the Israeli government and international organizations.

The commission, set up by the UN Human Rights Council in 2021, will present the report to the council next week. The report covers the period from the attack on southern Israel by Palestinian groups on October 7th to the end of 2023.

The report on Israel’s actions says it committed acts including forced starvation, murder or wilful killing, collective punishment and intentional attacks on civilians. It takes note of “a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population in Gaza” by the Israeli military.

“The immense numbers of civilian casualties in Gaza and widespread destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure were the inevitable result of a strategy undertaken with intent to cause maximum damage, disregarding the principles of distinction, proportionality and adequate precautions,” a COI statement says.

“The crimes against humanity of extermination; murder; gender persecution targeting Palestinian men and boys; forcible transfer; and torture and inhuman and cruel treatment were committed,” it reads.

The frequency, prevalence and severity of sexual and gender-based crimes against Palestinians by Israeli security forces during the period amounted to signs that some forms of such violence “are part of ISF operating procedures”, it adds.

More than 37,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war in Gaza and about 85,000 others injured, according to data provided by the Ministry of Health in the enclave.

Israel, which refused to cooperate with the team of experts, was swift to condemn the report. Rejecting the findings, it accused the COI of “systematic anti-Israeli discrimination”.

“The COI has once again proven that its actions are all in the service of a narrow-led political agenda against Israel. Today’s reports confirm what we have repeatedly said: the Pillay Commission will never do justice to the Israeli victims of Palestinian terrorism,” said Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN Meirav Eilon Shahar.

Israel has consistently accused international organisations, including the UN, of anti-Israel bias and anti-Semitism, with the claims increasing during its war in Gaza.

It reacted with fury last month as the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) applied for arrest warrants against top Israeli and Hamas leaders, alleging war crimes.



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