

# *United Nations inquiry proves Israel's actions in Gaza are intentional attacks on civilians*

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United Nations, June 20 (RHC)-- The Israeli military's "deliberate" use of heavy weapons in the Gaza Strip has been an "intentional and direct attack on the civilian population," a new report by a United Nations-backed independent commission has found.

Navi Pillay, chairperson of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said on Wednesday that Israel has committed crimes against humanity, forced

starvation, extermination, murder, and inhuman and cruel treatment of Palestinians.

As she presented the report to the UN Human Rights Council, Pillay said the Israeli military operating in Gaza “forcibly transferred almost the entire population into a small enclosure that is unsafe and uninhabitable” and used heavy weapons in densely populated areas in “an intentional and direct attack on the civilian population.”

Pillay said the commission concluded that specific forms of sexual and gender-based violence constituted part of the Israeli forces’ operating procedures. “Although Israeli officials have repeatedly stated their operations in Gaza are intended to destroy Hamas and release hostages, yet neither of these aims has been largely achieved at the expense of thousands of lives,” she said.

“We found that Israeli forces committed sexual and gender-based violence with the intent to humiliate and further subordinate the Palestinian community. Palestinian women were targeted and subjected to sexual violence and harassment online and in person.

“Men and boys experienced specific persecutory acts, including sexual and gender-based violence amounting to torture and inhuman and cruel treatment.”

The UN Commission of Inquiry head said: “We have never seen anything like this.”

Pillay also noted that the daily onslaught in Gaza must not sideline attention to a parallel wave of violence in the occupied West Bank, where UN human rights chief Volker Turk said on Tuesday the situation is “dramatically deteriorating.”

More Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces or settlers there since the start of the current war in October than in any other recorded period, Pillay told the council.

Israeli attacks on Gaza since October 7 have killed more than 37,000 people, 40 percent of them children, according to Gaza’s Ministry of Health. The October 7 attacks in Israel killed 1,139 people.

The report was the UN’s first in-depth investigation of the events since October 7 until the end of 2023. The commission was set up by the Human Rights Council in 2021.

It has an ongoing mandate with no time limit and benefits from a chief who is a former UN high commissioner for human rights and a former South African judge, according to Al Jazeera’s James Bays.

“She said the enormity of the tragedy overwhelms the commission. The rules say they are supposed to produce a report that is up to 10,700 pages. They have produced that report, but they have added two separate very large annexes,” he reported from Geneva.

Pillay told Al Jazeera it was “tragic” that Israel has prevented the commission from visiting victims inside Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. “What I found particularly disturbing is they not only deny us access into Israel and Gaza, but the whole of Palestine; we need to talk to victims there as well,” she said.

The commission will be releasing further reports looking into attacks on healthcare facilities in Gaza and the war’s effect on education.

Ibrahim Khraishi, Palestinian ambassador to the UN, thanked the commission for its report and condemned abuses committed by Israel during the “genocidal war.”

Toby Cadman, an international human rights lawyer, told Al Jazeera the report was unlikely to have an immediate effect on Israel’s conduct but could be used as evidence in future legal proceedings and could lead Western countries to reconsider their support for Israeli.

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