

# *United Nations expresses deep concern by Israeli sexual violence against Palestinian abductees*

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Israeli Channel 12 releases a video showing Israeli forces allegedly abusing a Palestinian abductee at Sde Teiman prison, just north of Gaza, on 7 August 2024 (Photo> Reuters)

United Nations, September 11 (RHC)--The UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict has expressed "serious concerns" over reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence against Palestinian abductees in Israeli custody, denouncing the normalization of the acts as "unacceptable."

In a statement issued in Geneva, Pramila Patten expressed deep concern regarding recent United Nations reports, particularly from Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), that reveal a troubling deterioration in detention conditions for Palestinian men, women, and children in Israeli custody since October 7, 2023.

"Sexual violence and sexualized torture in any form and in any context, and particularly in detention settings, is unacceptable. Such abhorrent acts not only constitute a grave violation of human rights and human dignity but they also undermine efforts towards peace and stability in the region," the statement said.

### Sexualized torture

Patten noted that disturbing reports have emerged of sexual violence and other inhuman and degrading treatment against Palestinian men and women, which could amount to "sexualized torture."

These reports detail a range of abuses, including pervasive sexual slurs, threats of rape and gang rape and photographing or filming of naked or partially undressed detainees in humiliating positions.

She recalled media attention to the recent case of a Palestinian male detainee who was hospitalized in July with severe injuries, due to sexual violence in the Israeli Sde Teiman military base. Political observers pointed out that one perpetrator of sadistic sexual torture on Palestinians was praised on prime-time Israeli television and his actions approved by a sizeable number of people, both officially and extra-officially, calling the torture and sexual abuse heroic.

Patten underscored the urgent necessity of upholding international human rights standards, asserting that the conditions of detention should meet global norms. She also highlighted the immediate support to assistance victims, which includes access to medical and psychological care.

The UN official expressed her concern regarding the disparity between the number of investigations initiated and the volume of complaints filed, highlighting recent efforts by certain Israeli political figures to disrupt current judicial processes or justify such actions.

"Sexual violence and sexualized torture in detention settings must never be normalized," she said, adding, "Impunity emboldens perpetrators, silences victims and undermines prospects for peace. Perpetrators of such heinous crimes must be held accountable and justice must be served."

She urged Israeli officials to allow unrestricted access to international organizations for inspection of detention facilities in Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza, while also calling for prompt, thorough, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all violations by relevant UN bodies.

This episode investigates the heinous crimes of Israelis against Palestinian prisoners, from torture to sexual assaults.

Testimonies gathered by rights groups and media reports, citing formerly detained Palestinians and Israeli whistleblowers, reveal that Israel continues to violate all rights and freedoms granted to prisoners by the Fourth Geneva Convention and international law.

Recently, the ministry of detainees' and ex-detainees' affairs in Gaza said, "The occupying Zionist entity, under the supervision of extremist and terrorist minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, has turned prisons and detention centers into death chambers."

Violence, extreme hunger, humiliation, and other forms of abuse of Palestinian prisoners have been normalized across Israel's jail system, reports indicate.

According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, nearly 10,000 Palestinians are currently held in detention or imprisoned on what Israel categorizes as "security" grounds, with 1,761 of them from the Gaza Strip.

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