

Human rights group affirms Israel committing crimes against Palestinians

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?Human rights group affirms Israeli abuse of Palestinians?

New York, April 28 (RHC)-- Human Rights Watch has concluded that Israel is committing the crimes against humanity of "apartheid and persecution" against Palestinians, and said it plans to forward its findings to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for due action.

In a 213-page report released on Tuesday, the New York-based human rights group said the Israeli regime was the "single authority" with primary control "over the area between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea... and methodologically privileging Jewish Israelis while repressing Palestinians, most severely in the occupied territory."

Kenneth Roth, executive director of the HRW, said, "This detailed study shows that Israeli authorities... are committing the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution." "It is coupled in the occupied territory with systematic oppression and inhumane acts against Palestinians living there," he said.

The report is based on robust sourcing, including human rights documentation, official planning documents, and statements by officials. AFP cited Omar Shakir, the Israel and Palestine director at HRW, as saying that there had been warnings for years that "apartheid is around the corner." "I think it's quite clear that that threshold has been crossed," Shakir said.

The HRW listed the sweeping movement restrictions on Palestinians, the seizure of Palestinian-owned land, and the forcible displacement of Palestinians as examples of the policies that constituted crimes of apartheid and persecution by the Israeli regime.

"Denying millions of Palestinians their fundamental rights, without any legitimate security justification and solely because they are Palestinian and not Jewish, is not simply a matter of an abusive occupation," Roth said. "These policies, which grant Jewish Israelis the same rights and privileges wherever they live and discriminate against Palestinians to varying degrees wherever they live, reflect a policy to privilege one people at the expense of another."

The group stressed that the ICC should "investigate and prosecute those credibly implicated" in the crimes of apartheid and persecution. Last month, The Hague-based court announced that it had opened a formal investigation into Israeli war crimes against Palestinians.

Reuters cited Shakir as saying that the HRW would send its report to the ICC prosecutor's office, "as we normally do when we reach conclusions about the commissions of crimes that fall within the Court's jurisdiction."

HRW also urged countries to "impose individual sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes, on officials responsible for committing these crimes" and to reconsider their ties with Tel Aviv, including military cooperation.

"While much of the world treats Israel's half-century occupation as a temporary situation that a decades-long 'peace process' will soon cure, the oppression of Palestinians there has reached a threshold and a permanence that meets the definitions of the crimes of apartheid and persecution," Roth said.

The HRW report angered Israel, which slammed it as "preposterous and false" and accused the group of having an "anti-Israeli agenda." But HRW was not the first group to point to Israeli apartheid.

Earlier this year, B'Tselem, an Israeli advocacy group, said Israel was an "apartheid regime" that systematically oppressed the Palestinians via military occupation and racist laws. The international movement of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) also said on Monday that the Israeli regime's treatment of Palestinians amounted to "apartheid."

Israel occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip during the Six Day War in 1967. It later had to withdraw from Gaza but has been occupying the other territories since.

About 700,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built in the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds since then. The international community views the settlements as illegal under international law but has done little to pressure the Israeli regime to freeze or reverse its policies.

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