

Top UN official voices concern over Israel's detention of Palestinian rights defenders

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Israeli forces violently detain a Palestinian during clashes at the compound that houses al-Aqsa Mosque, Occupied Palestinian Territory. (Photo by Reuters)

United Nations, August 13 (RHC)-- A senior United Nations official has expressed concern over the Israeli regime's campaign of arrests, harassment, criminalization and threats targeting Palestinian human rights defenders across the occupied West Bank.

“Arrests and raids on the homes of Palestinian human right defenders [by Israeli military forces] form part of a wider crackdown against those defending the human rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, stated.

Lawlor also criticized the arbitrary arrest and detention of Palestinian lawyer and human rights defender Farid Al-Atrash, who is also the director of The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) office in the southern West Bank.

Israeli military forces detained Atrash after he participated in a peaceful demonstration in the central West Bank city of Bethlehem, situated about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) south of al-Quds, on 15 June and released on bail eight days later.

The ICC is mulling the possibility of opening a probe into the demolition of homes and displacement of dozens of Palestinians from Khirbet Humsa hamlet in the Jordan Valley.

The UN expert also voiced concern over the forcible transfer of Palestinians living in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighborhoods of al-Quds.

Sheikh Jarrah has been the scene of frequent crackdowns by Israeli police on Palestinians protesting against the threatened expulsion of dozens of Palestinian families from their homes in favor of hardline Israeli settler groups.

Israel calls it “a real estate dispute,” while Palestinians and rights groups say the case highlights discriminatory policies aimed at pushing Palestinians out of al-Quds.

The Sheikh Jarrah protests in May coincided with a decision by the Israeli regime to ban gatherings in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan at the Damascus Gate of the Old City of al-Quds, and riots by far-right Jewish groups.

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