

Pro-Palestine rights group files property crimes case with ICC against Israel

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A member of the Israeli forces stands by the ruins of the demolished Salhiya house in Sheikh Jarrah, occupied East al-Quds. (Photo by AFP)

Ramallah, August 19 (RHC)-- The International Center of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP) has filed a war crime complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Israel's criminal property seizure from Palestinians.

The complaint revolved around Israel's "long and continued policy" of depriving Palestinian civilians of property for the regime's settlements built on occupied land and "in circumstances not justified by military necessity."

It dealt with the cases of Rezk Salem Hamed Kadih in Gaza and members of the Salhiya family from Sheikh Jarrah, a flashpoint Palestinian neighborhood of occupied East al-Quds, following an investigation that opened on March 3, 2021.

During the investigation, Fatou Bensouda, then-ICC prosecutor, said that "there was a reasonable basis to believe that war crimes have been or are being committed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem [al-Quds], and the Gaza Strip; potential cases arising from the situation would be admissible, and there were no substantial reasons to believe that an investigation would not serve the interests of justice."

The complaint urged the ICC prosecutor to include the cases it has submitted, and intends to submit, as part of the formal investigation. The rights group stated that evidence of Israel's property-related crimes was "vast, credible and clear."

"The fact that this has been allowed to continue as an accepted policy for Israel's illegal expansion is mind-blowing," said Tayab Ali, ICJP director. Ali further criticized EU countries as well as Europe and the US for their support for the Israeli regime. "The silence and support from countries in the EU as well as the UK and USA is tantamount to complicity in these crimes," he said.

The complaint mentioned the confiscation of the Kadih family's land in the town of Khuz'a', in the Yunis district of southern Gaza. The land, covering an area of about 36,000 square meters, was inherited by Kadih and his six siblings.

In 1948, during the Palestinian Nakba, or catastrophe, the war that preceded the Israeli entity's creation, the regime occupied almost half of the land and established a separation fence on a part of it.

After the Khan Yunis Massacre in 1956, more of the land was seized. Following the Six-Day War in 1967, even more land was taken by Israeli forces. Israel also used "excessive force to remove family members from the land" and established a permanent military presence there, claiming military necessity. "The Israeli military entered the land with bulldozers and opened fire at the farmers on the land," the complaint read.

Currently, the family only possesses a small amount of the original land and is not allowed to access all the remaining pieces.

Kadhi family's case, which represents "Israel's longstanding, systematic practice of confiscating or occupying Palestinian territory," is reflective of the regime's general policy, the complaint said. It also mentioned another piece of land, a 6,500 square meter property located in Karm al-Mufti, in Sheikh Jarrah, belonging to Salhiya family.

Despite 23 years of court actions against the Israeli regime, the family has been facing expulsion since 2017. Their land was allocated for school construction. Israel issued an ultimatum for evacuation of the property. In January, the regime forces raided the house, violently arrested and assaulted family members, and razed the house to the ground.

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