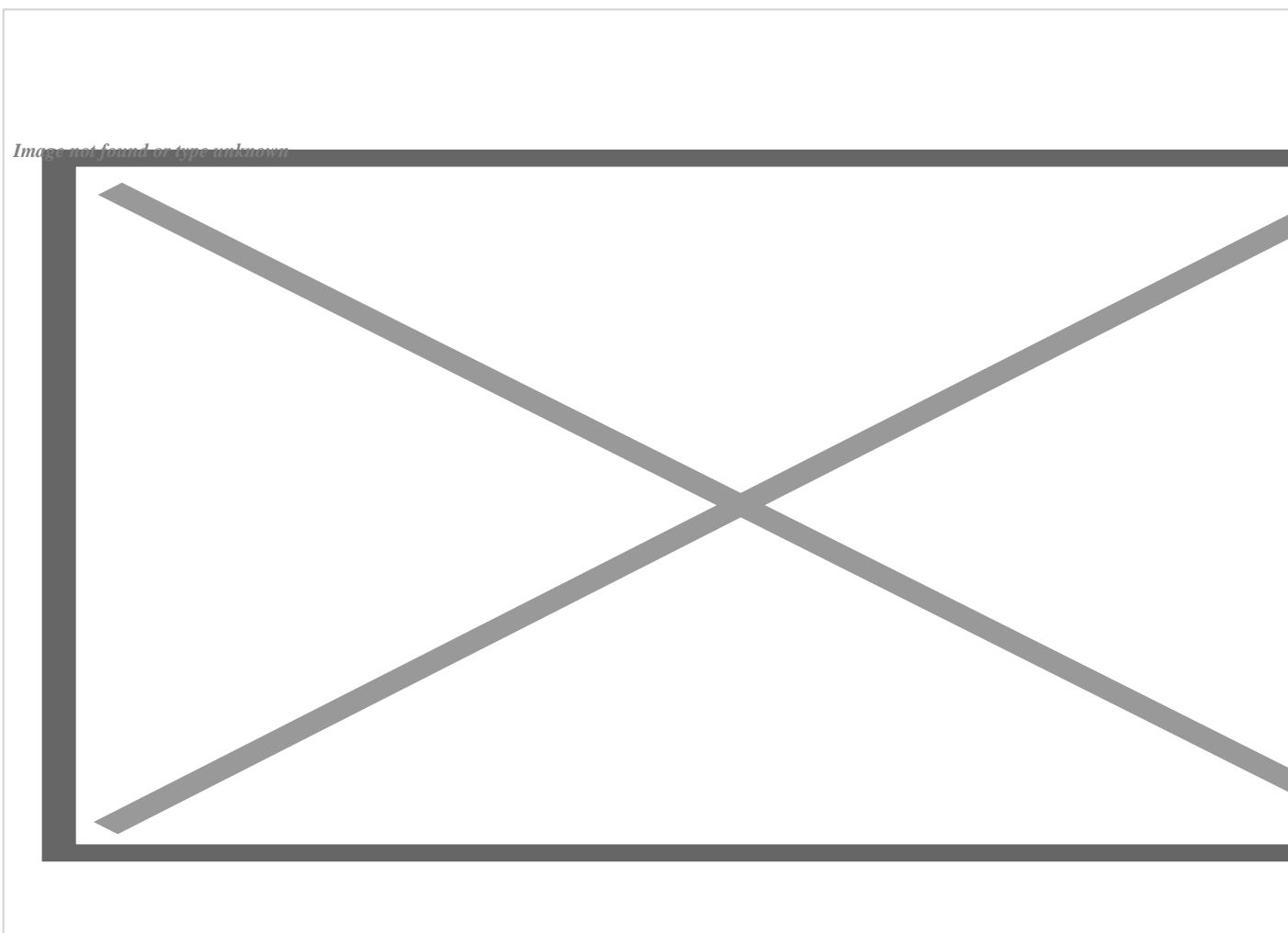


Rights group calls for Israel's accountability, end of decades-long impunity



Brussels, January 31 (RHC)=== A human rights group has warned about the alarming surge in killings committed by the Israeli regime against Palestinians, calling for the need to hold the illegal entity accountable and to end Tel Aviv's decades-long impunity.

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor said in a report cited by Palestine's official Wafa news agency on Monday that the recorded number of Palestinian deaths in the occupied West Bank increased by 82% in 2022 compared to 2021, and nearly fivefold (491%) compared to 2020.

In the report, titled "Pulling the trigger is the first resort," the rights group said analysis of field data revealed that the majority of Palestinian fatalities were civilians killed by Israeli forces in "unjustified operations" where they "presented no imminent threat or danger" to the lives of Israeli soldiers or settlers.

Providing detailed statistics of Palestinians killed by the illegal entity in 2022, the report documented the killing of 204 Palestinians by Israeli forces last year, 142 of whom were from the occupied West Bank (69.6%), 37 from the besieged Gaza Strip (18.1%), 20 from the occupied al-Quds (9.8%), and five from the Arab localities across the occupied territories (2.4%).

The data presented in the report also showed that Israeli forces carried out 32 summary executions, with 18 of them occurring alongside accusations that the victims had either conducted or attempted a stabbing or car ramming attack against Israelis. The remaining executions were generally lacking any rationale or carried out solely based on suspicion.

According to the report's figures, children made up approximately 20% of victims of Israeli killings in 2022, with 41 children being killed in Israeli attacks and assaults, in addition to eight women being killed the same year, three of whom were field-executed in the occupied West Bank.

Ramy Abdu, chairman of Euro-Med Monitor, said the Israeli killings and summary executions of Palestinian civilians, as evidenced by its lax open-fire regulations and official protection system for perpetrators of horrific violations, demonstrate that these are "state-sanctioned rather than individual actions."

Abdu said the use of lethal force against Palestinians remains a "key element" of the occupying regime's policy, adding: "We do fear that this year will see a rise in Israeli violence, with only extremist decision-makers in power who believe in killing Palestinians and driving them from their lands."

The Euro-Med Monitor said the behavior of Israeli forces toward Palestinian civilians reveals the regime's clear disregard for international obligations under the Geneva Conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, which requires parties to a conflict to protect rather than endanger civilians, as well as the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court, under which Israeli practices amount to war crimes.

The rights group called on the European Union to review the implementation of its partnership agreement with the Israeli regime in light of Israeli violations of the provisions related to respect for human rights and principles of democracy, as well as halt cooperation programs until the illegal entity meets its obligations and ceases its gross violations of human rights in the Palestinian territories.

"Relevant UN mechanisms and bodies must take urgent action to protect civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and ensure investigation and accountability for gross violations and any violations that may constitute war crimes," Euro-Med Monitor said.

"The International Criminal Court must commence its investigations without delay, and handle the situation in the Palestinian territories in the same manner as it does with similar cases in other regions of the world," it added.

Over the past months, Israel has ramped up attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories. As a result of these attacks, dozens of Palestinians have lost their lives and many others have been arrested. Most of the raids have focused on Nablus and Jenin, where Israeli forces have been trying to stifle a growing Palestinian resistance in the occupied cities.

The United Nations marked 2022 as the deadliest year for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank in 16 years.



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