

UN told Israel turns Palestinian territory into huge outdoor prison

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UN expert says more than 800,000 Palestinians, including children as young as 12, detained by Israel since 1967 occupation

United Nations, July 11 (RHC)-- Israel has detained more than 800,000 Palestinians in the occupied territory since 1967, including tens of thousands of children, and of the current 5,000 Palestinians in Israeli prisons about 1,100 are being held without charge or trial, an expert has told the UN Human Rights

Council.

Currently, there were 160 Palestinian children among those being held in Israeli prisons, Francesca Albanese, UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, told the council on Monday.

Albanese, presenting a report on the arbitrary detention of Palestinians, described Israel as treating occupied Palestinian territory as an outdoor prison. "Israel's military occupation has morphed the entire occupied Palestinian territory into an open-air prison, where Palestinians are constantly confined, surveilled and disciplined," Albanese told the council.

Israel's practice of unlawfully imprisoning Palestinians was "tantamount to international crimes which warranted an urgent investigation by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court," the UN said in a summary of the special rapporteur's presentation.

"All the more as these offences appeared to be part of a plan of 'de-Palestinisation' of the territory. This threatened the existence of a people as a national cohesive group," the summary added.

Albanese told the council that many Palestinians were considered guilty without evidence, arrested without warrants, detained without charges or trial, and brutalised in Israeli custody.

"Under Israeli occupation, generations of Palestinians have endured widespread and systematic arbitrary deprivation of liberty," she told the council, according to the German news agency DPA. In her report, Albanese describes a system of "apartheid imposed on the Palestinians" that needs to end "immediately".

The special rapporteur also called on governments not to recognize or support illegal Israeli settlements and to hold those responsible for such settlements accountable.

According to DPA, at the end of June, the UN Human Rights Office updated its database with the names of companies involved in settlement construction. The list includes mainly Israeli companies, but also some from the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Spain and Luxembourg. The UN Human Rights Council commissioned the database.

Israel was not present for Albanese's presentation on Monday, according to the UN summary of the presentation, and Israel has repeatedly rejected criticism of conditions in occupied Palestinian territory by the UN.

The State of Palestine, speaking as a concerned entity on Monday, expressed support for the special rapporteur's work "despite attempts to target" her mandate, the UN said in the summary.

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