



19 June 2024

Press Release: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

On this International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, the General Delegation of Palestine solemnly reaffirms its unwavering rejection and condemnation of all acts of sexual violence against any human being, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, gender, or nationality. Sexual violence has been systematically used by Israel, the occupying power, as a method of war and persecution against Palestinian civilians since 1948. Sexual and gender-based violence is committed by Israeli occupation forces (IOF) against Palestinians in the everyday functioning of the Israeli occupation, especially at checkpoints, in Israeli occupation detention centres, prisons, interrogation rooms, and during nighttime house raids. Recent reports, however, have found a dramatic increase in the range, frequency and severity of sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by IOF against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank since 7 October 2023.

In June 2024, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, reported that the escalation in sexual violence by IOF against Palestinians since 7 October 2023 is linked to an intention to punish, humiliate, and subordinate the Palestinian population as a whole. Since 7 October, IOF have detained more than 3,000 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip alone, including at least 200 women and girls who were transported to undisclosed locations and subjected to ill-treatment, interrogation, systematic torture, starvation, sexual violence and assault. The 2023 Report of the UN Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence confirmed reports that arrests and detention of Palestinian women and men by IOF since 7 October, in both Gaza and the West Bank, were often accompanied by beatings, ill-treatment and humiliation, including acts of sexual assault. It should also be noted in this context that UNICEF has previously documented and verified that Palestinian children in Israeli military detention are regularly threatened with and subjected to verbal, physical and sexual violence by Israeli officers in order to force confessions. The UN Commission of Inquiry found that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been subjected to systematic sexual violence by IOF, including being forced to strip publicly, often while blindfolded, forced to kneel or march, and subjected to interrogation or verbal and physical abuse and humiliation. Additionally, Palestinians have been forced by IOF to watch as members of their family and community were forced to walk either fully or partially naked while enduring sexual harassment. Other recent investigations, including a notable New York Times report about the inhumane treatment of Palestinian detainees from the Gaza Strip at the Sde Teiman Israeli occupation military base, have brought to light shocking testimonies and horrific evidence of sexual torture of Palestinian detainees by IOF, including the murder of a Palestinian prisoner who was sexually tortured to death with an electric stick.

These findings demand immediate attention and action from the international community to ensure justice and accountability for these despicable crimes. The State of Palestine has extended an invitation to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to visit Palestine with the designated investigation team, and the UN Commission of Inquiry to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the sexual violence and crimes against humanity committed by Israeli occupation forces (IOF) against Palestinians. Unfortunately, Israel continues to obstruct investigations by refusing to cooperate with or grant access to any of the relevant UN bodies, and continues to deny visas for OHCHR staff to enter Palestine to investigate or verify any of its violations. The principles of reciprocity, equality, and non-discrimination are essential to ensure a fair and unbiased approach to addressing these serious violations and holding the Israeli occupation accountable for its crimes. **The General Delegation of Palestine calls on the international community, including Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, to urgently intervene to stop the systematic sexual violence against Palestinians by enforcing an end to Israel's occupation and the unfolding genocide against our people in Gaza.**

For more information, please contact the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific.

