

UN experts decry Israeli regime's harassment of pro-Palestinian activists



A Palestinian demonstrator beaten to the ground by Israeli forces and illegal settlers during a protest, in Masafer Yatta, south of the southern West Bank city of al-Khalil (Hebron). (Photo by

United Nations, August 3 (RHC)-- Four United Nations experts strongly denounce the Israeli regime's harassment of human rights activists trying to provide support for the Palestinian communities that face forcible eviction from their houses in a southern West Bank area.

"Israeli authorities' hubris is proving without limits. They are even harassing human rights defenders and humanitarian workers seeking to support and protect people facing grave human rights violations in Masafer Yatta," the special rapporteurs said in a joint statement on Tuesday.

Masafer Yatta, located near the West Bank city of al-Khalil (Hebron), spans some 36 kilometers (22 miles) and is comprised of 19 Palestinian villages that are home to more than 2,000 people.

The Israeli military designated part of the area a closed military zone for training in the 1980s, and the regime has been seeking to remove the communities there on that basis.

On May 4, the Israeli Supreme Court rejected appeals by the residents of Masafer Yatta to prevent their eviction. The court's ruling effectively ended two decades of legal battles by the residents, who had fought to continue living on their land.

Israeli forces have reportedly already demolished structures in the Masafer Yatta communities of Khribet al-Fakhiet and al-Markez.

The experts condemned the regime's attitude toward the rights campaigners and said, "This is a direct assault on the core of human rights and international humanitarian law... this also confirms that impunity over abuse of power fosters power to abuse."

They voiced dismay at reports that human rights defenders and humanitarian workers have been harassed by the Israeli military in Masafer Yatta. "They have been stopped and detained for several hours at checkpoints and had their identification documents or cars confiscated, often on grounds that they had entered a closed military site without permission," the special rapporteurs said, insisting that such harassment had to stop.

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