

Report proves Israeli troops sexually assault Palestinian women they abduct



Women stand amid the destruction following overnight Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on February 23, 2024. (AFP)

Geneva, February 29 (RHC)-- Israeli troops continue to sexually assault the Palestinian women they abduct as part of a larger vicious campaign to dehumanize all the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, especially women and children, the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor says.

In new testimonies documented by the Geneva-based rights group, the Palestinian women said they have endured severe treatment that amounts to torture, including beatings and threats of rape, while they were held by the regime's forces.

"Forced nudity, strip searches in front of male soldiers, and verbal harassment" were what the Palestinian women said they experienced.

A 45-year-old resident of Gaza City said she was kidnapped by Israeli troops when they stormed a UN-run school housing displaced Palestinians in December. She was released after 43 days. The woman who requested anonymity said female abductees "were searched while we were completely naked, inside a closed-off area, and the female soldiers beat us severely and continuously."

She told Euro-Med she experienced "multiple strip searches in public, with male soldiers present." She said she was being held for eleven days inside what she said resembled a cage for animals, in bitter cold, with no access to food or water.

Euro-Med also cited a 20-year-old resident of the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip who was held inside a school sheltering the displaced in Gaza City for 50 days. She said the regime troops "tied her hands behind her back, blindfolded her, and searched her while she was only wearing her underwear."

The conditions were "extremely harsh," she said, "I strained a muscle in my handcuffed hand and an Israeli female soldier struck me hard on my back when I attempted to move." "We were subjected to nasty verbal abuse and foul language."

According to Euro-Med, all those violations committed by Israeli forces are "part of a larger campaign to dehumanize all Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, especially children and women."

Last week, a panel of UN experts said they have seen "credible allegations" that Palestinian women and girls have been subjected to sexual assaults, including rape, by Israeli troops. They cited at least two cases of rape, alongside other cases of sexual humiliation and threats of rape.

The true extent of sexual violence, however, could be significantly higher, according to Reem Alsalem, the UN special rapporteur on violence against women and girls. "We might not know for a long time what the actual number of victims are."

She said "on the whole, violence and dehumanization of Palestinian women and children and civilians has been normalized throughout this war."

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