

United Nations says Israeli attacks on Gaza's schools and cultural sites are crimes against humanity



United Nations, June 11 (RHC)-- UN experts in a report have warned that destruction of over 90% of Gaza's educational facilities and more than half of its religious and cultural sites by Israeli forces in besieged Gaza amounts to war crimes and the crime against humanity of "extermination."

In a report, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the occupied Palestinian Territory said on Thursday that Israel committed crimes by killing civilians sheltering at these sites.

The report, which will be presented to the Human Rights Council on June 17, said all this was done as part of a "concerted campaign to obliterate Palestinian life."

Israel's attacks represent a "widespread and relentless assault" on the Palestinian people, with "more and more indications that Israel is carrying out a concerted campaign to obliterate Palestinian life in Gaza," according to commission chair Navi Pillay.

The report also detailed the destruction of 10 key religious and cultural sites in the blockaded Palestinian territory, which investigators say were civilian in nature and had no apparent military value. "Attacks on cultural and religious sites have deeply impacted intangible culture, such as religious and cultural practices, memories and history," Pillay said.

More than 658,000 children in Gaza have been out of school for nearly two years, while airstrikes, shelling, and deliberate demolitions have decimated schools and universities, the report said.

The commission documented Israeli soldiers mocking Palestinians and their education before destroying institutions and found that Israeli forces repurposed facilities like Al-Azhar University's campus as military bases or even synagogues.

Harm done to the Palestinian education system was not confined to Gaza, the report found, citing increased Israeli military operations in the occupied West Bank as well as harassment of students and settler attacks there.

In the West Bank and East al-Quds, the commission found Israeli settler violence, military raids, and movement restrictions severely affected over 806,000 Palestinian students. It also accused Israel of profiting from appropriated heritage sites and blocking Palestinian access.

The commission called on Israel to end its occupation, halt all attacks and settlement activity, and comply with international law. The report comes as the Israeli military pushes ahead with its genocidal war against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

According to the Gaza health ministry, nearly 80 Palestinians have been killed across the Gaza Strip in the past day alone. The number of people killed in attacks on humanitarian aid distribution centers has also increased alarmingly.

UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini has condemned the attacks on aid centers, saying the current process has become a "death trap" for the people of Gaza. The death toll from the genocide in Gaza is nearing 55,000, mostly women and children.

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