

Probe finds Israel killing Gaza civilians with commercial drones



**An Autel EVO drone at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Florida
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Investigation by Israeli outlets 972 Magazine and Local Call finds drones are used to teach Palestinians ‘through blood’ not to return to their homes.

Tel Aviv, July 14 (RHC)-- The Israeli army is weaponising Chinese-made drones to kill Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, according to an investigation by the Israeli publications 972 Magazine and the Local Call.

The drones are operated manually by soldiers on the ground to bomb civilians – including children – to force them out of their homes or prevent them from returning to areas where Palestinians have been expelled, the outlets reported on Sunday. The publications interviewed seven soldiers and officers to produce their findings, they said.

The report was published as criticism of Israel's plan to set up an internment camp in southern Gaza is growing. Former Israeli Prime Ministers Yair Lapid and Ehud Olmert said it would amount to a “concentration camp” if Palestinians there are not allowed to leave.

“The weaponisation of civilian drones to kill and dispossess Palestinians is the latest revelation of the cruelties normalised in Gaza and further evidence of how Israel is trying to forcibly transfer the population to the south of the Strip,” Al Jazeera's Nour Odeh said, reporting from Amman, Jordan, because Israel has banned Al Jazeera from reporting from Israel and the occupied West Bank.

Soldiers are using mostly Evo drones produced by the Chinese company Autel, which are sold commercially for about \$3,000 and used by photographers, the investigation found. “However, with a military-issued attachment known internally as an ‘iron ball’, a hand grenade can be affixed to the drone and dropped with the push of a button to detonate on the ground,” the report said, adding that a majority of Israeli military companies in Gaza use these drones.

An Israeli soldier who served in the Rafah area this year and was identified in the report only as “S” was tasked with coordinating drone attacks in a neighbourhood of the city that the army had ordered to be evacuated, the Israeli media outlets reported.

“It was clear that they were trying to return to their homes – there's no question,” the soldier told the publications. “None of them were armed, and nothing was ever found near their bodies. We never fired warning shots. Not at any point.”

Israeli soldiers also said they did not allow bodies to be collected, sometimes letting stray dogs eat them as they watched and filmed from afar. In several cases, S told the outlets, the Israeli army deliberately targeted children.

“There was a boy who entered the [off-limits] zone. He didn't do anything. [Other soldiers] claimed to have seen him standing and talking to people. That's it – they dropped a grenade from a drone,” S said.

Israeli soldiers said the drones “were used to empty Palestinian neighborhoods and to teach Palestinians, through blood, not to return”, Odeh said.

According to the soldiers interviewed, the commercial drones are advantageous because they are much cheaper than military-grade ones.

“It’s very cheap, it’s very easy to use. It’s decentralised in a way, the use of these drones, because it’s a platoon that can use them. It does not need to require the authorisation from central command,” Meron Rapoport, editor and writer at the Local Call, told Al Jazeera.

Israeli army units in Gaza are also crowdfunding in Israel and the United States to buy more of these drones, posting videos to thank donors for their contributions, the report said.

The drone attacks are part of Israel’s war on Gaza, which has killed at least 58,026 Palestinians and wounded 138,520 since it began in October 2023, according to Gaza’s Ministry of Health. An estimated 1,139 people were killed in Israel during the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, attacks, and more than 200 were taken captive.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/387228-probe-finds-israel-killing-gaza-civilians-with-commercial-drones>



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