Rights group urges UN experts and rapporteurs to hold Israel accountable for its extra-judicial killing of Palestinians

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The Ramallah-based Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) urged United Nations experts and rapporteurs, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, to hold Israel accountable for its extra-judicial killing of Palestinians that left 41 men and women dead since the beginning of 2022.

It also called on the UN experts and rapporteurs to use all available means to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to its practices against and targeting the lives of Palestinians.

“On a daily, systematic, and widespread basis, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to violate Palestinian rights and use excessive force against unarmed Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt),” it said in its urgent appeal. “The Israeli occupying forces (IOF) shoot to kill Palestinians, who are protected under the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Particularly at military checkpoints and at their own discretion, Israeli troops open fire on suspected and wanted persons. Over the past period, the IOF has targeted and taken the lives of many Palestinians, including children and women, at checkpoints. in the absence of imminent danger to the lives of Israeli soldiers. These Palestinians were killed allegedly because they attempted to carry out operations or on grounds of mere suspicion.”

The ICHR mentioned the example of the 10 April killing of Ghada Ibrahim Sabateen, a 47-year-old Palestinian widow and mother of six children, near an Israeli flying checkpoint at the eastern entrance to Husan village, west of the southern West Bank district of Bethlehem.

“Ghada was directly targeted without any justification,” it said, adding that a soldier opened fire and wounded her and then left her on the ground for a long time while not allowing anyone to help her until she bled to death.

On the same day, Maha al-Za’tari, a female citizen of Hebron city, was targeted and killed in cold blood, without any justification.

“Since the beginning of 2022, using excessive force in miscellaneous incidents across the occupied West Bank, the IOF killed 41 Palestinians, including six children and two women. Excessive force has been used in various cases, including disruption of peaceful assemblies. In some incidents, citizens who had not been involved in any hostilities were extra-judicially killed in grave violation of their rights and protection enshrined in the IHL” said the Independent Commission, stressing that “willful killing constitutes a war crime.”

On the morning of 13 April, Mohammed Hasan Assaf, a 34-year-old lawyer and father of three children, was killed in cold blood in Nablus while the soldiers were withdrawing from the vicinity of Joseph’s Tomb. Assaf was accompanying his nephews to an industrial school in the area when soldiers opened extensive and indiscriminate fire at young men who stoned Israeli army vehicles killing him while he was on the sidewalk.

“These crimes are hailed by the Israeli political and military levels. In a statement released in late 2021, the IOF granted full right to soldiers to respond with live fire if they presume a danger to their lives. This has given a green light to extra-judicially kill and take the lives of Palestinians,” said the rights organization.

ICHR urged the UN experts and rapporteurs to investigate the Israeli violations and targeting of Palestinian lives and bring to an end these Israeli practices. “Necessary pressure should be applied to Israel to make sure that it honors its respective obligations and provides protection to Palestinian civilians throughout the oPt.”

It further called on them “to denounce the targeting and cold-blooded murder of Palestinians,” and urged the UN Member States “to bear their full responsibilities as third party States, put into operation the use of universal jurisdiction mechanisms to achieve international justice, prosecute and hold to account persons charged with committing grave violations of the IHL.”

The ICHR called for launching an investigation into Israeli violations by the International Criminal Court, focusing on the root causes that contribute to continuing Israeli violations of Palestinian rights. “Action needs to be taken to end the protracted Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory. The Palestinian people should be empowered to exercise their right to self-determination, guaranteed by the principles of International Law,” it stressed.