

A compound crime: Israeli army hits Gaza family, uses them as human shields, and runs over their mother



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Israel-Palestinian Territory

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Palestinian Territory - The Israeli army continues to use its tanks to deliberately run over live Palestinian civilians and crush their bodies, in addition to using civilians as human shields, in the ground operations of its crime of genocide in the Gaza Strip that has been ongoing since 7 October 2023.

The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor field team documented a compound and comprehensive crime against a civilian family comprising an elderly woman and her four children, including three young women and a one-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter. The family was attacked with gunfire and bombs after Israeli forces stormed their house on Thursday evening, 27 June.

They were later taken outside and detained for over three hours despite their injuries in their home, near Israeli tanks in a dangerous combat zone, where they were used as human shields. The 65-year-old mother, identified as Safiya Hassan Musa Al-Jamal, was run over by an Israeli tank and killed in front of her son.

In his testimony to the Euro-Med Monitor team, the elderly woman's son, Muhannad Al-Jamal, 28, said: "We were living in Al-Nazaz Street in Al-Shuja'iya, east of Gaza, when at approximately 10 a.m. on Thursday we were surprised to hear the sound of shelling and explosions. We made an unsuccessful attempt to leave. All around us was chaos. We went inside, up to the first floor, and sat in a room in the center of the house. As we were sitting there, we noticed that Israeli tanks were moving closer to the area. Then the bombing started to get more intense, and I saw that many of the tanks had turned and were now positioned on the adjacent land of our neighbours, bulldozing and destroying it before raising the Israeli flag on the property. I was with my mother, my three sisters, and niece in the room. We were very careful not to make any noise. At the end of the afternoon or before sunset, the tanks began firing shells toward my brother's ground floor flat in our home. I got my family together and we sat in one of the rooms, reciting the Shahada (a statement of belief that Muslims recite before death) and waiting to see what would happen to us.

After the soldiers entered the tank, it started to move backward and ran over my mother. When I saw the scene, I thought I had gone insane and began to cry and scream

Muhannad Al-Jamal, 28, a resident of Gaza

"After sunset, we heard gunfire in the street, and then I realised that the soldiers had stormed the house after blowing up a wall. When they found us in the room, they started firing at the walls randomly and threw five bombs amid gunfire. They were shouting in Hebrew, and we did not understand what they were saying. I was hit by shrapnel in my back, along with my sisters. My mother was struck by a large piece of shrapnel in her chest while my sisters were screaming, "We are civilians." The soldiers then moved forward one by one, yelling, "Shut up," before dragging me away. They forced me to take off my clothes and put me against the wall. After my mother and sisters entered with a female soldier, the soldiers pointed their weapons at me for half an hour.

"They asked me to carry my mother on my back. After that, a different soldier ordered me to place her on a stretcher, so I did. I then carried her with another soldier out through the opening

that the army attack had made. We then went to a nearby area and were placed in a tank, where I placed the stretcher in front of me before exiting. After that, they brought me back to the house. They later took me down and handcuffed me. My sisters were at the tank's door when a soldier arrived at roughly 9:45 p.m. and asked them to wait before he removed the handcuffs and put shackles on my hands and a blindfold on my eyes. He stopped me on a sand hill, and he was shining a laser at me. I felt that they were going to execute me. Then he turned on the tank and ordered me to get into it. It was a different tank from the one my mother was in. Later, the tank shifted and swung around. After that, they dropped me in what appeared to be a set of stairs, and I had no idea where I was. I was asked to follow their directions as I moved. This went on for about 15 minutes while rude remarks were made. Then I was grabbed by the neck by one of the soldiers. After I moved fifty meters, they put me in yet another tank. I moved in, then they took me down and put me in a tank that contained the stretcher that we used to transport my mother. Later on, the tank moved.

"I had assumed that we would be taken to a medical facility so that my mother could be treated, but instead they tackled me and my mother, putting her on the ground. After a few minutes, I realised we had arrived at the Mushtaha Roundabout, at the end of Al-Nazzaz Street. I inquired as to my location. "Your mother will be taken by ambulance," he said. My mom was on the ground, unconscious. There were two tanks on the right and left surrounding the roundabout. After the soldiers entered the tank, it started to move backward and ran over my mother.

"When I saw the scene, I thought I had gone insane and began to cry and scream.... I fled, fearing for my life, as the tank on the right tried to run me over. However, the two tanks moved in another direction, and the tank on the left was trying to run my mother over once more, but that did not happen. Afterwards, the tanks pivoted and pointed their weapons towards me. Out of fear, I hid by taking cover. All I could hear as I started to scream was the sound of gunfire. Dogs were getting closer to my mother's body and I shoved them away as they were going to eat her body. This was on Friday just after midnight, around 1 a.m. The soldier in the tank knew where he had placed her and was able to avoid her, but he deliberately ran over her. I could not bear the situation amid the heavy gunfire, and I could not carry my mother after the tank ran over her. I was shocked by what had happened, but I could hardly cover my mother and ran from the place, thinking if there had been an 'ambulance,' as he said, he would not run over her. I went looking for my sisters, as I did not know their fate. I kept crying as I walked through the intense gunfire until I came across someone on a balcony who offered me a bottle of water and directed me along a safe route that would get me to my friends' location in a stairwell. I made

every effort to get in touch with my sisters, and eventually I found out that they were receiving medical care at Baptist Hospital. They inquired about my mother, so I told them."

His sister, Areeji, 30, added to the Euro-Med Monitor team: "When the soldiers stormed our house and started shooting and throwing bombs, we told them that my mother was injured and dying. We noticed that she had a large wound, and a female soldier arrived to provide first aid. We observed her attempting to treat her repeatedly, and I witnessed my mother on the verge of death. After they had taken my brother, they held us for a while before telling us to head to Salah al-Din Street. When we asked about my mother, they said they would take her to the hospital. Then, they gave us a green light (torch) and we started to move. We were injured and bleeding, and we had a one-and-a-half-year-old baby girl with us. When we got to the area before the Shuja'iya intersection at 11:30 p.m., there were tanks there, a lot of gunfire, and I waved the green light (torch) until we passed. No one was following us until we got to the Baptist Hospital."

Euro-Med Monitor has previously documented many instances of the Israeli army killing Palestinian civilians by intentionally running over live civilians with military tanks.

Sixty-two-year-old Jamal Hamdi Hassan Ashour was one such victim. He was deliberately run over in Gaza City's Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood on 29 February after he was arrested. The father of five was subjected to harsh interrogation by members of the Israeli army, who bound his hands with plastic zip-tie handcuffs before running him over with a military vehicle from the bottom to the top of his body.

Ashour's home was targeted by Israeli aircraft, killing his nephew, before the family had to evacuate it. The incident occurred on the main Salah al-Din Street in the Zaytoun neighbourhood, according to eyewitnesses who spoke to the Euro-Med Monitor team. Israeli forces besieged Ashour and his wife inside their home, before arresting him and transferring him to a building in the neighbourhood designated for interrogating detainees. Israeli soldiers restrained the victim's hands with plastic shackles before they crushed him, and tramped on his body from the legs up, confirming that he was alive during the incident. To guarantee thorough and complete crushing, the victim was placed on asphalt rather than on an adjacent sandy area.

Another documented incident took place on 23 January, when an Israeli tank ran over members of the Ghannam family while they were sleeping in a shelter caravan in the Taiba Towers area of

Khan Younis. As a result, a man and his eldest daughter were killed, and his remaining three children and wife were injured. Amina, his 13-year-old daughter, confirmed that her father and older sister were killed when an Israeli tank unexpectedly and repeatedly ran over the caravan, where the family had been sleeping. While her mother and two other siblings survived the attack, Amina experienced extreme pressure in her eyes, nearly losing her sight.

In another incident documented by Euro-Med Monitor, Israeli tanks and bulldozers ran over and crushed displaced people inside their tents in Beit Lahia's Kamal Adwan Hospital courtyard on 16 December 2023. Several people were killed, including individuals who were initially injured and did not ultimately survive. The corpses of those who had been previously buried in the courtyard were also crushed in the 16 December incident.

Euro-Med Monitor has also documented numerous incidents of Israeli army tanks destroying civilian property, particularly cars, during Israel's ground incursions into different parts of the Gaza Strip. Most of these tank attacks have targeted vehicles with no evident military connection, parked in the streets, demonstrating the Israeli army's deliberate and systematic destruction of Palestinian property.

These violations are part of a larger Israeli effort to dehumanise every Palestinian in the Gaza Strip, apparently in an attempt to justify and normalise the crimes being committed against them. Crushing civilians with tanks is just one of the many brutal ways the Israeli army executes Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, denying their humanity, suffering, and dignity. These practices reflect the intention of Israel's government and military to collectively punish the Palestinian people, with the aim of eliminating, intimidating, and/or harming them physically and psychologically. These crimes come in tandem with a public incitement campaign by Israeli officials, media figures, and settlers calling for the annihilation of Palestinians in Gaza, and are committed with total impunity by the perpetrators—which is evident in the absence of any meaningful action by the Israeli government or military at any level to hold the perpetrators accountable.

Israeli military attacks continue in various parts of the Gaza Strip, with ongoing aerial and artillery bombardment targeting residential homes. The Israeli army has also escalated its targeted killings, and extrajudicial executions against Palestinian civilians since 7 October 2023 through direct targeting with snipers, drones, and continuing operations in various regions of the Gaza Strip. These actions against civilians amount to war crimes and crimes against

humanity under the Rome Statute, and are all part of the Israeli crime of genocide that has been ongoing in the Gaza Strip since 7 October.

The widespread and indiscriminate destruction of property caused by the Israeli army, as observed in the Shujaiya neighbourhood east of Gaza City, Rafah, Khan Yunis, and Jabalia north of the Gaza Strip, affecting over 65% of the buildings, is also considered a war crime under the Rome Statute.

The international community must take immediate action to fulfil its international obligations to put an end to the crime of genocide that Israel has been committing against all Palestinians in the Gaza Strip for nine months. Measures must be taken to ensure that Israel complies with its international obligations, the Security Council's ceasefire resolutions, and the International Court of Justice's rulings, and to ensure Israel is held accountable for the crimes it has committed against the Palestinian people.