

# Gaza: Israeli army expands its use of quadcopters to kill more Palestinian civilians



04 Jun 2024

Israel-Palestinian Territory

Share On



AR

**Palestinian Territory** - As part of its genocide that has been ongoing since 7 October 2023, Israel has been ramping up its use of small drones, or quadcopters, to drop explosive bombs and “shoot to kill” more Palestinians.

The Israeli army uses electronically controlled quadcopter drones remotely for a variety of tasks, including espionage and surveillance, issuing displacement orders, frightening civilians with loud noises, and—most dangerously—using them as a weapon to kill and injure Palestinians.

Since the start of its genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army has increased the number of extrajudicial executions and premeditated killings of Palestinian civilians. Drones are being used for sniping and shooting operations in various parts of the Gaza Strip, and are also being used to infiltrate homes and narrow alleyways. Meanwhile, the Israeli army has continued to kill Palestinians on a massively large scale by targeting residential areas with artillery and aerial strikes.

Israel's army has released a video documenting its use of these kinds of quadcopter aircraft to drop bombs on groups of people and houses while conducting military operations in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli army forces deliberately targeted and executed silah Muhammad Ahmad Odeh, 52, while she was trying to escape from the Jabalia refugee camp by raising a white flag. Odeh was killed due to direct fire from Israeli quadcopter aircraft on 21 May, in front of her family.

Her brother, Nidal, 40, told the Euro-Med Monitor team the following:

“On 20 May, at a late hour, my sister silah suggested that we stay at our neighbours' house on a backstreet of our Jabalia camp, which had been completely destroyed by Israeli bulldozers, and leave early the following day. Early on 21 May, we agreed on the plan. With our neighbour from the Abu Al-Tarabish family joining us, silah made the decision to lead the group and carry the white flag. We counted around twelve people. As soon as we got to the main street, my sister emerged, and the quadcopter fired right at her, striking her squarely in the head. She was falling in front of us and her head was covered in blood. The artillery shells began flying in our direction as we hurried back towards the house we had left. I was the last of my brothers to return home. Upon turning around, I discovered my sister dead. Since it was difficult to get to her because she was in the middle of the main street, I went back home.

After just two or three hours, a small aircraft flew in and took pictures of us inside the house. The army forces then moved in and started shooting at us. They fired sound shots, causing a state of panic among the women and children.

They forced us to take off all our clothes and tied our hands [together]. Then they interrogated us, photographed us, gave us a white flag, and then told us to head west, towards the sea. My

brother, Mahdi, is fluent in Hebrew. He told a soldier that we wanted to take Silah's body with us, since it was [still] in the street, but he refused.

We left under heavy artillery shelling on the designated route until we reached the western areas of the camp, where we met several people. After the army left the camp, on 30 May, we went back, found my sister Silah's body, and buried her in Al-Faluja Cemetery, west of the camp."

Seventy-year-old elderly man Fathi Hassan Yassin was similarly killed on 10 May, after being shot by quadcopter aircraft in Gaza City's southern Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood.

Yassin's son, Ibrahim, told the Euro-Med Monitor team the following:

"After a sleepless night brought on by the constant artillery shells and airstrikes, we decided to leave the house and head to a school where my uncle had fled. We departed at 10 a.m., with everyone in the vicinity evacuated. At the Zaytoun Martyrs school, displaced people were directly targeted by artillery shelling and quadcopter planes, causing multiple casualties. When a quadcopter got close, I ran away, but my father stayed behind, looking for a safe place with his blanket and mattress. I was struck in the head, and he was instantly killed by a direct shot."

Euro-Med Monitor's team also documented Ibrahim Aziz Atallah's death on 7 May; Atallah was hit by a bomb dropped by an Israeli quadcopter in the neighbourhood of Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood.

Muhammad Mazen Karam, the victim's cousin, told Euro-Med Monitor the following:

"We live in the Yarmouk neighbourhood. Searching for copper and plastic to sell and feed our families, my cousin Ibrahim Atallah and I were at the Salah al-Din Mosque in the Zaytoun neighborhood, just before the Dawla intersection. People were moving around the place as usual. We were approached by a quadcopter as we went by a side street. I warned him to run and hide as soon as I saw it, but it is likely that his poor hearing prevented him from hearing my call. I told him to hide, as I was doing, when all of a sudden I heard an explosion. When I heard Ibrahim calling, I told him to stay [put] to the right until assistance arrived. I saw him being

targeted by a quadcopter bomb. That was at nine in the morning, and he passed away shortly after I saw him take his last breaths."

Twenty-five-year-old Kamal Hamid Al-Astal also spoke with the Euro-Med Monitor team. He described how he was shot and injured by an Israeli quadcopter that bombed his home in Al-Qarara, east of Khan Yunis, on 9 March 2024:

"After an Israeli bombing on 8 March killed my brother, I was unable to retrieve his body for burial until the following day. Therefore, I went at 7 a.m. and brought his body to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where it was covered and buried. Then I decided to return to inspect the house, in the area of Al-Qarara. At noon, after I had checked over the house and climbed to the roof, a quadcopter came over. I managed to get away quickly, but as it got closer to the window, it opened fire on me. I tried to flee again, but the house was bombed by the warplanes, and I spent almost five hours under the rubble. I was shot by a drone as I attempted to escape and free my leg. Ultimately a man and his spouse arrived, removed me, and took me to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital at 5 p.m.; in addition to the burns on my face and hands, a leg bone had broken apart and was no longer in my knee. The muscles also needed to be put back together."

According to earlier investigations by Euro-MedMonitor, Israel's army is using the "SMASH Dragon" system made by Israeli company Smart Shooter, which can be supplied to various aircraft; the Matrice 600; and the "Thor" aircraft made by the company Elbit Systems—all of which are highly mobile and versatile, i.e. ideal for short-term operations. Their systems can automatically search buildings and create maps to identify possible targets, carry lethal or non-lethal payloads, and carry out a variety of missions for military personnel and special forces.

These drones have killed dozens of civilians, as confirmed by Euro-Med Monitor in earlier reports, by firing automatic machine guns mounted beneath an aircraft at random gatherings, or shooting directly at people.

Since the beginning of Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, dozens of Palestinian civilians have been killed or wounded by Israeli snipers and quadcopter drones, in addition to those killed during the Israeli army's ground incursions, which began at the end of October 2023 and have intensified in recent weeks.

Israel has used quadcopter drones in a systematic and widespread manner lately to carry out extrajudicial executions and premeditated killings of Palestinian civilians, according to testimonies gathered by Euro-Med Monitor. These drones are used, in particular, against civilians who attempt to return and inspect their homes after the Israeli military retreats from areas it has attacked by land or air.

Given their constant presence in the air, these aircraft are also used to terrorise, intimidate, and negatively impact the psychological well-being of Palestinian civilians by making horrifying noises and broadcasting orders from Israeli soldiers.

Some drones, like DJI drones, were made mainly for use in photography and other industries, but were converted by the Israeli army into intelligence aircraft and instead used for extrajudicial killings and executions.

Drones with various attributes and functional features, known as quadcopters, are produced by Israeli military companies. With a diameter of no more than one metre, they are simple to program and use for remote electronic flying.

In addition to carrying out additional military duties like shooting and carrying bombs, this kind of drone is outfitted with excellent cameras and highly precise listening devices. Numerous suicide drones, also known as loitering weapons, have also been produced. One such example is Israeli company Rafael's "Spike Firefly" aircraft.

Euro-Med Monitor emphasises that, while drones are not illegal weapons (weapons that are prohibited internationally), their use must adhere to international humanitarian law regulations that apply to all armed conflicts, just like any other weapon that is allowed to be used. These regulations ensure respect for the important principles of distinction and proportionality, and require taking all necessary precautions before carrying out any military attack.

Given their advanced technology and advantages over most other weapons, such as their ability to monitor areas with cameras, conduct real-time surveillance, and accurately track, fire at, and move quickly with a target, the main goal of using these drones as weapons in other armed conflicts has been to prevent or reduce civilian casualties in military attacks. By contrast, however, Israel is intentionally using such drones to target Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. This is evident as the majority of Israel's targeting takes place in public spaces where it is

easy to distinguish fighters from civilians, and because the Israeli military flies planes over the areas it targets for periods of time that are long enough to allow for the precise monitoring and evaluation of field conditions; plus, most of the killings occur within a close targeting range.

In a primary report submitted in late December 2023 to United Nations special rapporteurs and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Euro-Med Monitor documented dozens of cases of field executions carried out by the Israeli army in the Strip and requested an immediate investigation into these crimes, calling for the perpetrators to be held accountable and for justice for all victims.

All parties were urged to take serious action within the international community in order to achieve a ceasefire, ensure a cessation of the ongoing unjustifiable killing, open a criminal investigation into all of the Israeli military's reported atrocities, and achieve accountability and justice for every Palestinian victim and survivor.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor called in December for the formation of an independent international investigation committee specialising in Israel's ongoing military attack on the Gaza Strip. It also urged the international community to enable the work of a separate independent international investigation committee concerned with the Occupied Palestinian Territory—a group which was in fact formed in 2021—to carry out its work by ensuring its access to the Strip, and open the necessary investigations into all crimes and violations committed against Palestinians there, including the deliberate killing and extrajudicial execution of civilians.

Euro-Med Monitor also demanded that the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions visit the Strip as soon as feasible to look into the illegal killings that fall under the purview of his substantive mandate.

According to international human rights law, Israeli extrajudicial and judicial executions of Palestinian civilians—whether through direct liquidation or sniping and shooting operations—violate their right to life. The Geneva Conventions classify these executions as war crimes and crimes against humanity, under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and they are a fundamental component of the genocide that Israel has been committing against the Gaza Strip's inhabitants since 7 October 2023.