



Horrific testimonies: Israeli army tortures Palestinians in Gaza physically and psychologically



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📍 Israel-Palestinian Territory

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Geneva - As Israel continues its genocide in the Gaza Strip, ongoing since 7 October 2023, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor has documented the Israeli army's sadistic abuse and torture of Palestinians there. This includes purposefully causing severe

physical and psychological harm, which will undoubtedly have long-term effects, after storming their homes and shelter centres or attacking them on forced evacuation routes and so-called “safe corridors”.

In a new statement issued on Wednesday following the Israeli detention, investigation, and interrogation of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, the Euro-Med Monitor team confirmed that it had received horrifying testimonies and had personally interviewed recently-released victims of cruel torture practices that appeared to have a sadistic bent. These attacks have left deep wounds and numerous scars on the survivors’ bodies and have negatively affected their psychological health, stated the rights group. It appears from the documented testimonies that the attacks were carried out in retaliation and as collective punishment for being Palestinian.

Ramadan Shamlakh, a 21-year-old who lives in Gaza’s Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood, told the Euro-Med Monitor team that the Israeli army arbitrarily detained him and used him as a human shield, in violation of international law. The soldiers then took turns torturing him with cruel methods, leaving him with extensive scarring on his face and body, some of which will never heal, including the amputation of an ear.

Shamlakh said that he was with his brother Ahmed, who was injured back in 2014, and their three sisters when an Israeli army force raided their home. The

soldiers immediately began to beat him and his brother badly, concentrating on Ahmed's abdominal wound until they eventually reopened it.

According to Shamlakh, the soldiers took his siblings to an unknown location, while holding him captive before torturing him. They brought him to a tank and used him as a human shield before storming a building's upper floors. Once the flats were secured, they beat him severely, threw stones at him, made him lie on his stomach, and threw stones at his legs. Meanwhile, one of the soldiers used a knife to cut his fingers and nails, then inserted the blade into Shamlakh's ear and removed part of it. Finally, they struck him with a chair that was in the room, as well as directly in the head with an "iron frying pan".

"After that, they took me to the first floor, where an investigator began interrogating me while severely beating me in the face, even though I had repeatedly said that I was a civilian," he explained. "They tortured me for hours, leaving deep wounds and scars on my face, particularly under my eyes, my chest, and my fingers and nails." (The Euro-Med Monitor team noted that they saw dozens of wounds and scars on his face and on all of his fingers and nails.) "I was told to leave the house without taking anything, even though I was only wearing my underwear, and to head south on Salah al-Din Road."

Israeli soldiers stopped Shamlakh at their checkpoint on Salah al-Din Road, he said, and questioned him about the marks on his body; he replied that they

were theirs. They held him in the cold weather for 30 minutes, along with other detainees, for no reason before ultimately letting him go. He was found by young men in the Nuseirat neighbourhood in the central Gaza Strip, who gave him clothes and took him to Al-Awda Hospital for diagnosis and treatment.

“A.M.”, who wished to remain anonymous due to safety concerns, informed Euro-Med Monitor’s team of his own experience. Like Shamlakh, A.M. was arrested by Israeli soldiers in his home in Al-Zaytoun and severely beaten during his arrest. The soldiers yelled, “You did what you did to us on 7 October, and today you are in our hands; we will eliminate you,” A.M. told the team. Using a knife, he said, one of the soldiers started making cuts on A.M.’s face, hands and back, repeating the words, “We will eliminate you.”

In a separate testimony, “Y.M.”, who also requested anonymity due to safety concerns, said that he had sought refuge at Yarmouk Stadium in Gaza City before it was stormed by the Israeli army. There, he was subjected to torture: severe beatings, death threats, strip searches, and violent interrogation.

“When the soldiers stormed the Yarmouk Stadium, they asked for the women to be separated from the men, and for the men to line up behind each other,” Y.M. told Euro-Med Monitor. “When one of the soldiers asked for someone to speak to him in English, I responded.”

The soldier told Y.M. in English to order the other men to take off their clothes and throw them on the floor. “Then he began asking me sideways questions, hitting me, and giving me hard punches all over my body,” asserted Y.M. “Who taught you English? Was it Hamas?” the soldier asked him. “No,” Y.M. answered.

“When he asked where I lived,” continued Y.M., “I replied that I was from the Shuja’iya neighbourhood, and that is when I stopped being able to count the number of punches and blows that came at my face from all directions.”

“There were five soldiers working in shifts, one for questioning and four for torture,” he remarked. “One of the soldiers asked the other two to open my legs, while the other two started striking me in the vulnerable parts of my body with their iron-covered toes and heels.” He added that afterwards, one of them “almost choked” him by grabbing his neck and threatening to strangle him for not admitting that he was a Hamas member. “After about an hour of beatings, one of the soldiers threw me to the ground and threatened to shoot me if I raised my head,” Y.M. told the Euro-Med Monitor team.

Y.M. further stated that following his beating and torture, he underwent a computerised “security check” and search of his electronic device before he was released and permitted to exit the stadium, indicating that there was no basis for his torture.

Euro-Med Monitor confirmed that it has received numerous testimonies from Palestinians who were subjected to torture and inhumane treatment when the Israeli army stormed their homes, displacement centres, and neighbourhoods. These testimonies included stories of severe beatings, abuse, and humiliation, as well as harm to the victims' personal dignity. Additionally, Euro-Med Monitor team members noted that they had observed Israeli soldiers intentionally leaving marks and traces on victims' bodies that do not easily disappear, as well as engaging in a sadistic level of torture.

All of these actions, according to the human rights group, show that Israeli soldiers are actively targeting the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and causing them great physical and psychological suffering in the name of their national group—further evidence of the crime of genocide.

The Geneva-based organisation emphasised that these crimes are classified as war crimes and crimes against humanity under international criminal law, and that they are subject to review and investigation by both international and national courts of states under universal jurisdiction, regardless of the location of the crime and the nationality of the victim or perpetrator. Euro-Med Monitor also noted that the laws in effect in these countries prohibit the use of torture as a weapon, which is regarded as one of the peremptory rules of international law and imposes an international obligation on all countries

to question their perpetrators, hold them accountable, and prevent their impunity.

In this particular context, Euro-Med Monitor asserts that Israeli legislation and judicial precedents permit the use of torture in numerous flexible cases (in what are referred to as cases of “necessity” and “time bombs”) and grant its perpetrators legal cover and judicial immunity from any accountability and prosecution at the domestic level. This, in turn, prevents any opportunity for appropriate accountability, and as a result, the international community’s commitment—which includes the jurisdiction of international courts and national courts of states—remains valid and complementary.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor renewed its call for Alice Jill Edwards, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the subject of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, to look into the serious crimes and grave rights violations that Palestinian detainees have suffered, and to submit reports on the same, in order to help international courts and investigation committees with their work in examining and trying cases of crimes committed by Israel’s army against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

It further demanded that the UN Rapporteur make a swift country visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, to hear witness and victim testimonies, take all required action, and send urgent appeals to all relevant parties.

Euro-Med Monitor again called for the formation of an independent international investigation committee specialising in the ongoing military attack on the Gaza Strip, and to enable the independent international investigation committee concerned with the Occupied Palestinian Territory that was formed in 2021 to carry out its work, including ensuring its access to the Strip and ability to open the necessary investigations into all crimes and violations committed against Palestinians there.



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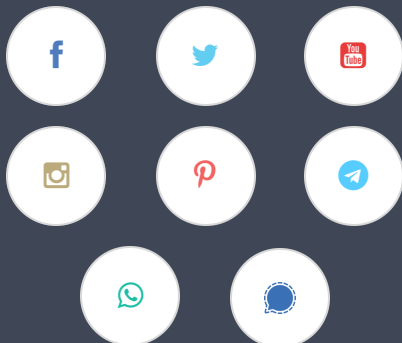
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