



## Int'l committee must investigate Israel's holding of dead bodies in Gaza



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📍 Israel-Palestinian Territory

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**Geneva** - The Israeli army has been holding the bodies of dozens of Palestinians killed during its genocide in the Gaza Strip beginning on 7 October, and Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor has called for the creation of an independent international investigation committee into organ theft suspicions.

Euro-Med Monitor has documented the Israeli army's confiscation of dozens of dead bodies from Al-

Shifa Medical Complex and the Indonesian Hospital in the northern Gaza Strip, and others from the vicinity of the so-called “safe corridor” (Salah al-Din Road) designated for displaced people heading to the central and southern parts of the Strip.

According to Euro-Med Monitor, the Israeli army also dug up and confiscated the bodies from a mass grave that was established more than 10 days ago in one of the Al-Shifa Medical Complex's courtyards.

While dozens of corpses were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which in turn transported them to the southern Gaza Strip to complete the burial process, the Israeli army is still holding the bodies of dozens of dead people.

Concerns about organ theft from the corpses were brought up by Euro-Med Monitor, which cited reports from medical professionals in Gaza who quickly examined a few bodies after their release. These medical professionals found evidence of organ theft, including missing cochleas and corneas as well as other vital organs like livers, kidneys, and hearts.

Doctors at several Gazan hospitals told the Euro-Med Monitor team that organ theft cannot be proven or disproven solely by forensic medical examination, since multiple bodies underwent surgical procedures prior to death. They stated that it was impossible for them to conduct a full analytical examination of the recovered corpses given the intense air and artillery attacks and influx of wounded civilians, but they detected several signs of possible organ theft by the Israeli military.

Israel has a long history of holding onto the bodies of dead Palestinians, Euro-Med Monitor said, as it holds the remains of at least 145 Palestinians in its morgues and approximately 255 in its “Numbers Cemetery”, [which is near the Jordanian border and off-limits to the public](#), in addition to 75 missing people who have not been identified by Israel.

According to the Geneva-based rights organisation, Israel stores the bodies of dead Palestinians in what it refers to as “enemy combatant graves”, which are covert mass graves situated in particular locations such as closed military zones, where interments and burials are secretly conducted. The remains or bodies of the dead are marked only with metal plates.

According to an earlier report by Euro-Med Monitor, Israeli authorities has kept the dead bodies of Palestinians in subfreezing temperatures—sometimes below 40 degrees Celsius—in order to ensure that they remain undisturbed and to possibly hide the theft of organs.

According to the human rights group, Israel has recently made it lawful to hold dead Palestinians’ bodies and steal their organs. One such decision is the 2019 Israeli Supreme Court ruling that permits the military ruler to temporarily bury the bodies in what is known as the “Numbers Cemetery”. By the end of 2021, the Israeli Knesset (or Parliament) had passed laws allowing the army and police to hold onto the bodies of dead Palestinians.

There have been reports in recent years of the unlawful use of Palestinian corpses held by Israel, including the theft of organs and their use in Israeli university medical school labs.

Israeli doctor Meira Weiss disclosed in her book *Over Their Dead Bodies* that organs taken from dead Palestinians were utilised in medical research at Israeli universities' medical faculties and were transplanted into Jewish-Israeli patients' bodies. Even more concerning are admissions made by Yehuda Hess, the former director of Israel's Abu Kabir Institute of Forensic Medicine, about the theft of human tissues, organs, and skin from dead Palestinians over a period of time without their relatives' knowledge or approval.

Israel is thought to be the biggest hub for the illegal global trade in human organs, according to a 2008 investigation by the American CNN network, which also revealed that Israel participated in the theft of organs from dead Palestinians for illegal use.

Euro-Med Monitor confirmed that Israel is the only country that systematically holds the dead bodies of those it kills, and is classified as one of the world's biggest hubs for the illegal trade of human organs under the pretext of "security deterrence" and in total violation of international charters and agreements.

Like any other country, Israel must abide by the rules of international law, which stipulate the necessity of respecting and protecting the bodies of the dead during armed conflicts. The Fourth Geneva Convention stresses that, "Each party to the conflict must take all possible measures to prevent the dead from being despoiled. Mutilation of dead bodies is prohibited."

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor also confirmed that refusing to hand over the bodies of the dead so

their grieving families can bury them with dignity and in accordance with their religious beliefs may amount to collective punishment, which is strictly prohibited in Article 50 of the Hague Regulations and Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.



## EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR

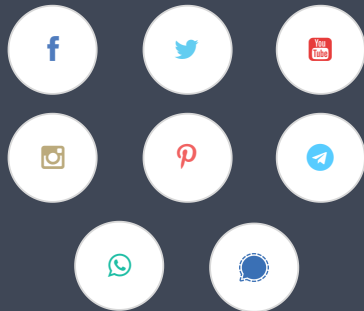
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