

[Editor's Note: The following is a press release issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on July 19, 2024. It can be seen online at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/gaza-killing-hind-rajab-andher-family-war-crime-too-many-warn-experts>.]

## **Gaza: Killing of Hind Rajab and Her Family – a War Crime Too Many, Warn Experts**

GENEVA (19 July 2024) – The killing of five-year old Hind Rajab, her family and two paramedics may amount to a war crime, independent experts\* warned today, denouncing Israeli claims that its troops were not in the area at the time as “unacceptable.”

They urged an immediate halt to the attacks against the civilian population in Gaza, which have already killed more than 38,000 Palestinians, including 13,000 children, warning that the systemic nature of the attacks may amount to a crime against humanity.

“The absence of proper investigation and accountability, more than five months after the tragic killing of Hind and six other members of her family trapped in a car which came under Israeli fire in Gaza is deeply troubling and may in itself amount to a violation of the right to life,” the experts said.

Two paramedics from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society were also killed when their ambulance came under Israeli fire while attempting to save Hind’s family. Audio recordings of calls between Hind and emergency services suggest that she was the only survivor in the car before she was also killed.

Recent forensic analysis of the crime scene offers compelling evidence about the location of the family’s car stranded in the line of sight of an Israeli tank and how it was shot at from very close range using a type of weapon that can only be attributed to the Israeli forces.

“The brutality of these killings seem to illustrate how reckless the army has been in its Gaza campaign: all instances of extrajudicial killing must be duly investigated and accounted for,” the experts said.

“Hind’s family, like many others in Gaza, had been forcibly displaced multiple times since Israel’s military operations in the strip,” the experts said. “They were shot dead while fleeing the neighbourhood of Tal Al-Hawa seeking safety, in what seems to be part of a broader pattern of indiscriminate killings of civilians attempting to find shelter and escape the fighting in Gaza upon so-called ‘evacuation’ orders by the Israeli military.”

“These killings are not isolated cases,” the experts said. “We are extremely troubled by the pattern of apparent indiscriminate and targeted attacks against civilians in Gaza, including on locations used for humanitarian assistance or to shelter IDPs,” they said. “The firing of heavy-calibre projectiles at a humanitarian zone near an office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Gaza, killing 22 displaced civilians, and most recently the attacks on IDP tents in Al Mawasi area, on Ash Shati’ Refugee Camp, and on the UNRWA Abu Oreiban school sheltering IDPs, among others, killing nearly 320 Palestinians, half of them women and children, have reinforced the fact that there is no safe place in Gaza” the experts said. “Such attacks amount to grave violations of international humanitarian law, must be promptly and reliably investigated, and should be severely punished.

“The willful or indiscriminate killing of protected persons, including civilians, medical personnel and humanitarian workers, amount to war crimes, and if systematic, crimes against humanity, and should be prevented at all costs,” the experts warned. “We remain deeply troubled by

the total impunity and apparent lack of investigations, and prevention of these crimes. This is all the more worrisome in the context of the recent order from the International Court of Justice for Israel to take immediate measures to protect Gaza's population from the risk of genocide," the experts said.

"The Government of Israel and its armed forces must take immediate measures to protect the right to life of all protected persons in Gaza, including women and children" they said.

They urged the Israeli Government to allow access of independent experts, including international human rights monitoring bodies into Gaza to ensure that all violations of international law committed since the beginning of the Israeli military operation in Gaza are credibly investigated. The experts repeated their offer of technical assistance.

Renewing calls for an immediate end to the bloodshed and grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including the unconditional release of all hostages, the experts urged the international community to ensure accountability for those responsible and protection and urgent assistance for the population in Gaza.

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**\*The Experts:**

**Morris Tidball-Binz**, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions;

**Ben Saul**, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism;

**Dorothy Estrada Tanck (Chair), Laura Nyirinkindi (Vice-Chair), Claudia Flores, Ivana Krstić, and Haina Lu**, Working group on discrimination against women and girls;

**Paula Gaviria Betancur**, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons;

**Reem Alsalem**, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences.

The Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

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