

Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item 7: General Debate: Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories
Date: 2 October 2024
Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 57th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), NGO in special consultative status

Occupied Palestinian Territories: Human rights defenders targeted amid ongoing war crimes

Mr. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada condemns the impunity for ongoing war crimes and violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel.

Since October 2023, tens of thousands¹ of civilians have been killed, including hundreds of human rights defenders.² The Gaza death toll is now over 41,500, mostly children. In the West Bank, Israeli raids have killed hundreds, and illegal Israeli settlers attack Palestinians with impunity.

The expansion of the war into Lebanon³ and Syria has killed hundreds of civilians and displaced up to a million.⁴

Israeli authorities arbitrarily detain human rights defenders throughout the OPT, including lawyers, journalists, and medical and humanitarian workers. Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners are reportedly systematic.⁵

Israel continues to impede the legitimate work of human rights organizations through unjustified smears, reprisals, and abuse of security laws.⁶

We also deplore arbitrary detention of defenders and others by OPT authorities.⁷

We call on all States to take urgent measures to ensure:

- An immediate ceasefire and a halt to weapons sales contributing to violations;
- Implementation of the International Court of Justice orders⁸ and Advisory Opinion;⁹
- Cooperation with the ICC¹⁰ and UN bodies; and
- Immediate release of all arbitrarily detained persons, including lawyers, defenders, journalists, medical and humanitarian workers, children, and hostages.

Thank you.

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- ¹ UNRWA Situation Report #140 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem
Friday, September 27, 2024, <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-140-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.
- ² 1,358 Palestinian human rights defenders may have been killed over the last 10 months, PBI Canada, 17 August 2024, <https://pbicanada.org/2024/08/17/1358-palestinian-human-rights-defenders-may-have-been-killed-over-the-last-10-months/>
- ³ Exploding pagers and radios: A terrifying violation of international law, say UN experts, 19 September 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/09/exploding-pagers-and-radios-terrifying-violation-international-law-say-un>; UNHCR: Attacks on civilians pile fresh misery on Lebanon, UNHCR, 27 September 2024, <https://www.unhcr.ca/news/unhcr-attacks-on-civilians-pile-fresh-misery-on-lebanon/>.
- ⁴ Lebanon says nearly 1 million now displaced by war. These are some of the stories of those forced to flee, CBC, 29 September 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/lebanon-displaced-beirut-1.7337252>.
Lebanon crisis: 90,000 displaced in last 72 hours, warns refugee agency, UN News, 26 September 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/09/1154921>. UNHCR scales up support as people flee Lebanon for Syria, UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/unhcr-scales-support-people-flee-lebanon-syria>.
- ⁵ Israel's escalating use of torture against Palestinians in custody a preventable crime against humanity: UN experts, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/08/israels-escalating-use-torture-against-palestinians-custody-preventable>.
- ⁶ Attacks against human rights defenders and obliteration of civic space in Gaza unacceptable, says UN expert, OHCHR, 16 September 2024 (The expert is Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the statement is endorsed by Morris Tidball-Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Gina Romero, Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, and Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/09/attacks-against-human-rights-defenders-and-obliteration-civic-space-gaza>.
- ⁷ Special Rapporteur, July 2023, para 11, 12, *supra* note 5, Detailed findings on attacks and restrictions on and harassment of civil society actors, by all duty bearers, Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, A/HRC/53/CRP.1, 2 June 2023, Section IV, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session53/A-HRC-53-CRP1.pdf>;
- ⁸ International Court of Justice, Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), Order of 26 January 2024 <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>;
Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), Request for the modification of the Order of 26 January 2024 indicating provisional measures, Order of 28 March 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240328-ord-01-00-en.pdf>.
- ⁹ International Court of Justice, Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/186>.
- ¹⁰ International Criminal Court, State of Palestine: Situation in the State of Palestine, ICC-01/18, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/palestine>.