

# United Nations Office at Geneva

## Multimedia Newsroom

TRANSCRIPT

### **HRC 59 - Commission of Inquiry on OPT and Israel - 17 June 2025**

<https://unognewsroom.org/story/en/2676/hrc-59-commission-of-inquiry-opt-17-june-2025>

2025-06-17

**Check against delivery. This is an automatically generated transcription. It is delivered without human review and does not constitute an official record.**

00:00:01:12 - 00:00:01:40

[Other language spoken]

00:00:01:39 - 00:00:03:75

President, Excellencies, good afternoon.

00:00:04:28 - 00:00:07:24

I speak before this Council.

00:00:07:44 - 00:00:25:64

20 months into the most ruthless, prolonged and widespread attack against the Palestinian people since 1948, the goal of the Israeli Government is abundantly clear, the destruction of life in Gaza.

00:00:26:28 - 00:00:31:92

For a year and a half now, our Commission has been investigating the violence in Gaza.

00:00:32:20 - 00:00:37:64

We have seen constant escalation and more and more deaths and injuries.

00:00:38:79 - 00:00:46:00

The violence has extended now into southern Lebanon, then Yemen and now Iran.

00:00:46:43 - 00:00:55:11

We have said in relation to violence in Palestine and Israel that security can only come with peace.

00:00:55:43 - 00:01:03:39

We say that again now in relation to this new regional conflict involving Israel and Iran.

00:01:04:12 - 00:01:13:15

Peace, justice and respect for human rights are the only ways forward in which the peoples of the region can live in security.

00:01:18:20 - 00:01:29:52

We should not let this regional escalation divert our attention from the ongoing carnage in Gaza, where hundreds continue to be killed each week.

00:01:29:84 - 00:01:46:04

In the last three months, the entire population of Gaza was forcibly transferred into small enclaves and Palestinians were killed while attempting to receive aid, bringing life to its bleakest point to date.

00:01:46:92 - 00:01:50:48

Children have paid an unimaginable price.

00:01:50:79 - 00:02:08:00

More than 1300 children have been killed just from the end of the ceasefire on 18th March to date, and more than 15,000 children have been identified as having been killed since October 2023.

00:02:08:43 - 00:02:11:47

These are not just intolerable numbers.

00:02:12:12 - 00:02:20:84

Each child killed represents a past, a present, and a future that will no longer exist.

00:02:21:75 - 00:02:33:39

Excellencies, the report before you today examines attacks on educational, religious and cultural sites in the occupied Palestinian territory and in Israel.

00:02:33:84 - 00:02:45:00

Our findings show that as Israeli security forces killed thousands of children, they also obliterated the education system in Gaza.

00:02:45:31 - 00:02:58:84

More than 90% of schools and university buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, creating conditions where education for children has been made impossible.

00:02:59:40 - 00:03:09:28

With the loss of education, Palestinians are also losing their source of stability, of hope and of a possibility for the future.

00:03:10:03 - 00:03:28:19

Israeli airstrikes have targeted educational facilities believed to be safe refuge areas, killing the displaced, including children and women, and deliberately shelled, burned and demolished schools and universities.

00:03:28:52 - 00:03:48:20

The Commission could not identify any military necessity which justifies such actions, and we conclude that these actions show an intent to destroy these facilities in order to curtail Palestinians access to education in the long term.

00:03:48:84 - 00:04:12:00

These attacks were part of a wide, widespread and relentless assault against the Palestinian people in which Israeli forces have committed war crimes, including directing attacks against civilians and wilful killing, and the crime against humanity of extermination excellencies.

00:04:12:28 - 00:04:24:72

The systematic targeting of educational facilities has extended well beyond Gaza and has impacted all Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

00:04:25:12 - 00:04:42:16

In the occupied West Bank, including E Jerusalem, closures, demolition orders, restrictions, military raids and large scale military operations have resulted in a significant loss of school days.

00:04:43:36 - 00:04:56:04

Settlers have been responsible for violent attacks against schools and against students, leaving children and educators terrified and traumatised.

00:04:56:39 - 00:05:08:00

Israeli authorities often directly incite such attacks or do not protect Palestinians, promoting a regime of impunity for violent settlers.

00:05:09:31 - 00:05:10:12

[Other language spoken]

00:05:10:12 - 00:05:28:00

Attacks by Israeli security forces have damaged more than half of all religious and cultural sites in the Gaza Strip, part of a wider campaign to destroy civilian targets and civilian infrastructure

through air strikes and shelling.

00:05:28:63 - 00:05:39:19

Israeli attacks also targeted religious sites that served as places of refuge, killing hundreds of people, including women and children.

00:05:39:60 - 00:05:57:84

Such damage was completely avoidable, given that Israeli security forces knew or should have known the locations and the significance of Gaza's prominent cultural sites and should have planned all military operations accordingly.

00:05:58:36 - 00:06:26:84

The damage to religious and historical buildings, monuments and other tangible heritage has a cascading effect and deeply affects intangible cultural elements such as religious and cultural practises, memories and history, undermining the identity of Palestinians as a people in the occupied West Bank, including E Jerusalem.

00:06:26:83 - 00:06:43:43

The Commission found that Israeli authorities have appropriated, developed and profited from cultural heritage sites representing Palestinian Jewish and other cultures and have suppressed non Jewish heritage.

00:06:43:87 - 00:07:04:95

They displaced Palestinian residents from those sites, blocked or severely restricted Palestinians from accessing such sites, and conducted archaeological excavations leading to the creation of tourist attractions, which is unlawful under international law.

00:07:06:39 - 00:07:14:23

Such actions deny the relationship of Palestinians to the lands, heritage and history.

00:07:14:48 - 00:07:37:56

Israel has been using cultural heritage and settlements as leverage for its unlawful territorial claims in the occupied West Bank, in flagrant defiance of multiple United Nations resolutions and the 2024 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice Excellence is.

00:07:37:56 - 00:07:59:16

We have repeatedly requested the Israeli authorities to grant us immediate, unimpeded access to the occupied Palestinian territory, including Gaza, in accordance with our mandate and the order of the International Court of Justice of 24th May 2024.

00:08:00:07 - 00:08:03:39

Israel has ignored all of these requests.

00:08:04:00 - 00:08:10:92

The Commission reiterates its call for a complete and unconditional cessation of hostilities.

00:08:11:16 - 00:08:22:88

We demand an immediate and full end to the siege imposed on Gaza and the release of all those arbitrarily detained, including all hostages.

00:08:23:07 - 00:08:25:19

Both Israeli and Palestinian.

00:08:25:72 - 00:08:32:51

Attacks against educational, religious and cultural sites must stop immediately.

00:08:33:75 - 00:08:44:72

All parties must ensure the protection, preservation and development of cultural heritage sites representing Jewish and Palestinian cultures alike.

00:08:45:24 - 00:08:46:08

[Other language spoken]

00:08:46:08 - 00:08:55:32

We have emphasised on several occasions that atrocities committed by one side do not justify those committed by the other.

00:08:55:32 - 00:09:03:32

In reaction, all those who have committed atrocities must be brought to justice and held fully accountable.

00:09:03:63 - 00:09:23:72

We have also noticed that the October 7th attacks against Israel and Israel's subsequent attacks on Gaza were preceded by decades of violence and retribution, dispossession, unlawful occupation and denial of the Palestinians right to self determination.

00:09:24:36 - 00:09:59:79

The extensive physical destruction of Gaza, the dismantling of its educational and healthcare systems, the destruction of housing and infrastructure, and the targeting and destruction of heritage sites, including limiting of access to those sites and the erasure of their heterogenic history, are intended to erode Palestinians historical ties to the land and weaken their collective identity, thereby hindering their right to self determination.

00:10:00:12 - 00:10:25:91

In line with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the Commission emphasises that all Member States, individually and collectively and the United Nations are under a legal obligation to work cooperatively to bring to an end the unlawful occupation and ensure the Palestinians right to self determination.

00:10:26:44 - 00:10:48:36

The Commission strongly supports the resolution adopted by the General Assembly last week condemning the use of starvation as a weapon of war, demanding a full lifting of the Israeli blockade on humanitarian aid and insisting on the protection of civilians under international law.

00:10:48:75 - 00:10:56:12

It is an incumbent on all states to act resolutely to end the slaughter and stop the atrocities.

00:10:56:44 - 00:10:57:04

[Other language spoken]

00:10:57:03 - 00:10:57:55

[Other language spoken]

00:11:00:39 - 00:11:01:39

Thank you very much.

00:11:01:48 - 00:11:03:32

In line with usual.

00:11:03:32 - 00:11:03:87

[Other language spoken]

00:11:03:87 - 00:11:10:72

We will begin by hearing from delegations of concerned countries, and I would now like to pass the floor to the distinguished representative of Israel.

00:11:12:55 - 00:11:16:95

I note that the Israeli delegation is not present.

00:11:18:27 - 00:11:22:51

I would now like to pass the floor to the distinguished representative of the State of Palestine.

00:11:22:51 - 00:11:24:07

[Other language spoken]

00:11:28:55 - 00:11:29:03

[Other language spoken]

00:11:29:15 - 00:11:29:55

[Other language spoken]

00:11:29:55 - 00:11:45:47

President, the State of Palestine thanks and appreciates the Commission of Inquiry and the Secretariat for their significant efforts in preparing this important report, despite the logistical, logistical and technical difficulties it they face.

00:11:45:84 - 00:11:53:24

The report monitors the crimes committed by the occupation against educational facilities and religious and cultural sites.

00:11:53:24 - 00:12:09:44

The report includes detailed information and legal analysis of information on attacks against educational facilities, including air raids, bombardment, arson, deliberate killing of civilian civilians who took refuge in schools.

00:12:09:44 - 00:12:28:00

This is a war crime and crimes against humanity as well as genocide and in the West Bank, including E Jerusalem and the educational system suffers from escalated military operations and attacks perpetrated by the occupation forces and the herds of settlers against students and schools.

00:12:28:27 - 00:12:43:95

In addition to checkpoints, there are more than 900 checkpoints and iron gates that separate cities, villages and camps and impedes the movement of the students to access the schools, institutions and universities.

00:12:44:12 - 00:12:55:67

They also repeated attacks against nurseries, children's schools, and the closure of a number of schools, including six schools that are part of Andrea and E Jerusalem, President.

00:12:56:12 - 00:13:01:79

The religious and cultural sites were not spared.

00:13:02:60 - 00:13:06:60

Mosques and churches were targeting Gaza, most of whom were destroyed.

00:13:06:84 - 00:13:29:56

There are Christian and Muslim murderers who were killed while taking refuge in in the in them and the these schools and and the religious sites are civilian properties in accordance with the international law and also in accordance with the Agreement for the protection of Cultural Property in Conflict.

00:13:29:72 - 00:13:40:12

The Commission reiterates so that there is no evidence corroborating the allegations of the occupation for the use of these properties for military purposes and the West Bank.

00:13:40:12 - 00:14:03:87

The occupation forces appropriated Christian, Jewish and Islamic religious and cultural sites, denied access to them, and the Commission concluded that these practises, including the transfer of responsibility for archaeological and culture sites in the West Bank to the Israeli antiquities authorities, is an illegal annexation or obliteration of history.

00:14:04:08 - 00:14:14:80

The report also details the magnitude of the tragedy faced by or faced by educational culture, religious institutions.

00:14:14:79 - 00:14:21:95

This threatens the current situation of the Pacian people, their future and this also has a bearing on our right to self determination.

00:14:22:36 - 00:14:55:36

Thus, all parties should implement the recommendations of the Commission and countries should shoulder their responsibility by taking practical steps in order to stop all violations against educational, culture and religious institutions in accordance with the advisory opinion of the ICG that provides for the legality of occupation, all its consequences and repercussions, and to take provisional measures as ordered or ruled by the ICJ in January, Mars, March and May last year.

00:14:55:36 - 00:14:56:80

To prevent genocide.

00:14:57:00 - 00:15:21:12

We call on all States and institutions to ensure escort and international protection for the entry of aid in terms of food, medicine, water and fuel together and through international and UN agencies rather than the mass murder traps or the so-called US Israeli mechanism that targets aid seekers.

00:15:21:84 - 00:15:26:68

400 of those were killed and 3000 people were were wounded.



00:15:26:67 - 00:15:29:00

The latest crime was committed today.

00:15:29:15 - 00:15:35:19

80 AIDS waiters were killed in Khan units and Rafa and 200 people were wounded.

00:15:35:48 - 00:15:42:72

We call for the implementation of the General Assembly resolution L34 that calls for a ceasefire and the release of hostile.

00:15:43:39 - 00:16:16:63

We call for the release of those administratively detained and forcibly disappeared by bringing pressure to bear on the occupation forces and taking measures through seizing export of weapons and the reconsideration of trade, diplomatic relations and taking punitive measures against the members of the government of extremism, killing, murder and criminality, not to receive them and to implement the principle of accountability and responsibility without double standards.

00:16:16:63 - 00:16:24:75

There are so many martyrs and wounded, most of whom are children and women who were killed in Palestine.

00:16:26:20 - 00:16:29:48

Save the Palestinian people from this government of extremism.

00:16:29:48 - 00:16:29:56

[Other language spoken]