'Abu Ghraib 2.0': IDF Torture Videos Spark Renewed Calls to End US Military Aid to Israel

"It's no surprise... that the same government that tortured Iraqis in Abu Ghraib is funding the same tactics on Palestinians," said Jewish Voice for Peace.

By Brett Wilkins
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Human rights defenders on Tuesday renewed calls for the U.S. government to end American complicity in Israel's "horrific war crimes" after the publication of videos purportedly recorded and shared by Israeli soldiers showing the torture and dehumanization of Palestinian men, some of them naked, in the illegally occupied West Bank.

U.S.-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) were among the groups that condemned the videos, which show armed and uniformed Israeli troops and possibly settlers beating, kicking, stomping, and dragging bound, blindfolded, and naked Palestinian men, forcing them to shout "long live Israel," and draping them in the Israeli flag.

> "The footage of Israeli soldiers torturing Palestinian men in the West Bank is horrific," JVP said on social media. "The Israeli military has brutally abused Palestinian prisoners for decades. As the Israeli military wages a genocidal war in Gaza, its soldiers are no longer hiding this abuse from the public."

> @POTUS @SecBlinken this is on you.

> Should we expect the standard comment from @PressSec about how Israel has a right to defend itself in the West Bank, where Hamas doesn't govern, by carrying out torture tactics on random Palestinian farmers and students? https://t.co/E1Elg7rzyu

> — Dr. Omar Suleiman (@omarsuleiman504) October 31, 2023

"Torture and humiliation [are] a tool of all repressive regimes to punish and destroy the spirit [of] anyone who challenges their oppression," the group continued. "It's no surprise then, that the same government that tortured Iraqis in Abu Ghraib is funding the same tactics on Palestinians. This is disgusting."

JVP added: "CEASE-FIRE NOW! END U.S. MILITARY FUNDING TO ISRAEL NOW!"

The U.S. gives Israel around $4 billion in annual military aid. Last week, President Joe Biden asked Congress to authorize an additional $14 billion in assistance for Israel as it ramps up its war on Gaza in the wake of this month's Hamas-led surprise attacks that killed more than 1,400 Israelis and others, with the death toll since rising to over 1,500, according to state broadcaster *Kan*. Around 200 Israelis and others were taken hostage by Gaza-based militants.

> Watch the video clip .
> Israeli soldiers continue dehumanizing Palestinian detainees, the majority of them are workers.
> So Israel is not defending it self, it is defending its occupation and apartheid.
> pic.twitter.com/urt0didZ43
>
> — Issa Amro عمرو عيسى 🇵🇸 (@Issaamro) October 31, 2023

CAIR national executive director Nihad Awad said in a statement that "enough is enough. President Biden must end our nation's complicity in [Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu's increasingly genocidal campaign of violence against Palestinian civilians in both Gaza and the West Bank."

"Every new massacre that the Israeli government commits further stains our nation's reputation and refutes the claim that our nation supports human rights," Awad added. "If our leaders truly do view Palestinians as human beings worthy of life and freedom, we must stop this madness."

> Soldiers also documented themselves stripping Palestinian detainees then brutalizing their naked bodies and shared it on the world wide web. What does that say about them? They don't even have to hide anything, because the West has written them a blank check of impunity. https://t.co/bg5OrhhfkW
>
> — Mohammed El-Kurd (@m7mdkurd) October 31, 2023

Awad's comments came on the same day that Israeli bombardment of the Jabalia refugee camp, Gaza's largest, killed and wounded at least scores and possibly hundreds of Palestinians.

The Gaza Health Ministry said Tuesday that 8,525 people, including 2,187 women and 3,542 children, have been killed, and over 21,000 others wounded, by Israeli forces since they began bombarding Gaza on October 7.

At least 124 Palestinians have also been killed and over 2,000 injured in attacks by Israeli troops and settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since then, a situation U.S. National

Security Adviser Jake Sullivan called "totally unacceptable."

"Israel must take measures to protect Palestinians from such attacks and to hold accountable any settlers who carry out attacks, as well as any members of the Israeli Defense Forces (sic) who stand by or fail to intervene when these attacks occur," Sullivan said on Sunday.

> Israel must take measures to protect Palestinians from Israeli extremist settler violence, hold attackers accountable and IDF who standby or fail to intervene. We've made clear to the Israeli gov these attacks need to stop & those responsible need to be held accountable. pic.twitter.com/8lnDqDFWIn
>
> — Matthew Miller (@StateDeptSpox) October 30, 2023

The newly published torture videos follow reports earlier this month of Israeli soldiers and settlers torturing a group of Palestinian men in the central West Bank village of Wadi al-Seeq on October 12. According to the victims, they were beaten, stripped, urinated on, and sexually assaulted.

"All the monstrous, inhumane, or immoral means of interrogation you could think of were used against us. You would have thought we were at Guantánamo or Abu Ghraib," one of the men, 46-year-old Mohammad Matar (known as Abu Hassan), told +972 Magazine, referring to the notorious U.S. military prisons in Cuba and Iraq, two of the numerous American facilities were detainees were tortured—sometimes to death.

> I'm not going to show the gruesome ones, but you have videos of Palestinians stripped completely naked in the West Bank and soldiers are taunting them, beating them, and humiliating them.
>
> It's Abu Ghraib 2.0. This is what US military aid is subsidizing
>
> — Remi Kanazi (@Remroum) October 31, 2023

"They had our hands tied behind our backs, our eyes covered, our faces in the ground," Abu Hassan said. "They stepped on our heads and said: t'Eat! Eat the sheep shit!"

"They jumped on our backs intending to paralyze us, to break the spinal cord," he added. "They also tried to hit us on our genitals to mutilate us, 30 to 40 times. They kept taking turns to hit us."

> Since the October 7 massacre by Hamas, settler pogroms have become routine, yet this is a new low. It's happening because too many are silent. Because "now is not the time". And in silence, we stand idly by. With every silence, we give our consent. Never stay silent.
>
> — Breaking the Silence (@BtSIsrael) October 23, 2023

An Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson told +972 Magazine that "the manner in which

the arrest was carried out and the conduct of the forces in the field was contrary to what was expected of soldiers and commanders in the IDF."

"After the initial investigation, a decision was made to dismiss the commander of the unit that carried out the arrest," the spokesperson added. "In the circumstances of the matter and in view of the seriousness of the suspicions, it was decided to open an investigation by the military police."

On Monday, the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) sounded the alarm on what it called "colonial violence and ethnic cleansing" in Masafer Yatta, a collection of 19 hamlets in the southern West Bank where the Israeli government in 2022 ordered the expulsion of 2,000 Palestinians to make way for an Israeli military training facility.

According to ISM:

Settler militias are terrorizing Palestinians by invading their villages during pogroms, armed with assault rifles, often wearing Israeli army uniforms and accompanied by Israeli soldiers. Palestinians and ISM activists have reported and documented cases of settlers beating up Palestinian residents, including women, children, and the elderly; settlers and soldiers shooting towards Palestinian houses… destroying water pumps and electric grids, uprooting trees, and taking up Palestinian fields, planting Israeli flags on Palestinian land and houses, and even forcing Palestinians to sing pro-Israel chants and to wave an Israeli flag while holding them at gunpoint and filming them.

ISM also said that on Sunday, "settlers and soldiers invaded the village of Susyia and threatened residents that if they don't leave within 24 hours, they will be back and start killing Palestinians in the village."

"A similar threat to residents of the village of Khirbet Zanuta has already resulted in the community leaving the land in order to save their families," the group added.

The Times of Israel reported Tuesday that Israeli settlers torched a home in the Masafer Yatta village of Khirbet Asfi al-Tahta.

مستوطنون يحرقون منزل وكهف في خربة اصفي التحتا بمسافر يطا جنوب #الخليل #انقذوا_مسافر_يطا pic.twitter.com/Wvsaq5mo3r

— samahpal23 (@samahpal23) October 30, 2023

The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has reported the ethnic cleansing of at least scores of Palestinian families from their homes and farms in Area C, the Israel-designated West Bank occupation zone completely administered by Israel.

"While all eyes are on Gaza… the ethnic cleansing in the West Bank could intensify further," Israeli international law and human rights professor Neve Gordon wrote for the *London Review of Books* blog Monday, "with Israeli forces pushing Palestinians out of their homes and possibly across international borders."

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Brett Wilkins is a staff writer for Common Dreams.

Featured image: Bound, blindfolded, and stripped Palestinian men sit on the ground after being detained by Israeli forces in the illegally occupied West Bank. (Photo: Breaking the Silence/X)

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