

Israeli Extra-Judicial Executions

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

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At 8:50AM on February 27, an Israeli aircraft fired two missiles at a civilian microbus on the coastal road near Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. Six members of the Izziddin al-Qassam Brigades were in it at the time. Five of them were killed. The sixth one was seriously injured.

Twenty minutes later, another aircraft attacked a vehicle in which other Izziddin al-Qassam Brigades members were traveling. They escaped harm by fleeing before missiles struck their car and destroyed it.

On March 1, Hamas reported that Israelis killed 91 Palestinians in February, 83 in Gaza and eight in West Bank, and the killing continues to escalate. The International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC) said eyewitnesses confirmed that IDF troops and tanks invaded Jabalyia (in Gaza) before dawn on Saturday. They targeted the refugee camp, struck at resident homes, attacked medical relief workers, fired missiles at cars and in residential areas, and killed at least 37 Palestinians (mostly civilians) and injured 120 others by midday. IMEMC later on Saturday raised the toll to 56 dead and updated it again Sunday AM to 98 as IDF forces continued rampaging without letup.

Haaretz first reported 34 deaths on Saturday, including five children and three women. Later in the day, it upped the total to 50, then 59 and by Sunday noon the total known killed was "more than 70." AP first indicated 33 deaths, then raised it to 45, then 50 late in the day and 66 by Sunday morning (plus about 200 wounded) and nearly 100 deaths since February 27.

The Palestinian Ma'an News Agency reported 84 deaths since Saturday, 98 in total since February 27 and over 200 wounded, many with mangled bodies and serious life-threatening injuries. Throughout the weekend, Israeli aircraft struck many targets, including Hamas' headquarters building (unoccupied at the time) that "completely collapsed" and injured five people, according to witnesses.

Reports continue being updated, and the latest 6PM Gaza time one from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) indicates the following: 101 documented deaths since February 27, including 49 unarmed civilians. They include 25 children and five women. In addition, more than 250 people have been injured, mostly unarmed civilians, and many injuries are serious. Further, there's been widespread destruction of homes, other buildings and property throughout Gaza. As it usually does, the IDF employs "disproportionate and excessive lethal force in residential districts, with utter disregard for the lives of civilians."

Under international law, these are crimes of war and against humanity. On March 1, the Palestinian human rights organization, Al-Haq, issued a statement saying: "Many of the

recent Israeli attacks constitute war crimes which may amount to grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, for which (Israelis are) criminally responsible” and must face trial. Al-Haq called on the international community to act because “All states have criminal jurisdiction to try (the) accused....by virtue of the principle of universal jurisdiction....No excuse can therefore justify their inaction in view of the unlawful willful killing of (Palestinian) civilians in” occupied Palestine.

PCHR also reported that an Israeli aircraft bombed Abd El-Rahman Mohammad Ali Atallah’s home in Gaza City on Saturday. It was completely destroyed and killed six members of his family, including three women. Six other family members were injured, four of whom were children and one was a “two-day old” infant. The situation is dire, hospitals can’t cope, Israeli forces prevent ambulances from evacuating the injured, supplies of everything are short, morgues are overwhelmed, coffins aren’t available to bury bodies, and overall conditions are impossible for Gazans to handle as they continue being attacked without mercy.

Palestinians in the West Bank are also affected. On Sunday, Israeli forces assaulted protesters:

- in Hebron with live rounds and tear gas, killing a 14 year old boy and injuring 45 others, including 24 children;
- in Ramallah the same way injuring seven teenagers; and
- in Bethlehem as well injuring two boys, one from bullet wounds to the leg and the other from tear gas inhalation. Other demonstrations took place in Jenin, Nablus and other West Bank and Gaza locations. Hundreds of Israeli Arabs also held one in Nazareth, Israel on Friday after the High Court denied a petition to overturn a police ban preventing Israeli Arabs from holding a memorial service for recently deceased George Habash, the founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and its Secretary-General until 2000. No violence was reported.

Meanwhile for Jews inside Israel, life proceeds normally as they conduct their daily affairs. So far, the toll on them and IDF forces is minimal:

- a single civilian death,
- two soldiers killed by early evening Saturday,
- two others slightly wounded on Saturday and four others lightly on Sunday,
- seven lightly injured Israeli civilians on Saturday from nearby rocket explosions, and
- two others by shrapnel from an exploding Katyusha rocket on Sunday.

But it’s just the beginning according to Defense Minister Ehud Barak. He said a large-scale invasion is imminent with IDF forces massed on the border, awaiting orders to invade and attack. It won’t be the first time as assaults have gone on for decades. But they became especially frequent after the second Intifada began on September 29, 2000. From then through late January 2008, PCHR documented the extra-judicial killings alone:

- 705 in total;

- 478 of them targeted victims;
- 227 of them innocent civilians; and
- 68 of them (through June 2006) children.

Total Palestinian deaths and injuries from September 29, 2000 through late January 2008 are as follows, according to PCHR:

- 4419 Palestinians killed, including 794 children, 152 women, 25 medical personnel and 10 journalists;
- 11,700 Palestinians injured in Gaza; and
- 13,550 Palestinians wounded in the West Bank;

Palestinians are attacked on any pretext, but February 28 wasn't typical. A day after a Qassam rocket killed an Israeli in Sderot, Israeli aircraft killed 18 Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Five of them were children, and it was after 11 deaths the previous day, including three children. One victim was the son of senior Hamas lawmaker, Khalil al-Haya, a top figure in Gaza and himself a target of previous assassination attempts. Palestinians know what they face – continued attacks from the air or the ground. This is state terrorism, collective punishment, executions without trial, cold-blooded killings, a serious breach of international law and against the 1948 Convention on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide. More on that below, but first some background.

In its June 4, 2001 issue, Israel's largest circulation (Hebrew) newspaper, Yedioth Ahronoth, published the following statement from an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman: "We set up a list of Palestinian names of individuals whom the Israeli government has approved for physical elimination, among the names are included members of Hamas, Fatah, Popular Front and Islamic Jihad activists."

This is official state policy, and Israel's High Court affirmed it in December 2006. The Court ruled that IDF targeted killings don't categorically violate international law, and each one must be evaluated on its own merit. Specifically, the three justice panel unanimously stated:

"The State of Israel is fighting against severe terrorism, which plagues it from the 'area.' The means at Israel's disposal are limited. The State determined that preventative strikes upon 'terrorists' in the 'area' which cause their deaths are a necessary means from the military standpoint. These strikes at times cause harm and even death to innocent civilians....the State's struggle against terrorism is not conducted 'outside' of the law. It is conducted 'inside' the law....(We) cannot determine in advance that targeted killing is always illegal....that it is prohibited according to customary international law."

This and comparable High Court rulings have stunning implications. They affirm Israel's claim to be above the law with the right to conduct willful state-sponsored killings. The Court's justification was that the State is waging armed conflict against Palestinian "terrorists." Their members are civilians who aren't protected under international law. To be afforded such protection, "A civilian....must refrain from taking a direct part in the hostilities." Those who violate "this principle (are) subject to the risks of attack like those to which a combatant is subject, without enjoying the rights of a combatant."

Executive Director, Hannah Friedman, of The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel responded to the decision. She stated: “We are concerned that today’s High Court of Justice ruling will worsen the current situation and create a dangerous path that will lead to an increase in the number of innocent civilians who are killed or injured.” In the past 14 months, it’s been horrendous as violence escalates, international law is ignored, and the world community is mute about mass-murder crimes, overwhelming human suffering, and can barely say more than both sides must end violence and resume peace negotiations.

Israeli Violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention

Israel is a serial international law abuser. Specifically, it commits grave violations of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention that protects civilians in times of war and has done it for decades:

- Article 2 states that “the present Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them. The Convention shall also apply to all cases of partial or total occupation of the territory....even if the said occupation meets with no armed resistance;”
- Article 3 prohibits all kinds of assaults on life or physical security;
- Article 27 refers to “protected persons” and states “They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence....,”
- Article 32 prohibits murder, torture and corporal punishment, and
- Article 33 prohibits collective punishment and “all measures of intimidation or....terrorism.”

Geneva and other international human rights laws guarantee what Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: that everyone “has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” It also affirms Article 6 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 stating that every “human being has the inherent right to life.” Violations of Geneva and other international laws are crimes of war and against humanity. Israel is a serial offender but has yet to be held to account.

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights documented its extra-judicial executions from September 29, 2000 through December 2007 and updates it weekly on its web site – pchr.org. Below are examples, but first some background.

Some Brief History of Israeli Targeted Killings

Without cause, these executions target specific individuals with explicit government approval, and Israelis have done it for decades. During the Mandatory Palestine period, Stern Gang (later renamed Lehi) and Irgun members were underground terrorists with very committed aims – to drive out the British (seen as occupiers), allow unrestricted Jewish immigration, remove indigenous Arabs, and establish the Jewish state of Israel. They carried out killings and bombings, some of which were notorious like Lehi’s 1944 assassination of Britain’s Lord Moyne, the military governor of Egypt. Another was Irgun’s infamous 1946 King David Hotel bombing killing 91 Brits, Arabs and Jews and injuring many more.

Two of their leaders became future prime ministers – Lehi’s Yitzhak Shamir (1983 – 84 and 1986 – 1992) and Irgun’s Menachem Begin (1977 – 1983), but they were wanted men before 1948. The New York Times called Irgun a “terrorist organization,” and the World Zionist Congress in 1946 strongly condemned “the shedding of innocent blood as a means of political warfare.” It was just beginning.

In the 1950s, targeted killings were common and were used to halt fedayeen resistance attacks from Egypt. In 1967, after Gaza and the West Bank were occupied, Palestinians became the favorite target, inside and outside the Territories, and by various means:

- car and mail bombs,
- air attacks,
- commando raids,
- undercover operations,
- poisoning,
- snipers, and
- various other methods, including proxy forces to do Israeli killing.

General Ariel Sharon commanded an “anti-terror” detachment in the early 1970s that targeted Palestinian resistance fighters in Gaza. Through undercover operations, the unit killed 104 Palestinians and arrested 742 others.

After Israeli athletes were killed at the 1972 Munich Olympics, Prime Minister Golda Meir and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan established “Committee X” that used Mossad operatives to find and kill the perpetrators. Thirteen deaths resulted, including a Moroccan busboy in Norway by mistake.

Throughout the 1970s, Palestinians in the Territories were targeted, especially its leaders, and in 1982 Israelis nearly killed Yasir Arafat with car bombs, air attacks and at least once when a sniper had him targeted but got no orders to shoot. His second in command, Abu Jihad (Khalil el-Wazir), was less fortunate. He was key to the first Intifada’s success, an irreplaceable leader, and had to be eliminated. Ehud Barak reportedly got the assignment and headed a commando operation that killed him.

Executions continued in the 1990s, including three major ones with mixed success. One killed Islamic Jihad leader, Fathi Shikaki, in Malta in 1995. Another eliminated Yahya Ayyash, a Hamas Izzaddin al-Qassam Brigades member who was known as “the Engineer” for his bomb-making skills. One embarrassing attempt failed. It targeted Hamas’ Amman, Jordan political bureau chief, Khaled Meshal. Two Mossad agents poisoned him but were captured by Jordanian authorities before they could flee. To secure their release, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to provide the poison’s antidote and release Hamas’ founder, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, from an Israeli prison.

With the outbreak of the second Intifada, killings escalated markedly. Below are examples, including several high-ranking Palestinians:

- Abu Ali Mustafa – head of the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP),
- Mustafa Zibri – the PFLP’s Secretary-General,
- Raed al-Karmi – a Lebanese Tanzim movement leader, and
- many mid-level resistance fighters from various Palestinian groups opposing the occupation.

Examples of Extra-Judicial Executions from September 29, 2000 Through December 2006

All three Israeli government branches support extra-judicial killings and require no evidence to justify them. Officials merely say those targeted are wanted, dangerous, and threaten State security. As a result, security forces kill with impunity and with no regard for the innocent, including women, children, the elderly or infirm.

Consider an egregious example. On July 12, 2006, IDF aircraft attacked the home of Dr. Nabeel Abu Silmiya in the Gaza City Sheikh Radwan neighborhood. The house was completely destroyed and Dr. Nabeel, his wife and seven children were killed – possibly in error, according to IDF. It claimed it targeted Izziddin al-Qassam Brigades leader, Mohammed al-Daif, and a number of his colleagues but struck the wrong house instead.

Multiple killings are common and are carried out against civilian homes, government buildings and structures, and by planting bombs in cars and targeted shootings on the ground. The death toll keeps rising, and PCHR documented specific examples below.

Examples of IDF Executions from January Through March 2007

Five targeted killings occurred in the period during which three others were injured.

On February 1, IDF soldiers killed Jaser Nader Ahmad Abut Zugheib in the Tulkarm refugee camp. In the same incursion, two Palestinians were wounded, one seriously with a bullet in the chest.

On February 21, an IDF undercover unit targeted the al-Bassatin area west of Jenin. It killed Mahmoud Ibrahim Qassem Obaid, an Islamic Jihad al-Quds Brigades leader, by shooting him in the head at close range.

On February 28, another IDF undercover unit executed three Islamic Jihad members as they tried to flee the Jenin refugee camp in a car.

In the examples above, arrests weren’t attempted, and victims were either wounded or unarmed when IDF soldiers executed them Mafia-style by point-blank shootings. PCHR stresses that with no due process and the absence of evidence, there’s no guarantee or even likelihood that targeted individuals committed crimes. They were simply Israeli vigilante justice victims targeting the innocent.

Selected IDF Executions from April Through June 2007

During the period, 25 killings occurred, but only 16 were actually targeted.

On April 21, an IDF undercover unit attacked a car in Jenin killing three Palestinians in it. Two were al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades members and the other belonged to the al-Quds

Brigades. On the same day, an IDF aircraft-fired missile killed an innocent civilian in his vehicle who had no affiliation with Palestinian resistance groups.

On May 4, Seilat al-Harhiya village, west of Jenin was attacked. Two al-Quds Brigades members and a mentally disabled Palestinian civilian were executed.

On May 20, an IDF aircraft missile struck a Gaza City al-Shojaeya neighborhood meeting hall killing seven members of the al-Haya family and a Hamas activist as well as wounding three others.

On May 29, IDF undercover units killed two Palestinian activists in Ramallah and Jenin and wounded five others.

On June 1, the IDF assassinated an Islamic Jihad member in Khan Yunis.

On June 12, the IDF executed an al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades member in the north Tulkarm Saida village.

On June 24, the IDF killed three al-Quds Brigades members and wounded three civilians.

On June 30, IDF forces executed three al-Quds Brigades members in Khan Yunis.

Selected IDF Executions from July Through September 2007

On July 26, an IDF aircraft struck a vehicle south of Gaza City killing three activists in it.

On August 4, an aircraft-fired missile struck a civilian car near the Rafah International Crossing Point on the Egyptian border. Three al-Quds Brigades members in it were seriously wounded but managed to survive. Moments later, two other missiles hit another civilian car killing the driver and a civilian bystander and wounding 12 others.

On August 20, IDF forces executed four Izziddin al-Qassam Brigades members and two additional Palestinian Ministry of Interior Executive Force members in central Gaza's al-Boreij refugee camp.

On August 21, IDF air and ground forces killed three Palestinians in al-Qarara village, northeast of Khan Yunis.

On August 22, the IDF executed an Izziddin al-Qassam Brigades member and wounded another east of Gaza City.

During the last week of August, three children were extra-judicially killed in Beit Hanoun. There was no evidence they had any affiliation with a local resistance group.

On September 26, IDF forces executed five Army of Islam members in the al-Zaytoun neighborhood, east of Gaza City.

Examples of IDF Executions from September through December 2007

On October 11, an IDF undercover unit killed one and wounded another al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades member near al-Hamam Square in Jenin.

On November 25, IDF forces executed an al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades member in the Tulkarm

refugee camp, east of the town. Witnesses said he raised his hands to surrender but was shot in the neck. Seriously injured, two IDF soldiers beat him violently and let him bleed to death in a coffee shop. A second man was also seriously injured in the attack.

On November 29, IDF aircraft attacked and killed two Izziddin al-Qassam Brigades members northeast of Khan Yunis.

Attacks continue unabated – by air strikes and on-the-ground Mafia-style executions in violation of sacred international law explained above. And a Haaretz February 29 article suggests they threaten to escalate. It quoted Defense Minister Ehud Barak blaming Hamas for the increased violence and said it will “bear the cost of our response....(it’s) necessary and will be carried out.” On the same day, Knesset chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Tzachi Hanegbi, said IDF forces must “quickly....topple the Hamas terror regime and take over all the areas from which rockets are fired on Israel,” and they should remain in those areas for years.

Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai went further and threatened a “shoah,” which is the Hebrew word for holocaust. On Israeli radio he said: “the more Qassam (rocket) fire intensifies and the rockets reach a longer range, (the Palestinians) will bring upon themselves a bigger ‘shoah’ because we will use all our might to defend ourselves.” The comment is outrageous, it incites genocide, and it’s a punishable crime in violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Gregory Stanton’s Genocide Watch site has a mission: to “predict, prevent, stop, and punish genocide and other forms of mass murder (by) rais(ing awareness and influenc(ing) public policy concerning potential and actual genocide.” Its aim “is to build an international movement to prevent and stop genocide,” and it’s badly needed in Occupied Palestine where Israel has conducted state-sponsored genocide for decades according to Israeli historian Ilan Pappé.

International law expert Francis Boyle agrees and proposed in a March 20, 1998 article that “the Provisional Government of (Palestine) and its President institute legal proceedings against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Hague for violating the (Genocide Convention).” He categorically stated that “Israel has indeed perpetrated the international crime of genocide against the Palestinian people (and the) lawsuit would....demonstrate that undeniable fact to the entire world.” Boyle would likely agree that the case today is even more compelling at a time Israeli forces are ravaging Gaza and assaulting West Bank communities as well.

Genocide is hideous in concept and execution, and Stanton explains how it progresses in eight defined stages:

1. Classification – Cultures or societies distinguish between “us and them” to categorize people by race, religion, nationality or other distinguishing characteristic;
2. Symbolization – Classifications are given names or other symbols, such as Jews, Latinos, blacks or Muslims.
3. Dehumanization – A dominant group denies another’s humanity and equates its members with animals, vermin, insects, diseases or, in the case of Palestinian resistance fighters, gunmen or terrorists;

4. Organization – Genocide is always organized; most often it's by the state using militias, the military and/or other security forces to target victimized groups;
5. Polarization – Extremists incite hate through propaganda and other communication methods, and laws and other measures often target the victims;
6. Preparation – Victims are identified, separated out and targeted for elimination;
7. Extermination – Once it starts, it escalates to mass killing that's legally defined as "genocide;" and finally
8. Denial – The final stage assures continued genocide will follow with evidence of it suppressed or destroyed. Some genocidal regimes are brought to justice like the Nazis at Nuremberg. Others like Israeli governments since 1948 have gotten away with it for decades with no indication (so far) the Olmert or a future regime will be held to account.

Minister Vilnai affirms that killing may now escalate against a people who've been under a medieval siege for months. Talk of peace and ceasefire is hollow, Israel and Washington incite violence and want none of it, and IDF commanders are preparing a large-scale assault to target Hamas for removal. How much longer will this go on? When will the occupation end? How many more killings will be tolerated? When will world leaders take note? People who care want answers. It's about time they got them.

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