

Israel's organ theft has never been clearer



By Hoda Yousefi
Middle East
affairs expert

**PERSPECTIVE
EXCLUSIVE**

During the past months of the ongoing conflict in Palestine, besides the brutal Israeli air strikes against Palestinian civilians and the massacre of women and children in Gaza, news also emerged at times about Israel's abduction of the bodies of Palestinians and the theft of their organs. Physicians at Al-Shifa Hospital have repeatedly expressed their concerns in this regard, urging human rights organizations to investigate. It has been agreed upon to form an independent fact-finding committee to conduct inquiries into this matter and verify its accuracy to be potentially prosecuted in international courts.



Workers uncover bodies from a mass grave at the Nasser medical complex in Khan Yunis, the southern Gaza Strip, on April 22, 2024.
MOHAMED EL SAIFE/CBC

Reinforcing suspicions

After infiltrating Al-Shifa Hospital, the occupying regime's forces dug a mass grave near the cemetery and handed over only 111 out of 180 bodies to the Red Cross several days later. A source, who requested to remain unnamed for security reasons, told Al-Quds Al-Arabi that the Israeli army prevented the presence of the wounded in parts of the hospital ground where the mass grave was later found to be located and then, returned with a truck believed to contain bodies for loading.

After Israeli forces withdrew from Khan Yunis, three mass graves containing at least 392 bodies were discovered at the Nasser Medical Complex. According to Wafa News Agency, 165 bodies, including those that were altered beyond recognition, remain unclaimed.

Videos and photos of the victims indicate torture inflicted on their bodies, with some victims being restrained with plastic handcuffs. Emergency and rescue teams have reported discov-

ering bodies with bound hands and abdominal wounds stitched in a manner inconsistent with medical practices in Gaza, leading to suspicions of organ theft.

In particular, rescue teams involved in retrieving the bodies from mass graves at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis, located in southern Gaza, expressed concerns about potential organ theft by Israeli forces. Additionally, doctors in Gaza hospitals discovered after examining several Palestinian bodies handed over by Israel that some of their organs, including corneas, livers, and kidneys, were missing.

This issue has raised doubts among international human rights organizations regarding Israel's use of Palestinians' body parts for its own patients and/or selling them at exorbitant prices. What further fuels suspicions is that Israel prohibited autopsies on many of the bodies that were delivered a long time after the moment of death. Worse still, some of them have still not been handed over to the Red Cross.

The Zionist regime indeed has a dark history of abducting the bodies of Palestinians. Tel Aviv owns one of the world's largest skin banks for treating burn victims and cancer patients. It is supposed to adhere to standard procedures and use skin cells from volunteers. However, it has long been speculated that Israel obtains the necessary skin cells not from volunteers but from the bodies of Palestinians, using them to treat its own soldiers. None of these actions surely fly under the radar of the cabinet, whether they are carried out by individuals or private entities. Israel's legal system has even enacted laws to facilitate such processes. In 2019, the Israeli Supreme Court authorized the temporary detention and burial of Palestinians in Israel. In the same year, the Knesset passed a law allowing the army to hold the bodies of Palestinians as a punitive measure against them.

Similar past transgressions

In 1979, Yehuda Hiss, the for-

mer director of Israel's Abu Kabir Institute of Forensic Medicine, confessed in a documentary that the bodies of Palestinians who were killed during the First Intifada were used without their families' permission. Meira Weiss, an anthropological researcher, wrote in her book, titled *Over Their Dead Bodies*, about how they removed body parts such as corneas, skin, and heart valves from Palestinians and replaced them with pre-made objects that non-specialists would never notice. She witnessed this when she was working at the Abu Kabir Institute of Forensic Medicine between 1996 and 2002. In 2008, a Swedish journalist named Donald Boström revealed in a report published in the *Aftonbladet* newspaper that Israel had stolen the body parts of 19-year-old Bilal Ghanan. In the report, he also stated that in 1992, Ehud Olmert, the Israeli minister of health, launched a national campaign to encourage organ donation, which was

soon declared to be a success as demand exceeded supply. At the same time, Palestinian youths thought to disappear. After a few days, they were handed over to their families in sealed coffins, and Israeli authorities threatened their relatives to bury their sons' bodies at night without autopsy or funeral ceremonies.

In 2011, the FBI arrested an Israeli citizen named Levy Izhak Rosenbaum. After a few days, he confessed to acting as a broker for a criminal network run by the Israeli cabinet that sold illegal human organs in the United States.

These reports are just a few instances of Israel's revealed crimes in this regard, crimes that have never been denied by Tel Aviv.

Over the past few decades and particularly during the recent war on Gaza, the worst forms of organized terrorism, ranging from theft and looting to indiscriminate carpet bombing and massacring civilians, have been perpetrated by the occupying Israeli regime.

The discovery of the possible theft of Palestinians' human organs by Israel has emphasized the need to prosecute such crimes in international courts more than ever before. It is imperative to form a team of international lawyers to expose such crimes on the international stage so that ultimately, the Zionist regime would be compelled to account for its actions, provide compensation to the families of the wronged, and be held accountable for its crimes.

Israel must adhere to international law, which stresses the necessity of protecting the bodies of the deceased during armed conflicts. The Fourth Geneva Convention, in particular, prohibits the mutilation of bodies of non-combatants as well as combatants who are hors de combat (out of the fight) due to wounds, detention, or any other cause. Keeping Israel in line will only be possible through the continuous efforts of individuals and organizations active on human rights issues.

University protests in US signal decline of Zionism



By Zohreh Qanadi
Staff writer

PERSPECTIVE

Pro-Palestinian protests are sweeping through prestigious American universities over the ongoing conflict in Gaza weeks ahead of graduation ceremonies, challenging the influence of the Zionist lobby.

With the death toll nearing 35,000 in the seven-month war in the besieged strip and still rising, tent encampments of protesters that demand universities to cease business with Israel and companies supporting the Gaza war have spread across the US. The resulting police crackdown on some campuses evokes memories of the larger student protest movements during the Viet-

nam War era.

At the moment, American universities are still grappling with clearing out encampments. While some institutions are continuing negotiations, others are resorting to using force and issuing ultimatums, which has often resulted in clashes with police. The number of arrests at campuses nationwide surpasses 2,000.

The response to these pro-Palestinian protests from politicians and University administrators, faculty, and students has roiled college campuses and divided the American public. Tensions are running high as students and activists on both sides of the issue have engaged in heated debates and confrontations. The protests have sparked discussions on

free speech, political activism, and the role of universities in addressing contentious global issues. In addition to condemning the US policies toward Israel and Palestine, including censoring the US' unwavering support for the Israeli regime, the issue of the violation of free speech — enshrined in the First Amendment of the US Constitution — has now been

raised.

Zionists unsettled

While these pro-Palestinian protests challenge the US administration's policies, they appear to frighten its ally, Israel, too. Here is a look at why the student revolt could unsettle the Zionists, headed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. What particularly worries