

# Israel carrying out 'extermination' campaign in Gaza: UN

## Israel's use of heavy weapons 'intentional' attack on civilians



A new independent report presented to the United Nations' Human Rights Council on Wednesday concluded that Israeli forces have been carrying out several crimes against humanity in Gaza, including a campaign of "extermination" that has ramped up since the current military offensive began more than eight months ago.

The Israeli military's "deliberate" use of heavy weapons in the Gaza Strip has been an "intentional and direct attack on the civilian population", the new report by a United Nations-backed independent commission has found.

Navi Pillay, chairperson of the Independent International

Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said on Wednesday that Israel has committed crimes against humanity, forced starvation, extermination, murder, and inhuman and cruel treatment of Palestinians. She also accused Palestinian groups of war crimes.

As she presented the report to the UN Human Rights Council, Pillay said the Israeli military operating in Gaza "forcibly transferred almost the entire population into a small enclosure that is unsafe and uninhabitable" and used heavy weapons in densely populated areas in "an intentional and direct attack on the civilian population".

Pillay said the commission concluded that specific forms of sexual and gender-based violence constituted part of the Israeli forces' operating procedures.

"Although Israeli officials have repeatedly stated their operations in Gaza are intended to destroy Hamas and release hostages, yet neither of these aims has been largely achieved at the expense of thousands of lives," she said.

### Sexual violence

"We found that Israeli forces committed sexual and gender-based violence with the intent to humiliate and further subordinate the Palestinian community. Palestinian women were targeted

situation is "dramatically deteriorating".

More Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces or settlers there since the start of the current war in October than in any other recorded period, Pillay told the council. Israeli attacks on Gaza since October 7 have killed more than 37,000 people, 40 percent of them children, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health. The October 7 attacks in Israel killed 1,139 people.

### 'Overwhelming enormity of tragedy'

The report was the UN's first in-depth investigation of the events since October 7 until the end of 2023. The commission was set up by the Human Rights Council in 2021. Pillay said it was "tragic" that Israel has prevented the commission from visiting victims inside Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Ibrahim Khraishi, Palestinian ambassador to the UN, thanked the commission for its report and condemned abuses committed by Israel during the "genocidal war". Israel gave its seat at the council meeting to the mother of one of the dozens of captives held in Gaza, who delivered an emotional speech.

"Mr President, we should be on the same side – the side fighting hostage-taking, never accepting the use of young women as tools for trade. Please help me hug my daughter again," said Meirav Lesheim Gonen, the mother of a 23-year-old captive.

## Russia, North Korea sign mutual defense pact

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed a new pact Wednesday that includes a pledge of mutual defense if either is attacked.

The agreement was sealed at a summit in Pyongyang during Putin's first visit to North Korea in 24 years as both countries face growing confrontations with the West.

In a news conference after the summit, Putin said the agreement, which he called "a truly breakthrough document," reflected the two countries' shared desire to raise relations to a new level — covering security, trade, investment, and cultural and humanitarian ties. Putin also said Russia "does not rule out military-technical cooperation with the DPRK in connection with the treaty that was signed today", referring to North Korea by its official name.

Kim said it was a peaceful agreement that elevated relations to an alliance. Kim, who has been accel-

erating weapons testing and stoking tensions with US ally South Korea, on Wednesday promised his "full support" for what Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, which has triggered rafts of UN sanctions on Moscow.

Kim called Putin the "dearest friend of the Korean people". Putin, in turn, thanked his host Kim — whose country has been under a UN sanctions regime since 2006 over its weapons programs — saying Moscow appreciated the "consistent and unwavering" support. Putin said the two heavily sanctioned countries would not tolerate Western "blackmail" and called for a review of UN sanctions on North Korea.

"The indefinite restrictive regime inspired by the US and its allies at the UN Security Council towards the DPRK should be reviewed," Putin said.

Putin also said Moscow and Pyongyang were fighting "US hegemony" together and commended the North



for its "balanced position" on Ukraine. "Today, we are fighting together against the hegemonism and neo-colonial practices of the United States and its satellites," he said.

The two countries have been allies since North Korea's founding after World War II and have drawn even closer since Russia's war on Ukraine in 2022. Officials in the West are concerned about weapons and intelligence sharing that could both help Putin's army in Ukraine, and threaten the US and its allies in Asia.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un attend a Gala concert in Pyongyang, North Korea, on June 19, 2024.

● GAVRIIL GRIGOROV/POOL/AFP

that Russia was trying "in desperation, to develop and to strengthen relations with countries that can provide it with what it needs to continue the war of aggression that it started against Ukraine."

He claimed that North Korea had been providing Russia with "significant munitions," as well as other weapons for use in Ukraine.



Palestinians flee Israeli bombardment in the area in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on June 19, 2024.

● BASHAR TALEB/AFP

and subjected to sexual violence and harassment online and in person. "Men and boys experienced specific persecutory acts, including sexual and gender-based violence amounting to torture and inhuman and cruel treatment."

Pillay also noted that the daily onslaught in Gaza must not sideline attention to a parallel wave of violence in the occupied West Bank, where UN human rights chief Volker Turk said on Tuesday the

## Netanyahu's failure led ...

Many Israeli officials have warned that continuing on the current path could lead to the imminent collapse of the regime.

Thus, the dissolution of the cabinet, coupled with the current regional and global isolation of the illegal entity, can be seen as the starting point of an irreversible political collapse for the occupiers, the effects of which will become apparent in the near future.

### Cabinet inefficiency and intensifying protests

It is clear that one reason influencing Netanyahu's decision to dissolve the cabinet is its inefficiency and failure to achieve declared objectives in the eight-month war on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, such as eliminating or at least containing Hamas and liberating prisoners in exchange for intensified attacks on the besieged territory. The decision comes amidst growing dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war in Gaza and daily calls for protests by anti-government groups. In this environment replete with increasing anti-government sentiment, Netanyahu's decision may serve as a means to escape the mounting criticisms directed at him and his decisions regarding the Gaza war and related issues.

### Platform for disputes instead of unity

One of the key motivations for forming the war cabinet after the al-Aqsa Storm was to display unity among all Israeli parties and groups in decision-making for the Gaza war and to present a united front to the world. However, the subsequent emergence of disagreements and even clashes among cabinet officials revealed that Israel not only lacks a cohesive strategy for the Gaza war but also cannot reach an agreement on how to conduct or end the war. This fragmented image, exacerbated by the presence of extremists like Ben Gvir, pushed Netanyahu towards dissolving the cabinet to at least minimize the portrayal of disarray in decision-making within the Zionist community and to the world. According to Israeli media reports, over the past nine months of the Gaza conflict, Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected attempts by extremist coalition members, including Israel's security minister Itamar Ben Gvir and finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, to join these discussions. Additionally, the resignation of Benny Gantz from the cabinet in protest at Netanyahu's policies and the subsequent formation of a political opposition movement against his war policies demonstrated that the cabinet could serve as a pressure tool against Netanyahu's decisions.

Therefore, rather than being a body for making crucial wartime decisions, the cabinet became a focal point for political conflicts and, subsequently, a tool for the opposition to pressure Netanyahu and his party within the political framework of the Israeli regime. Consequently, Netanyahu sought to dissolve the cabinet to both reduce discord and eliminate the pressure against himself.

On a deeper level, Netanyahu could no longer manage the cabinet, and his incompetence in handling the Gaza war had altered the trajectory of his political life in the eyes of the public and other officials. Currently, the demand for Netanyahu's resignation from power is growing among officials and the public, escalating with each step he takes in committing atrocities and genocide against the people of Gaza, following the lack of achievements. Thus, Netanyahu attempted to enhance his decision-making power in the war by making it solely dependent on himself. Immediately after the dissolution of the war cabinet, the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth speculated that some key decisions would now be made by a cabinet that might include over 50 members, where the voices of warmongers are more dominant, providing Netanyahu with greater political cover to continue the conflict.

### Consolidation of extremism

Netanyahu issued the dissolution order when faced with demands from far-right ministers like Ben Gvir and Smotrich to join the cabinet. One of the significant reasons for the existing rifts among officials was the pressure from extremists on Netanyahu and their direct, detrimental impact on US-Israel relations. Two far-right ministers threatened to collapse the ruling coalition by resigning if Netanyahu accepted US President Joe Biden's peace plan. Additionally, in response to Biden's recent threat to halt arms exports to Tel Aviv, they labeled him a friend of Hamas. These contradictory and aggressive stances of the extremists were unpalatable to the US, raising concerns that their presence in the war cabinet could strain the close Israel-US partnership and affect financial support. Therefore, Netanyahu aimed to dissolve the cabinet to restore the credibility of the extremists and ultimately his government while reducing tensions with the US. With the war cabinet dissolved, the management of the Gaza conflict is now limited to a few radical ministers and the Israeli minister for military affairs, allowing the extremists to implement their plans for continued genocide in Gaza.

## Iran's Navy advanced drones increase its combat power

Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said the Navy has acquired advanced drones in the field of unmanned aerial vehicles, which has increased the force's combat power in the area.

Irani made the announcement in a ceremony in the southern city of Sirjan in Kerman Province on Wednesday, saying the Navy has made "good progress" in the operational areas and that there will be new additions ahead, which will continue to keep the force at the point of authority and progress, according to Press TV.

"Soon, we will see accessions in the Navy and effective presence in all oceans is on the agenda and a priority," the top commander said. "Our achievements are those of the people and the country as the Navy is a showcase of the country on the international stage."

Iranian military experts and engineers have in recent years made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient.