

Prisoners & Detainees

# **Sexual & Gender-Based Violence Committed by Israeli Military & Security Forces against Palestinians in Israeli Prisons**

Thursday 7 March 2024, by [Physicians for Human Rights - Israel \(PHRI\)](#) (Date first published: 7 March 2024).

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*Photo: Activestills*

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Concurrently, UN experts have expressed concern about evidence indicating that Palestinian women and girls in Israeli custody have faced various forms of sexual assault. PHRI urges a thorough investigation into these testimonies and reports as potential war crimes.

Sexual violence is the utilization of sexual acts to humiliate and exert control over victims. Beyond enduring the actual violence, survivors frequently contend with shame, guilt, and stigmatization influenced by societal and cultural factors. As a result, survivors often wait before reporting their experiences and, in some cases, may never come forward.

PHRI has previously addressed incidents of sexual violence against Palestinians by Israeli security forces, occurring during incarceration, interrogations, and as part of the practices of the Israeli occupation.

Since the start of the war, we have observed an escalation and worsening of violence against Palestinians, with public and official support legitimizing these actions. A pervasive culture of lack of accountability predates the war, as complaints of violence, including sexual violence, were inadequately addressed by state authorities and courts, revealing systemic failures.

In times of war, displacement, damaged communication infrastructure, and dismantled welfare and healthcare systems, the harm caused by violence is exacerbated due to the limited access to reporting, support, and complaint mechanisms.

Sexual abuse is rooted in unequal and oppressive power relations. The local history of colonialism, military occupation, war, and armed conflict, coupled with the ongoing apartheid regime, creates fertile ground for vulnerability. In this context, it is the occupying power's obligation to take every measure to prevent harm. However, without effective internal and external constraints, it is unlikely

that Israel would fulfill these responsibilities.

We call upon local and international authorities to investigate the reported acts of violence as potential war crimes, prosecute the offenders, and ensure that such crimes do not recur in the future. Meanwhile, the well-being of survivors must be prioritized by establishing reliable reporting mechanisms, safeguarding their dignity and privacy, and providing care and support services.

Survivors deserve the opportunity to regain autonomy, and their personal narratives should not be exploited for purposes other than their own well-being – unless that is their explicit desire.

### **Physicians for Human Rights - Israel**

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### **P.S.**

- PHRI. 07.03.2024:  
<https://www.phr.org.il/en/sexual-gender-based-violence-2024/?pr=3617>