

Gaza: Israel Systematically Uses Quadcopters to Kill Palestinians from a Close Distance

By [Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor](#)

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As part of its genocide against the Gaza Strip that has been ongoing since 7 October 2023, the Israeli army has been using small drones (or quadcopters) to fire directly at Palestinians, killing and injuring many of them, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor has documented.

Israel's army has increased its use of electronic-controlled quadcopters—which were previously restricted to use for intelligence purposes—for killing and injuring Palestinians. The Israeli army has escalated its premeditated murders, extrajudicial executions, and judicial killings against Palestinian civilians through direct targeting with snipers and drones in various regions of the Gaza Strip, in addition to aerial and artillery bombardment of residential areas, Euro-Med Monitor said.

According to the rights organisation, Israeli sniping operations, killings, and executions primarily target unarmed civilians in shelter centres, hospitals, streets, and populated residential areas; these civilians pose no threat or danger to anyone, as they are not participants in any hostilities.

Based on investigations conducted by Euro-Med Monitor, the Israeli army is using small killer drones fitted with machine guns and missiles from the Matrice 600 and LANIUS categories, which are highly mobile and versatile, i.e. ideal for short-term operations. Their systems can automatically search buildings and create maps to identify possible targets; carry lethal or non-lethal payloads; and carry out a variety of missions for military personnel and special forces.

These drones have killed dozens of civilians, confirmed Euro-Med Monitor, by firing

automatic machine guns mounted beneath the aircraft at random gatherings or by shooting directly at people.

The rights group documented the 12 February killing of two brothers, Muhib Osama Ezz El-Din Abu Jama, 19, and Elyas Osama Ezz El-Din Abu Jama, 17, who was mentally and physically disabled, in Rafah's Al-Shaboura refugee camp, in the south of the Gaza Strip. "We heard gunfire around us at around 1:45 in the evening," Osama, the father of the two victims, told the Euro-Med Monitor team. "Not knowing what was going on, as we were inside the tents, I went outside to look around and saw everyone running. Hearing gunfire, my boys woke up and asked what was going on."

Osama stated that "in less than a minute" a quadcopter overhead started shooting "right at our tent". He was wounded, he said, and two of his sons were killed, one of whom had both mental and physical disabilities. "Then we left the tent and ran so that I could protect what was left of my children," he continued. "We entered somebody's house, and I kept bleeding for three hours, until the ambulance arrived and took me to the hospital."

He added that, "After bringing me to the Kuwaiti Hospital, which was unable to treat me, they moved me to Abu Youssef Al-Najjar Hospital [in Khan Yunis], where they bandaged my wound, retained the shrapnel, and informed me that they would check on the injury later [due to crowding]."

On the same day (12 February), Euro-Med documented the killing of 16-year-old Mahmoud Alaa Awad Al-Assar and his 21-year-old sister, Asmaa Alaa Awad Al-Assar. An Israeli quadcopter shot the siblings north of Badr Camp, northwest of the city of Rafah.

The rights group also received reports of the killing of two Palestinians and the grave injury of a third on 8 February, after an Israeli quadcopter drone opened fire at a refugee school near Al Awda schools, east of Khan Yunis. The Geneva-based organisation pointed to the killing of another Palestinian civilian by an Israeli quadcopter on the very same day; the victim was killed while trying to access the Internet on the roof of the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis.

Another victim, Muhammad Diab Abdel Qader Barhoum, was shot and killed by a quadcopter drone on 4 February, just before noon, as he was heading to the town of Al-Nasr, north of Rafah City, to feed his sheep. Euro-Med Monitor also stated that four more Palestinians, including two children, were killed on 21 January when quadcopter planes opened fire on Al-Aqsa University, which houses thousands of displaced people, west of Khan Yunis.

The rights group also reported that Israeli quadcopter drones opened fire on Palestinians who had gathered to receive flour brought by United Nations trucks. Fifty Palestinians were killed and dozens more were injured during the 11 January incident. Testimonies gathered by Euro-Med Monitor indicate that dozens of residents gathered on Al-Rashid Street, which had been devastated by Israeli bulldozers in recent weeks, and were awaiting the arrival of the trucks. The quadcopter drones arrived suddenly, however, and started shooting at the residents.

The surviving residents fled the area and managed to transfer the wounded, while the dead remained on the ground. Later that day, the aid trucks arrived, and hundreds of residents gathered again in the hope of receiving a share of flour, as hundreds of thousands of

Palestinians in the northern Gaza Valley are currently starving for the fourth consecutive month now. Euro-Med Monitor said that numerous people were killed or injured in similar shooting incidents that have now occurred at least six times later in the area, which is close to the Kuwait roundabout on Salah al-Din Road, south of Gaza City.

Euro-Med Monitor also drew attention to the killing of 13-year-old Amir Odeh on 24 December 2023. Odeh was shot in the chest by a quadcopter drone while in a room at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society's (PRCS) headquarters in Khan Yunis. "Amir was suddenly hit by a gunshot fired from a quadcopter through the window of the room," the child's father told the Euro-Med Monitor team, "while the youngster was playing with his cousins in a room on the eighth floor of the PRCS building, to which we had been evacuated."

He added, "I carried Amir, who had a wound on the left side of his chest, to Al-Amal Hospital, which is housed within the PRCS's main office, where he was proclaimed dead."

Yet another Israeli drone fired a missile at a man on 3 February who was riding a small electric bicycle several metres south of the Palestine Street and Al-Thawra Street intersection in Gaza City, killing him at the scene. The victim was identified as Jihad Muhammad Jumaa Al-Dardasawi, 50, a resident of Al-Turkman neighbourhood in the area of Al-Shujaiya, east of Gaza City. Initial examination of the corpse revealed that Al-Dardasawi was directly targeted by an Israeli drone, resulting in multiple holes in his body, including at least four in his back and one in his thigh; a closer look at the crime scene and a video clip confirm that Al-Dardasawi was the target of a tiny missile, the shrapnel of which scattered and left dozens of craters and openings in a nearby wall.

An Israeli drone fired the missile at Al-Dardasawi, killing him, according to an eyewitness who spoke with the Euro-Med Monitor researcher who recorded the incident. The target area was not experiencing any fighting at the time of the missile launch, the eyewitness stated.

Since the beginning of Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, hundreds of Palestinian civilians have been killed or wounded by Israeli snipers and quadcopter drones, in addition to those killed during the Israeli army's ground incursions, which began at the end of October 2023. More recently, Israel has started to use quadcopter drones in a systematic and widespread manner to carry out extrajudicial executions and premeditated killings of Palestinian civilians, according to testimonies gathered by Euro-Med Monitor. These drones are used in particular against civilians who attempt to return and inspect their homes after the Israeli military retreats from areas it has attacked by land or air.

According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, health workers have noticed that the bodies of most victims of the aforementioned executions and field killings show evidence of unusual gunshots, which differ from ordinary gunshots in that they leave a different shape on the victim's body when they penetrate it. This is because they are not bullets fired from rifle-type weapons, but from quadcopter drones. Because of their frequent presence in the airspace, Euro-Med Monitor noted that these particular aircraft are also being used to terrorise, intimidate, and harm the psychological well-being of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli army converted this drone—which was originally designed to be used for photography—into an air weapon for intelligence gathering, and has subsequently repurposed it for the deliberate and direct execution of unlawful targets. Developed by Israeli military industries, the quadcopter drones are one meter in diameter, with various capabilities and tactical features. They are easy to programme and operate electronically

remotely, with a design akin to that of helicopters. These drones have very precise eavesdropping instruments and high-quality cameras, and can carry out additional military duties like shooting and carrying bombs, as well as be modified to become suicide drones.

Euro-Med Monitor emphasised that while drones are not illegal weapons, as in weapons that are prohibited internationally, their use must adhere to international humanitarian law regulations that apply to armed conflicts, just like any other weapon that is allowed to be used. Importantly, these regulations ensure respect for the principles of distinction and proportionality, and require taking all necessary precautions before carrying out a military attack.

Given their advanced technology and advantages over most other weapons, such as their ability to monitor areas with cameras, conduct real-time surveillance, and accurately track, fire at, and move quickly with a target, Euro-Med Monitor emphasised that the main goal of using these drones as weapons in other armed conflicts has been to prevent or reduce civilian casualties in military attacks. Now, however, Israel is intentionally using them to target Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, the rights group contended; this is evident as the majority of Israel's targeting takes place in public spaces where it is easy to distinguish fighters from civilians, and because the Israeli military flies planes over the areas it targets for periods of time that are long enough to allow for the precise monitoring and evaluation of field conditions, plus most of the killings occur within a close targeting range.

In a primary report submitted to UN special rapporteurs and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) last December, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor documented dozens of cases of field executions carried out by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip. The rights group requested an immediate investigation into these crimes, calling for the perpetrators to be held accountable, and justice for all victims. It also called on the parties to take a position opposing the widespread killing operations carried out by Israeli forces targeting Palestinian civilians, especially the field executions and physical liquidations in the Gaza Strip.

In addition, Euro-Med Monitor demanded the establishment of an international legal team, commitment to secure its entry into the Gaza Strip, and the initiation of an inquiry into these and other instances of Palestinian civilians being killed by Israeli forces. The rights group reiterated that the UN special rapporteurs and the ICC Prosecutor must facilitate the launch of international human rights committees that would visit the Strip and document the magnitude of Israel's crimes against Palestinian civilians.

According to international human rights law, Israeli extrajudicial and judicial executions of Palestinian civilians—whether through direct liquidation or sniping and shooting operations—violate their right to life, stressed Euro-Med Monitor. The Geneva Conventions classify them as war crimes and crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and they are a fundamental component of the genocide that Israel has been committing against the Gaza Strip's inhabitants since 7 October 2023.

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