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Tel Aviv has 936 lawsuits against them for Gaza assault Israel set for blizzard of war crimes charges



Structural damage in Gaza was estimated at \$ 1.6 billion (Courtesy of PCHR)

CAIRO (AlArabiya.net)

Israel was set to face an avalanche of war crimes lawsuits from Palestinian lawyers who accused Tel Aviv of dozens of crimes five months after its three week assault on the Gaza Strip, the German daily Der Spiegel reported Saturday.

A group of Palestinian lawyers filed 936 lawsuits against Israel's Defense Forces (IDF) and the cases will soon be heard in Spain's National Court under universal jurisdiction, Iyad al-Alami, head of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), said.

PCHR's attorneys are collecting evidence of human rights violations and war crimes committed against unarmed civilians.

Accusations ranged from shooting children and women at close range to the illegal use of white phosphorus bombs on civilians as well as attacks on ambulances and razing civilians' houses.

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Other than PCHR, there are dozens of attorneys from Britain, Norway, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Spain working on lawsuits against Israel and which will be filed under the principle of universal jurisdiction, which studies cases of war crimes, genocide, torture and crimes against humanity.

Six attorneys in Norway filed a lawsuit for human rights violations against Israel and are seeking a European arrest warrant against senior Israeli officials, one of whom is former prime minister Ehud Olmert.

Winning one case

Israel launched a ground, sea and air raid on the Gaza Strip on Dec. 27 2008 for three weeks and killed more than 1,300 civilians, mostly women and children and wounded more than 5,000.

Following the bloody assault, rights heavy weights like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International released reports with evidence of human rights violations in Gaza, including the use of white phosphorous bombs on civilians.

A United Nations fact finding mission dispatched to Gaza in March to investigate the fallout of the Gaza war and confirmed reports of Tel Aviv's misconduct and war crimes during the war.

But al-Alami said that PCHR's legal team is launching its legal battle independent of efforts of international organizations. "Winning a case, just one, would be enough [and] then I would retire immediately, because I would have achieved everything," al-Alami was quoted as saying.

Spain's National Court in Madrid is the first court to consider lawsuits filed against the Israeli government for its recent Gaza offensive.

The court previously issued an arrest warrant against former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and it is now investigating allegations of detainee torture at America's controversial military prison in Cuba, Guantanamo Bay.

One of the court's judges is also investigating three Chinese cabinet ministers and other high-ranking Communist Party officials for their role in suppressing the Tibetan uprising in 2008.

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) is a Non Government Organisation based in Gaza City dedicated to protecting human rights, promoting the rule of law and upholding democratic principles in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.