

# Amnesty International UK

# BRIEFING



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## Crisis in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

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Amnesty International continues to reiterate our **call for an immediate ceasefire** by all parties to prevent further loss of civilian lives and to ensure access to life-saving aid for people in Gaza. The current escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza is unprecedented. The conflict has already killed thousands of people, exacerbated humanitarian suffering in Gaza and had devastating consequences for civilians. Backed by world-class verification and a longstanding commitment to impartiality, Amnesty International is monitoring activities of all parties to the conflict and will continue to publish our investigations into human rights abuses.

Amnesty International is urging the UK government to:

- Call for an immediate ceasefire by all parties and help end the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza
- Urgently and explicitly call on Israeli authorities and all Palestinian armed groups to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, foremost by taking all necessary precautions to protect civilians
- Continue to call on Palestinian armed groups to immediately release all civilian hostages and refrain from firing indiscriminate rockets into Israel
- Call on Israel to end its 16-year-long illegal blockade on Gaza, starting by immediately suspending its recent increased restrictions on food, fuel, electricity and water, which is collective punishment amounting to a war crime
- Call on Israel to immediately rescind its evacuation order to people in northern Gaza, which amounts to forced displacement; and end unlawful attacks that kill or injure civilians and destroys civilian homes and infrastructure
- Commit support to international accountability measures, including the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation into the situation in Palestine.

### CEASEFIRE

**We urge the international community to call for an immediate ceasefire by all parties. Last week's vote in the House of Commons was a historic missed opportunity for MPs to show they genuinely support the protection on Palestinian and Israeli civilians. The UK MPs who voted against a ceasefire have badly let them down.**

### **A negotiated ceasefire would:**

- Put a stop to unlawful attacks by all parties, halt the mounting death toll in Gaza and enable aid agencies to get life-saving aid, water and medical supplies into the strip
- Allow hospitals in Gaza to receive life-saving medicines, fuel and equipment they desperately need and to repair damaged wards
- Provide opportunities to negotiate the release of hostages detained in Gaza
- Allow for independent international investigations to take place into war crimes committed by all parties to help end long-standing impunity, which continues to produce further atrocities.

### **ILLEGAL BLOCKADE**

Palestinians and Israelis deserve a future where they can live free from violence and see an end to the fatal human rights violations that continue to destroy so many lives. Challenging the Israeli authorities' system of apartheid over Palestinians is now more urgent than ever.

Since 2007, Israel has imposed an air, land and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip collectively punishing its entire population. On 9 October, Israel's minister of defence Yoav Gallant announced a "complete siege on Gaza ... No electricity, no food, no water, no gas - it's all closed", as part of Israel's response to attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. **Amnesty International is calling on the Israeli authorities to immediately suspend all increased restrictions which have recently been imposed** and to lift its illegal 16-year blockade on the occupied Gaza Strip.

### **EVIDENCE OF WAR CRIMES**

Amnesty International reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional release of all civilian hostages, some of them children, who have been held in the occupied Gaza Strip for a month after being abducted by Hamas and other armed groups on 7 October.

Hostage-taking and the abduction of civilians are prohibited by international law and are war crimes. Al Qassam Brigades – the military wing of Hamas – circulated an online video showing three civilian hostages being held in Gaza directing a message to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Recording and publicly sharing testimonies from hostages amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment. Hostages must be treated humanely and in accordance with international law, not paraded in online videos or coerced into making statements.

As Israeli forces continue to intensify their cataclysmic assault on the occupied Gaza Strip, Amnesty International has documented unlawful Israeli attacks, including indiscriminate attacks, which caused mass civilian casualties. The organization spoke to survivors and eyewitnesses, analysed satellite imagery, and verified photos and videos to investigate air bombardments carried out by Israeli forces between 7 and 12 October, which caused horrific destruction, and in some cases wiped out entire families. [Here](#) the organization presents an in-depth analysis of its findings in five of these unlawful attacks. In each of these cases, Israeli attacks violated international humanitarian law, including by failing to take feasible precautions to spare civilians,

or by carrying out indiscriminate attacks that failed to distinguish between civilians and military objectives, or by carrying out attacks that may have been directed against civilian objects.

Today (November 20<sup>th</sup>) We have [further determined](#) that attacks which occurred on 19 and 20 October were indiscriminate attacks or direct attacks on civilians or civilian objects, which must be investigated as war crimes. The attacks hit a church building where hundreds of displaced civilians were sheltering in Gaza City and a home in al-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza. The Israeli strikes killed 46 civilians, including 20 children. The oldest victim was an 80-year-old woman and the youngest was a three-month-old baby. These attacks must be investigated as war crimes.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

War crimes have and continue to be committed on both sides, as outlined in this briefing. Israel's well-documented record of war crimes does not excuse Palestinian armed groups' horrendous actions, nor absolve them from upholding their obligations under international law to respect fundamental principles of humanity and protection of civilians. Targeting and killing civilians is a war crime and there can be no justification for Hamas's reprehensible attacks. As Israeli forces' retaliatory attacks pummel Gaza, Amnesty insists that neither security nor justice will be achieved by a civilian bloodbath in Gaza and collective punishment.

In 2021, the International Criminal Court opened an investigation into the situation in the State of Palestine with a mandate covering crimes under international law committed by all parties in the current conflict, as well as the crime against humanity of apartheid against Palestinians. **Amnesty calls on the ICC chief prosecutor to expedite the investigation and to include the recent crimes committed by all parties. The UK government must clarify its position and ensure the ICC's investigation receives full support and necessary resources.**