

BRIEFING



‘YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE SUBHUMAN’

Israel’s genocide against Palestinians in Gaza

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Cover photo:
Jabalía in northern Gaza on 20 January 2025,
the day after a ceasefire went into effect
© Omar al-Qattaa/AFP via Getty Images



A Palestinian girl pulls and a boy pushes a shopping cart loaded with water containers past a mound of rubble and debris in Gaza City, 11 December 2024 © Omar Al-Qattaa/AFP via Getty Images

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On 7 October 2023, Israel launched a military offensive on Gaza of unprecedented intensity, scale and duration. It brought the population of the occupied Gaza Strip to the brink of collapse.

Through direct or deliberately indiscriminate attacks, Israel wiped out multigenerational families in seconds. At the same time, Israel imposed conditions in Gaza calculated to condemn Palestinians to a slow death. It levelled cities and destroyed critical infrastructure, rendering large swathes of Gaza uninhabitable. It repeatedly displaced almost the entire population and deliberately denied the delivery of life-sustaining supplies, creating a deadly mixture of malnutrition and disease.

Viewed in isolation, some of the acts investigated by Amnesty International constitute serious violations of international law. But, looking at the broader picture of Israel’s military campaign and the cumulative impact of its policies and acts, genocidal intent is the only reasonable conclusion.

‘Here in Deir al-Balah, it’s like an apocalypse... You have to protect your children from insects, from the heat, and there is no clean water, no toilets, all while the bombing never stops. You feel like you are subhuman here.’

Mohammed, who fled with his family from Gaza City to Rafah in March 2024 and was displaced again in May 2024 to Deir al-Balah

■ Our findings and conclusions are set out in full in the report *‘You Feel Like You Are Subhuman’: Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza*, published on 5 December 2024.

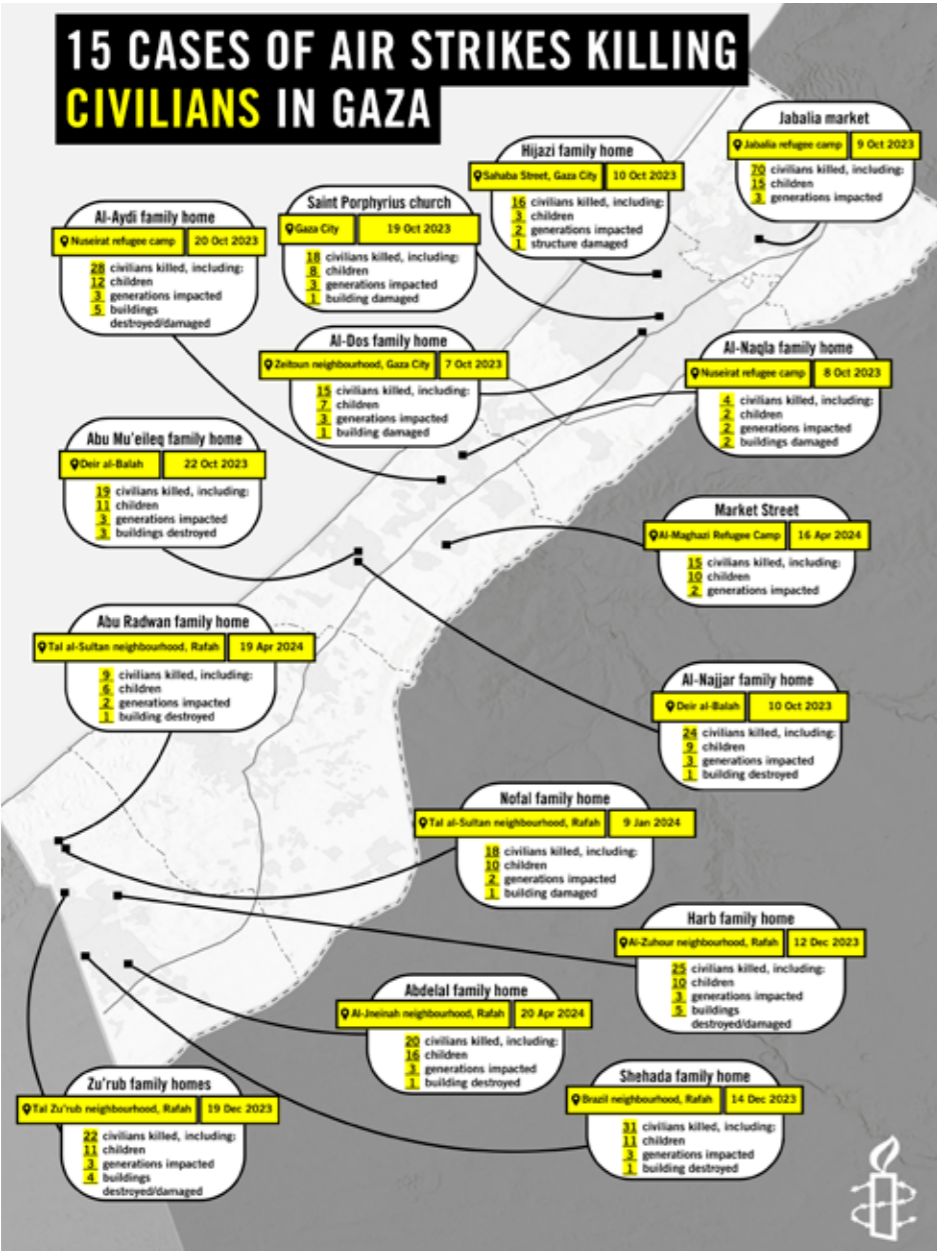
What is genocide?

Genocide is a crime under international law, defined in the Genocide Convention and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Genocide is committed when certain prohibited acts are committed with ‘intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.’

Based on evidence gathered between 7 October 2023 and July 2024, Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that Israel committed prohibited acts under the Genocide Convention and that these acts were carried out with the specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza:

- killing members of the group;
- causing serious bodily harm or mental harm to members of the group;
- deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

Amnesty International concludes that following 7 October 2023, Israel committed genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.



This map shows the location and key details of the impact of 15 Israeli air strikes investigated by Amnesty International between October 2023 and April 2024. The strikes killed at least 334 civilians, including at least 141 children.

Killing and causing serious bodily or mental harm

On October 7 2023, Israel launched a military offensive on Gaza in retaliation for the deadly Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel.

The offensive was characterised by the use of heavy munitions, including 2000-pound bombs, either directly targeted at civilians or indiscriminately launched into densely populated civilian areas without effective warning.

Amnesty International conducted detailed investigations into 15 air strikes between 7 October 2023 and 20 April 2024 that killed at least 334 civilians and wounded hundreds of others. While the 15 strikes represent only a fraction of Israel's aerial attacks, they indicate a pattern of conduct designed to cause a very high number of fatalities and injuries among the civilian population.

Amnesty International found no evidence that the strikes were directed at a military objective.

Twelve of the 15 attacks struck homes and other residential buildings. Of those, five homes were hit between 11pm and 4am when residents were likely to be sleeping.

Eleven of the attacks struck homes and other buildings in the area south of Wadi Gaza, where residents of the north had been ordered to flee. The locations struck, already known for their population density, were even more overcrowded than usual because of the influx of displaced people.

In several of the attacks, Israel used large bombs with a wide area effect, such as US-manufactured Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM). These bombs were often used in densely populated areas where the effects were likely to be indiscriminate.

In 14 of the attacks, the individuals hit received no warning. In the 15th, the individuals received an ineffective warning. In that case, the family had left their home immediately after their neighbour received a warning that his home would be bombed. After five hours elapsed and no bombing took place, the family thought it safe to go back and collect necessities. When they returned the home was bombed by Israeli forces, killing four people and injuring 20 others.

Between October 2023 and October 2024:

42,010 = **2%**
recorded fatalities of Gaza's entire population

97,590 recorded injuries

60% of those killed were women, children and elderly people.

■ The actual numbers of people killed and injured may be significantly higher given the inability of hospitals to report deaths and injuries, as well as the number of bodies likely to be missing and buried under the rubble.



SAINT PORPHYRIUS CHURCH

Al-Zaitoun neighbourhood
Gaza City

19 October 2023
Approx. 9.30pm

All individuals in the collage were killed by an Israeli strike on the compound of the Saint Porphyrios church in the Al-Zaitoun neighbourhood on 19 October 2023. In total, 18 civilians, including eight children, lost their lives. The numbers represent the ages of each individual at the time of death. All photographs © Private

Civil defence teams and residents conduct search and rescue efforts on 20 October 2023 in the historic Saint Porphyrios Greek Orthodox church, Gaza. © Ali Jadallah/Anadolu via Getty Images

Strike on Saint Porphyrios church, 19 October 2023

On 19 October 2023 at around 9.30pm, an Israeli air strike destroyed a building in the compound of the Saint Porphyrios church in Gaza City, where an estimated 450 displaced Christians were sheltering. The strike killed 18 civilians and injured at least 12 others. The oldest victim of the attack was 80 while the youngest was a two-month-old infant, killed along with his mother and sister.

Ramez al-Sury, whose three children were killed in the attack, told Amnesty International:

We left our homes and came to stay at the church because we thought we would be protected here. We have nowhere else to go... There is nowhere safe in Gaza during this war.

Amnesty International reviewed video and photo evidence of the attack and concluded that a large air-delivered munition directly struck a building at the church where those killed and injured were sheltering. We found no evidence of legitimate military objectives in or near the targeted building.

Inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of the group

Israel deliberately inflicted conditions on Palestinians in Gaza intended to lead, over time, to their destruction. These conditions were imposed through three simultaneous patterns that repeatedly compounded the impact of each on the others:

1. Destruction of life-sustaining infrastructure and other objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population

The level and speed of damage and destruction in Gaza has not been seen in any other conflict in the 21st century.

The damage to infrastructure resulted in mass forced displacement and put essential services out of order. For example, sewage and wastewater management systems effectively collapsed, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases. The destruction of hospitals shrank the capacity of the health system just as needs skyrocketed.

In May 2024, the UN noted that, even in an optimistic scenario in which Israel allowed a five-fold increase in construction materials entering Gaza, it would take until 2040 to rebuild the housing units destroyed.

Damaged or destroyed

within three months of the offensive (by January 2024)

- about **62%** of all homes
- nearly **84%** of health facility buildings
- **57%** of water infrastructure
- more than **60%** of the electricity distribution network

2. The repeated use of sweeping, arbitrary and confusing mass 'evacuation' orders to forcibly displace almost all of Gaza's population

Through its repeated 'evacuation' orders, Israel displaced nearly 1.9 million Palestinians – 90 per cent of Gaza's population – to endure inhumane conditions in ever-shrinking, unsafe pockets of land. Some were displaced as many as 10 times.

People were often 'instructed' to relocate to areas that would be subjected to new 'evacuation' orders days or weeks later, or areas that lacked the infrastructure to support life, let alone cope with the mass influx of people.



As the spaces targeted by 'evacuation' orders expanded, internally displaced people ran out of land where they could set up their tents. Some were forced to sleep next to solid waste dumps or sewage pipelines.

Israel would regularly redraw the boundaries of the unilaterally designated 'humanitarian zones' without giving residents adequate warning. The boundaries of the Al-Mawasi 'humanitarian zone' changed on three different maps shared by the Israeli military between 18 and 30 October 2023 alone. In early 2024, the Israeli military started launching air strikes on 'humanitarian zones'.

The sweeping, often incomprehensible, misleading and arbitrary nature of these 'evacuation' orders makes clear their role: to inflict conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of Palestinians in Gaza.

Every displacement meant having to find a new shelter and struggling to make it habitable, amid huge overcrowding and shortages of essential items.

Samah Malaka, 30, fled her house in Gaza City after an Israeli air strike destroyed it, killing five members of her family. She then spent a week seeking refuge at Abu Assi school in Gaza City before the school was attacked on 2 November 2023. During the attack, she sustained an injury and was taken to Al-Shifa hospital, where her right leg was amputated above the knee. On 10 November 2023, Al-Shifa hospital was hit, forcing her to flee the hospital south to Khan Younis. Samah described to Amnesty International the pain she felt as she was forced to flee again so soon after her operation:

My husband rushed me out and placed me on a wheelchair. We could not afford to pay for transport. It was total chaos. He pushed the wheelchair from Gaza City all the way to Khan Younis. It was torture. The pain was unimaginable, I felt like my other leg, which was fixed with metal plates, was dissolving. I just want to rest. I just want not to hear the sound of shelling and bombing.

3. The denial and obstruction of the delivery of essential services, humanitarian assistance and other life-saving supplies into and within Gaza.

After 7 October 2023, Israel tightened its 17-year illegal blockade by imposing a total siege on Gaza, cutting off electricity, water, and fuel. In the nine months reviewed for this report, Israel tightly controlled access to energy sources and obstructed the delivery of life-saving goods and humanitarian aid, particularly to areas north of Wadi Gaza.

Restrictions on fuel contributed to the collapse of Gaza's health system and water and sanitation facilities. Restrictions on food delivery caused catastrophic levels of hunger, particularly in the north and in a context where domestic food production had collapsed. Restrictions on medical supplies further crippled Gaza's health system.

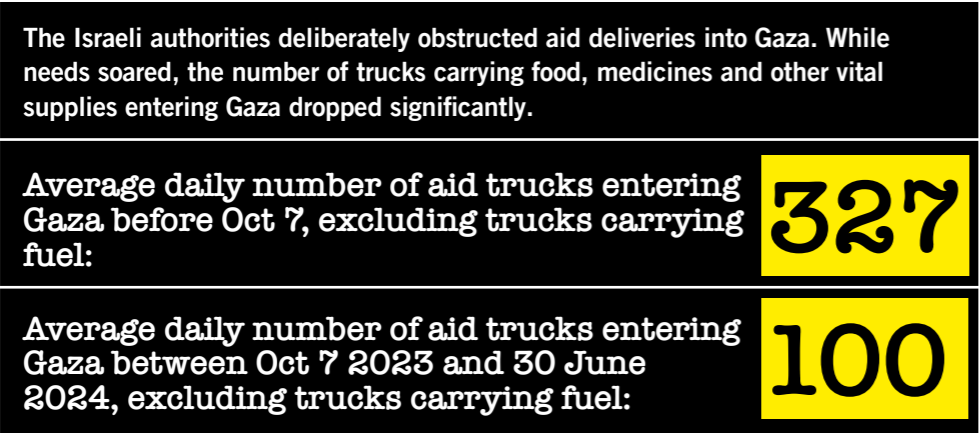
Unliveable conditions

The consequences of Israel's actions in Gaza were disastrous for the civilian population, causing a surge in malnutrition and infectious diseases combined with collapse of the health system. According to UNICEF (the UN agency for children), the World Health Organisation and the World Food Programme, the speed and severity of the decline in the population's nutritional status within just three months was 'unprecedented globally'. By early 2024, people were dying from malnutrition, which humanitarian organisations say could have been easily prevented. Malnutrition also makes people – especially children – more susceptible to infectious diseases and bacterial infections.

I got pregnant in January, just as hunger started to hit us here in the north very cruelly. At the beginning, we were eating corn, wild vegetables, khubbeizeh [a dish made from mallow leaves]; later, we had to switch to animal fodder which is unbearable
Dana Al-Masharawi, a 20-year-old woman pregnant with her first child, who had been displaced multiple times

We are seeing deaths from malnutrition, which is something we didn't see before... We are receiving cases of children who can't move or cry because of the severity of the weakness from malnutrition and dehydration... There's not really a comparison from before the war and now... Especially after [Israel] closed the roads and prevented relief and food and medicines coming into north Gaza, then we started seeing this phenomenon in a horrifying way
Medical worker, Kamal Adwan hospital

Massive overcrowding, coupled with lack of adequate shelter and basic sanitation facilities, fuelled the spread of disease. In March 2024, UNICEF reported that on average, 340 people shared one toilet and 1,290 shared a shower across Gaza. In November 2023, UNICEF stressed that the 'desperate lack of water; faecal matter strewn across densely packed settlements; unacceptable lack of latrines; severe constraints on handwashing,



On 10 October 2023, then Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Israel Katz explicitly stated that Israel's decision to ban the entry of fuel was intended to inflict conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinians in Gaza:

So far we have transferred 54,000 cubic metres of water and 2,700 megawatts of electricity to Gaza per day. It's over. Without fuel, even the local electricity will shut down within days and the pumping wells will stop within a week. This is what should be done to a nation of murderers and butchers of children. What was will not be.

personal hygiene and cleaning' were a 'perfect storm for the spread of disease'. To avert the spread of diseases, UNICEF called for safe and unimpeded daily amounts of fuel to restore the functioning of water and sanitation facilities – but the Israeli authorities ignored such calls. As time passed, new disease threats arose. Tests conducted by UNICEF in July 2024 detected the presence of poliovirus type 2 in samples of sewage water. Disease spiked among children. In February 2024, the Global Nutrition Cluster, led by UNICEF, reported that at least 90 per cent of children under five had been affected by one or more infectious diseases, and at least 70 per cent had had diarrhoea in the past two weeks.

I'm a mother of three children. They all got hit by diarrhoea at the same time more or less. Dealing with that before the war would have been difficult, but now it is a nightmare: no clean toilets, no clean water, nothing close to hygiene. To be a displaced mother in Gaza in this war is to live every day not knowing if your children will be killed by a missile or by a disease.
A 35-year-old displaced woman from Gaza City

Specific intent

The scale of the attacks, the number of civilian victims spread across ages and genders and within multigenerational families and the repetition of destructive acts are all factors that indicate genocidal intent. The conditions of life that Israel imposed on Palestinians in Gaza reinforce this finding. The Israeli authorities were fully aware that the destruction of homes and essential infrastructure, coupled with mass forced displacement and a total lack of essential supplies, would lead to the collapse of the healthcare system, food production system and water and sanitation services, with deadly consequences for the civilian population. Israel's offensive on Gaza occurred in the context of a brutal 57-year military occupation, 17 years of illegal blockade, and a wider system of apartheid, all of which demonstrate Israel's pre-existing hostility towards Palestinians. Amnesty International identified 22 statements made by senior officials in charge of managing the offensive that appeared to call for, or justify, genocidal acts. They included these:

It's an entire nation out there that is responsible. It's not true this rhetoric about civilians not aware, not involved.
President of Israel, Isaac Herzog

Doctors in Gaza described multiple factors affecting the ability of hospitals to function:

- A huge surge in needs
- Severe lack of supplies
- 'Evacuation' orders that forced the hospitals to close and hospital staff to abandon supplies
- Looting of supplies and equipment after 'evacuation' orders
- Raids and other attacks on hospitals that damaged the facility itself or equipment within it
- The killing, injury, detention or enforced disappearance of hospital staff.



Remember what Amalek did to you. We remember and we fight

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, citing a biblical story of absolute vengeance in which an entire nation – the people of Amalek – is ordered to be destroyed.

[In Gaza, there are] 2 million Nazis... who want to slaughter, rape and murder every Jew
Bezalel Smotrich, Minister of Finance until 19 January 2025

As long as hundreds of women, children, old people and the other abductees are held by the Nazi entity, no humanitarian aid should be allowed

Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir

With such human beasts, we will deal accordingly. Israel has imposed a complete blockade on Gaza. You will not have electricity or water, just destruction. You want hell, you'll get hell

Major General Ghassan Alian, Head of COGAT

Vengeance is a great value... For a hundred years to come they should know that you shouldn't mess with Jews... This place will be a fallow land. They will not be able to live here.

Colonel Erez Eshel, army reserve colonel, 162nd Brigade

This photograph shows graffiti scrawled on the side of an Israeli military watchtower in the occupied West Bank. It reads 'There are no uninvolved' (translation from the original Hebrew by Amnesty International), followed by 'Destroy Gaza' in English. The photograph was taken by a Palestinian journalist on 24 February 2024 on the road between Bethlehem and Hebron. © Ahmad Al-Bazz

We need to make sure that whenever the IDF meets Gaza there is destruction... Wherever the 74th battalion was, it happened, I can guarantee you that. Destruction nothing less. In every place we were, there was only sand left and houses on the ground. Because in every home, unfortunately, I learned that in Gaza, there is no innocence.

Lieutenant Colonel Oren, commander of the 74th battalion of the 188th Brigade

This language was frequently replicated, including by Israeli soldiers on the ground, making calls to 'erase' Gaza or to make it uninhabitable, and celebrating the destruction of Palestinian homes, mosques, schools and universities.

The lyrics to a song sung by a group of soldiers ran:

I am coming to conquer Gaza... to blot out the memory of [the people of] Amalek. I left home behind me and won't come back until victory. We know our slogan, there are no uninvolved civilians



This screenshot from a video verified by Amnesty International and originally posted on Instagram on 17 January 2024 shows an Israeli soldier spraying the walls of a house in Khan Younis with the words: 'We will build from the ruins of Gaza, our Temple Mount'

Recommendations

The failure of the international community – including the UK government – to press Israel to end atrocities in Gaza, by delaying calls for a ceasefire and continuing arms transfers, is a stain on our collective conscience.

Governments must stop pretending they are powerless to end this genocide. It has been enabled over decades by governments, including the UK, that have shielded Israel from accountability.

To end the genocide and bring the perpetrators to justice, the UK government as an ally of Israel must:

1. Take urgent steps to help bring an end to all Israeli actions in Gaza which amount to genocide, including by ensuring as a first step that Israel implements all provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) since 26 January 2024.

2. In line with the ICJ's advisory opinion of 19 July 2024, render no aid or assistance for maintaining the unlawful situation created by Israel's continued occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT); it must suspend all arms transfers to Israel.

3. Support the investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) into crimes falling under the Rome Statute allegedly committed in Israel and the OPT, including through executing ICC arrest warrants. Ensure that the Office of the Prosecutor has adequate resources for its investigation into the situation in the State of Palestine. Safeguard the ICC's independence and protect the ICC from any attempts to unduly interfere with its work. (The crimes falling under the Rome Statute are: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.)

4. Adopt business advisories against trade and investments in companies connected to maintaining the occupation, banning the import of goods originating from Israeli settlements in the OPT, and banning investment in companies

and banks that are contributing to maintaining Israel's unlawful occupation. This must include companies that produce or develop weapons, surveillance, policing equipment or technology, as well as companies involved in constructing settlements or settlements' infrastructure and banks that are facilitating transactions for settlers and settlements.

5. Pursue fair and effective justice and individual criminal accountability for any alleged crimes under international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, perpetrated in Gaza since 7 October 2023 by exercising domestic, universal or other forms of extraterritorial criminal jurisdiction.

6. Where sufficient evidence exists, ensure that competent authorities conduct criminal investigations and prosecutions in civilian courts. This should encompass potential perpetrators who may have committed crimes as members of the Israeli army or settler movements.

7. Undertake a national-level structural investigation – a broad investigation focused on structures related to potential international crimes and potential perpetrators – into genocide and other crimes under international law committed in Israel and the OPT.

8. Pressure Israel to stop preventing the entry of aid into Gaza and to allow its delivery to the population in need; provide political support and adequate funding to UNRWA.

9. Pressure Israel to immediately allow entry into Gaza for members and staff of any international investigative or UN-mandated mechanism.

10. Use all economic, political and diplomatic tools at its disposal to ensure that the Israeli authorities implement the recommendations outlined in Amnesty's December 2024 report: *'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza*.

Read the full report
amnesty.org.uk/genocide-report-uk-2024

Questions and answers about the report
amn.st/6000FJtZp

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