
Amnesty International

MONTHLY ACTION

ACTIVISM TEAM, Amnesty International UK
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JULY 2015

Gaza Crisis: Palestine has a right to seek justice via the International Criminal Court – Tell the UK to stop threatening them

The past six years have seen three major conflicts between Israel and armed groups in the Gaza Strip driven by long-standing impunity for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. This year marks the first anniversary of the 2014 conflict, designated Operation Protective Edge by Israel (8 July-26 August). Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which took effect on 1 April 2015, and its acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction from 13 June 2014 means that there is finally an opportunity to challenge this culture of impunity. Yet the UK continues to publicly express its opposition to Palestine's membership and the ICC Prosecutor's decision to open a preliminary examination into the crimes committed – this makes it complicit in hindering efforts to attain justice for all victims – **we need to challenge the UK's position on this.**

To date, no perpetrators have been held accountable for war crimes and other human rights abuses and victims of the conflict have had no justice. This climate of impunity, if left unchallenged, will lead to yet another horrendous conflict in Gaza and Israel with yet more children, women and men killed and horrifically maimed.

Amnesty's long term goals for this campaign are to see:

1. Israeli and Palestinian officials and commanders responsible for serious violations of international law that took place during the 2014 Israel/Gaza conflict held accountable.
2. Justice for victims, and deterrence of future violations, achieved through strengthened accountability mechanisms, including prosecuting perpetrators of crimes under international law.

The UK government's shameless stance highlights the inconsistency between its position on a Syria ICC referral (staunch supporters) and that for a Palestinian referral. If the UK genuinely supports international justice and wants to see an end to this decades long conflict, they'd support the Palestinians' bid for justice through the ICC and not hinder the process through punitive measures & threats.

Our key calls to the UK government are:

- 1 - Stop political interference and oppose punitive measures against Palestine for accepting the ICC's jurisdiction or for pursuing international justice mechanisms.
- 2 - Let the ICC Prosecutor make a determination on the preliminary examination on the merits of the evidence.
- 3 - Call on the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to conduct genuine investigations and prosecutions into crimes committed during the 2014 conflict.

What you need to do

Please write to the Foreign Secretary calling on the UK government to support Palestine's bid for justice through the ICC and not to be complicit in hampering justice. Please write a personalised letter using above 3 key calls, information in this briefing and additional information on our website – see links on the next page.

There is also additional information on our website – see the links below.

Foreign Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
King Charles Street,
London
SW1A 2AH

You can also tweet Foreign Secretary at @PHammondMP

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Background Information

In July 2014, the ongoing conflict in Israel & the Occupied Palestinian Territories escalated following the launch of Israel's ground invasion into Gaza. More than 2000 Palestinians (including 1,473 civilians and 501 children) and 71 Israeli's (including 6 civilians) were killed.

During the conflict serious human rights violations took place and Israel is known to have bombed UN schools and hospitals - acts likely to constitute war crimes. Family homes were also among the targets for air strikes.

Amnesty International's research shows there was a failure to take necessary precautions to avoid excessive harm to civilians. To date no perpetrators have been held to account, exacerbating a pervasive climate of impunity.

Palestine, Israel and International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ICC undertaking a preliminary examination is a crucial step in order for the Prosecutor to determine whether to open a full investigation into the crimes committed during the conflict. Paving the way for the ICC to carry out preliminary investigations means that there is finally an opportunity to challenge the culture of impunity, and in the long term holding Israeli and Palestinian officials and commanders responsible for violations of international law during the 2014 Israel/Gaza conflict to account.

Israel has publicly asserted it will not cooperate with the Court and has applied punitive measures as retaliation for Palestine's accession to the ICC. Attempts to address Israel's long standing impunity, must not be allowed to result in further collective punishment of Palestinians in the OPT.

UK Position

The UK government continues to oppose Palestine's membership of the ICC and the ICC Prosecutor's decision to open a preliminary examination, its position is also mirrored by other states including the USA and Canada who have also publicly expressed their opposition.

Watch this space

6 July - Launch of Gaza Platform - collaboration between Forensic Architecture and Amnesty International. The platform will feature an interactive map of Gaza which documents and illustrates Israeli military attacks during Operation Protective Edge and features cases and testimonies from Amnesty International and civil society organisations in Gaza. The platform is a dynamic tool that allows audiences to see general patterns and trends as well as information, testimonies, pictures, videos, and satellite imagery relevant to specific attacks.

8 July - AIUK Event 'How Long Until Justice? A Presentation of the Gaza Platform. Panel discussion and Q&A with prominent speakers followed by a reception to take place at the Human Rights Action Centre, for more info & reserve ticket please go to: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/events/how-long-until-justice-presentation-gaza-platform>

Date (tbc) - Report Launch on Israeli military attacks on the town of Khuza'a, Gaza, during Operation Protective Edge. The report presents documentation of human rights violations carried out by the Israeli army during the capture of the eastern town starting 22 July. It will also include some five incidents where the Israeli army forced Palestinian civilians to undertake dangerous tasks including by using their presence to deter attacks from Palestinian armed groups.

30 July - Interactive report, on the Israeli attack on Rafah August 1 2014. This investigative work, done in collaboration with Goldsmith University's Forensic Architecture, looks at the Israeli army's apparent employment of its so-called "Hannibal Procedure", which allows the use of excessive and disproportionate force in order to foil the capture of one of its soldiers, including risking the soldier's life.

The upcoming reports will be accompanied by additional resources such as Q&A's videos, photos, and maps that will be available from around the time of the launch.

More information <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/gaza-operation-protective-edge>

If you have any queries about this action and for updates please contact
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