



Genocide Watch
Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Emergency Alert: Israel and Gaza **17 October 2023**

Genocide Watch is declaring a Genocide Emergency Alert for Israel and Gaza due to the war between Israel and Hamas.

On October 7, 2023, coinciding with the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, Hamas launched a coordinated assault by over [1500](#) heavily armed Hamas terrorists who murdered over [1400](#) Israeli civilians, including [200](#) men, women, and children in [two kibbutzim](#) and [260](#) civilians attending an outdoor music festival. Hamas abducted over [150 hostages](#), including children. Hamas launched over [six thousand missiles supplied by Iran](#) into cities all over Israel.

Hamas targeted Israelis simply because they were Israelis. It was the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have expressed their [genocidal intent](#) to destroy the nation of Israel. The massacres by Hamas constituted [acts of genocide](#). The attacks were also crimes against humanity and [war crimes](#).

Israel has declared war on Hamas and embarked on an aerial bombing campaign on Gaza. Over [2300 Palestinians in Gaza](#) have died in the first week of bombing. Gaza's only power station has shut down because Israel has cut off fuel deliveries. Without electricity, water cannot be pumped. Gaza is running out of food.

Israel asserts that it is the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people. Israel's recognition by the United Nations followed the Holocaust. The UN explicitly intended to recognize a nation-state where Jews could defend themselves after thousands of years of exile and genocide. Many Jews came to Israel because they were [persecuted in Arab countries](#), the [Soviet Union](#), and other nations.

As a nation-state recognized by the United Nations, Israel has full rights under [Article 51 of the UN Charter](#) and international law to defend itself.

The legitimacy of Israel's creation was rejected by Palestinians, most Arab countries, and many Islamic nations. These countries consider Israel's territory to have been stolen from the Palestinian people. [Iran](#), [Hamas](#), and [many people in the Arab world](#) still deny the Holocaust.

Since 1948, Israel has had to defend itself against numerous [invasions by its Arab neighbors](#). Following its victories in the wars against it, Israel took effective control in 1967 of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. UN recognition did not include those territories as part of Israel. Legally they are ["occupied territories."](#)

The Palestine Liberation Organization and Hamas were founded in response to Israeli occupation. Since its founding in 1987, Hamas has been designated a terrorist organization by Israel, Egypt, and many Western nations. [In its charter, Hamas](#) declares its intent to destroy the nation of Israel, a declaration of genocidal intent. [Hamas is funded by Iran](#). The Gaza government of [Hamas is heavily funded by Qatar](#).

Following many terrorist attacks by Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, Israel occupied both territories. Israel ceased occupation of Gaza in 2005. Israel and Egypt have blockaded Gaza since 2007. Israel severely restricts movement of Gaza's population of 2.5 million Palestinians.

Israel still occupies the West Bank. 700,000 Israelis live in settlements that violate [Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention](#), prohibiting "transfer [of] parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

Israeli settlers believe their settlements are justified by God's promise that Jews have the right to all the ancient lands of Judah and Israel.



This settler ideology is supported by Likud, the party of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is committed to [further settlement expansion](#). Like the American ideology of “manifest destiny,” the settler ideology is used to justify forced displacement of Palestinians who have lived in the occupied territories for thousands of years.

Forced displacement is a crime against humanity prohibited by [Article 7\(1\)\(d\)](#) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Dehumanization of the enemy is common in wars and genocides. It is already evident in this war, with Hamas militants [spitting on and mutilating bodies](#) of their victims and the Israeli Defence Minister calling Hamas “human animals.” [Dehumanization is a stage of genocide](#).

From 2008 - 2022, Israeli attacks in Gaza and the West Bank killed [6407](#) Palestinian civilians, over half killed by Israeli bombs and missiles. During the same period, [308](#) Israeli civilians have died from Palestinian attacks. In 2022, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) killed an estimated [204](#) Palestinians. Most deaths occurred during military raids against suspected Palestinian militants.

The October 2023 terrorist attacks by Hamas and bombing of Gaza by Israel Defense Forces have caused over [2670 civilian deaths](#) in Gaza and [1400](#) civilian deaths in Israel in just the first week of the war.

Both Israel and Hamas are committing war crimes. As of October 13, 2023, more than 150 civilian hostages have been taken from Israel and are being held in Gaza by Hamas. Taking of hostages is prohibited by [Common Article 3, and the Fourth Geneva Convention](#), and [Additional Protocols I and II of the Geneva Conventions](#), and is a war crime under [Article 8\(2\)viii of the ICC Statute](#).

Israel has imposed a [blockade on Gaza](#) until all hostages are returned, prohibiting the entry of water and fuel. [50,000 pregnant women](#) lack access to essential health services and more than [600,000 children](#) are among the Palestinians trapped in Gaza. Israel's massive bombing of Gaza has [indiscriminately killed civilians](#). Israel's bombing of the [Ahlī Arab Hospital in Gaza killed 500 civilians](#). The hospital bombing was a clear [war crime](#).

Israel called for the [relocation of 1.1 million civilians](#) to south Gaza within 24 hours for safety, an order that Hamas ordered Palestinians to ignore. The UN urged Israel to withdraw this order due to the [“devastating humanitarian consequences”](#) from an evacuation that cannot be completed before Israeli bombing and invasion begin. Israel extended the evacuation deadline but thousands of civilians are still trapped.

As a nation state, [Israel has the right to self-defence](#). Both Israel and Hamas are obligated by international law to protect civilians. Israeli invasion of Gaza will result in [more war crimes by both Israel and Hamas](#).

Genocide Watch considers the war in Israel and Gaza to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination, Stage 4: Dehumanization, Stage 5: Organization, Stage 6: Polarization, Stage 8: Persecution, and Stage 9: Extermination**.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- All hostages held by Hamas must be freed immediately and returned to Israel.
- The Israeli blockade of medicines, food, and water to Gaza should end immediately.
- Military aid to Israel should be conditional on Israel's adherence to the laws of war.
- Humanitarian corridors to safe areas must be free from bombing and ground attacks.
- Hamas and Israel must halt all attacks that kill or injure civilians.
- Reports of Israel's use of [incendiary weapons](#) must be investigated by the UN.
- Israeli officials in the occupied West Bank must ensure the safety of all civilians.
- Israel should not invade Gaza until Israel lifts its blockade, stops its bombing, and enforces rigorous rules of engagement to prevent civilian casualties.