

Feb 18, 2024

I, Lee Mordechai, write this document as a historian and Israeli citizen, as my testimony to the horrible current situation in Gaza as events are unfolding.¹ I write my personal opinion as an academic, partially because of the disappointing general silence on this issue among many international and Israeli academic institutions, especially those that are well-positioned to comment on it, even as some of my colleagues have bravely spoken out. I do not believe this document will convince many others to change their minds. Rather, I write this publicly to testify that during the war there were and remain Israeli voices who strongly dissented from Israel's actions.

Although I am neither a lawyer nor an expert on the subject, the evidence I have seen and describe below has been sufficient for me to believe that what Israel is currently doing to the Palestinian population in Gaza is a crime against humanity² that is consistent with the definition of genocide as I understand it.³ A recent (Jan. 26) International Court of Justice Order found that Israel's actions could plausibly be argued to be genocide,⁴ as experts have pointed out before⁵ and after⁶ the Order – including both action and intent.⁷ A federal judge in California ruled the Israel's actions are "plausibly" genocide.⁸

On 7 October 2023, Hamas militants attacked Israel, killing over 1,200 people in Israel, most of whom were civilians, and taking about 250 people hostage to Gaza. These atrocities are war crimes and crimes against humanity. Many others have already written about these events in the international and Israeli media and I do not have much new to add on these events. The events of 7 October initiated the current war that is the context for this document.

Despite the aforementioned atrocities, I believe Israel's response to the events of Oct. 7 over the past four months continues to be wholly disproportionate, immoral and criminal. My position on these matters represents a tiny minority in Israeli society. In polls on this issue only 1.8% (October), 7% (December), and 3.2% (January) of Jewish Israelis believed the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) was using too much firepower in Gaza.⁹

My position is based on many pieces of evidence that I have collected particularly since late December 2023. In my analysis, I gave precedence to evidence provided by reputable institutions such as the United Nations, in particular its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which releases almost daily updates about the situation in Gaza, as well as reports by several humanitarian aid and human rights organizations. I have also made use of mainstream media outlets, particularly in cases of factual reporting (e.g. someone saying something). In cases of in-depth investigative reporting I have also used sources like the Israeli +972/Local Call Magazine. To

¹ I chose to write this open statement about what is happening in Gaza having been inspired by John Mearsheimer's similar statement a few months ago. https://mearsheimer.substack.com/p/death-and-destruction-in-gaza?publication_id=1753552&post_id=139711017. Additionally important in composing this document is the comprehensive and important South African Application instituting proceedings and Request for the indication of provisional measures to the International Court of Justice, from which I have traced some of the sources of information in this document (<https://www.ici-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20231228-app-01-00-en.pdf>).

² <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/crimes-against-humanity.shtml>

³ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>

⁴ <https://www.ici-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

⁵ <https://time.com/6334409/is-whats-happening-gaza-genocide-experts/>

⁶ <https://www.justsecurity.org/91457/top-experts-views-of-intl-court-of-justice-ruling-on-israel-gaza-operations-south-africa-v-israel-genocide-convention-case/>

⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/01/genocide-gaza-israel-california-court>. The court dismissed the case as the issue was outside its jurisdiction.

⁹ https://social-sciences.tau.ac.il/sites/socsci.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/social/2023/Findings-November-2023-EN.pdf; <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israelis-say-hamas-must-be-crushed-despite-gaza-casualties-un-rebuke-2023-12-13/>; <https://www.idi.org.il/articles/51742>; https://en-social-sciences.tau.ac.il/sites/socsci-english.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/social/peaceindex/2024-01-findings.pdf

support the evidence I have collected from these sources, I have used material from social media from both sides. To the best of my ability, I estimate that the vast majority of the information I have included is reliable, and I have repeatedly chosen not to include information from both sides I had doubts about.

This document corresponds to an update and expansion of earlier versions of my understanding of the situation in early January and late January 2024, following ideas and suggestions I have since received. The document's main purpose is still to state my opinion publicly out of a sense of commitment I have to human rights ideals. A secondary purpose is to preserve at least some of the evidence I have come across as I have been reading about the war. I hope readers find it useful to better understand the circumstances over these difficult days in the present and the future.

Context

Gaza itself is a tiny piece of land, consisting of some 365 square kilometers. Its population is about 2.3 million, making it one of the most densely populated areas on the planet.¹⁰ Israel controls Gaza's borders, communications, electricity, water and even population registry.¹¹ The United Nations, human rights organizations, government ministries (including in the US and the UK) and legal scholars all see Gaza as an occupied territory under the control of Israel.¹² These features as well as Gaza's geography and demography exacerbate the crisis I outline below. Israel, already before the current war, has been described as an apartheid state by leading human rights organizations following serious and well documented reports (Human Rights Watch,¹³ Amnesty International¹⁴, and B'Tselem¹⁵). This has facilitated many of the policies and actions I discuss below.

The massacre of Palestinians

So far, Israel has killed over 28,775 Gazans – over 1 percent of the total population of Gaza.¹⁶ This death toll is conservative and will almost certainly increase. The number does not include about 7,000 missing people, many still buried under the rubble.¹⁷ It also does not include any individuals whose death was not reported to Gaza's overwhelmed health ministry. According to the available public data, including data in Israel, about three quarters (c. 73%) of the deaths in Gaza are of women and children.¹⁸ As of mid February, over 12,300 children had already been killed.¹⁹ 68,552 people (about 3 percent of Gaza's population) have been injured.²⁰

¹⁰ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-87>

¹¹ <https://features.qisha.org/gaza-up-close/>

¹² Sanger, Andrew (2011). "The Contemporary Law of Blockade and the Gaza Freedom Flotilla". In M.N. Schmit, Louise Arimatsu; Tim McCormack (eds.). *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law 2010*. Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law. Vol. 13. Springer Science & Business Media. pp. 429-431.

¹³ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>

¹⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>

¹⁵ <https://www.btselem.org/topic/apartheid>

¹⁶ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/08/the-numbers-that-reveal-the-extent-of-the-destruction-in-gaza>

¹⁸ <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-02-12-2024-4ade5edf47711c6b0c13d1380980de2b>

¹⁹ <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-02-12-2024-4ade5edf47711c6b0c13d1380980de2b>

²⁰ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

Although the International Court of Justice Order that called upon Israel to take “all measures in its power” to prevent the killing of Palestinians on 26 Jan., as of writing Israel has continued to kill an average of over 100 Palestinians a day.²¹

Israeli spokespersons themselves have estimated that two civilians have died for each Hamas militant, and stated that it is a justified ratio.²² In reality, the ratio is likely far worse – with estimates that about 80-90 percent of deaths have been of civilians.²³ According to the key investigative report on the subject, Israel knows well the amount of civilians that will be hit by its attacks and proceeds to bomb buildings with little oversight, often through employing an artificial intelligence system (“The Gospel”).²⁴ About 40-45% of the air-to-ground munitions Israel has dropped on Gaza are unguided.²⁵ In addition, Israel has also used quadcopters to fire on civilians.²⁶ In February, Amnesty International closely investigated four attacks that killed at least 95 civilians. All took place in the southern governate that was supposed to be safe at the time, and Amnesty found no indication that the buildings were legitimate military objectives or that people in the buildings were military targets.²⁷

The rate of civilian deaths is shocking, particularly as it continues in real time. The UN Secretary General has stated that “We are witnessing a killing of civilians that is unparalleled and unprecedented in any conflict [in recent years]”.²⁸ Since the beginning of the operation, Israel has killed an average of about 100 children per day. This number is greater than the number of children killed in conflict zones around the world over the past three years combined, and is far greater than the rate of children killed in other 21st century wars.²⁹ In October alone, the number of killed Gazan children was over 10 times more than the number of children killed in the entire first year of the Russia-Ukraine war.³⁰ As UNICEF’s Executive Director put it, Gaza is “the most dangerous place in the world to be a child”.³¹ UNICEF estimated in early February that at least 17,000 children are unaccompanied or separated from their parents.³²

As of February 16, 160 UN staff members have been killed.³³ 124 journalists and media workers have been killed, more than the entirety of journalists killed in World War II, and at a rate higher than any other conflict over the past century.³⁴ More than 100 university professors, including several leading

²¹ https://twitter.com/_ZachFoster/status/1758520277288341601

²² <https://cnn.com/2023/12/05/middleeast/israel-hamas-military-civilian-ratio-killed-intl-hnk/index.html>

²³ See e.g. the considerably lower mortality estimate here (1,000-2,000 Hamas fighters in late November).

²⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/26/idf-messaging-suggests-gaza-truce-unlikely-to-last-much-beyond-tuesday>

²⁵ <https://www.972mag.com/mass-assassination-factory-israel-calculated-bombing-gaza/>

²⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/01/the-gospel-how-israel-uses-ai-to-select-bombing-targets>

²⁷ <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/12/13/politics/intelligence-assessment-dumb-bombs-israel-gaza/index.html>

²⁸ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/war-gaza-israeli-quadcopters-hi-tech-weapon-menacing-palestinian-civilians>

²⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-opt-new-evidence-of-unlawful-israeli-attacks-in-gaza-causing-mass-civilian-casualties-amid-real-risk-of-genocide/>

³⁰ https://twitter.com/UN_News_Centre/status/1726609880986083685

³¹ <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-3195-children-killed-three-weeks-surpasses-annual-number-children-killed-conflict-zones>

³² <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/5903/Number-of-Gazan-children-killed-in-under-a-month-is-10-times-higher-than-that-of-Ukrainian-children-killed-in-entire-first-year-of-Russia%E2%80%99s-ongoing-war>

³³ <https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/statement-by-unicef-executive-director-catherine-russell-on-the-resumption-of-fighting-in-gaza/>

³⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/stories-loss-and-grief-least-17000-children-are-estimated-be-unaccompanied-or>

³⁵ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

³⁶ <https://cpi.org/2024/01/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/9/how-deadly-is-the-israel-gaza-war-for-journalists>; <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

Palestinian academics, have been killed.³⁵ At least 340 health workers have been killed.³⁶ Israel's attacks on hospitals have killed hundreds of Palestinians. More have died by forced evacuations, including four premature babies in intensive care after the IDF forced the nurse taking care of them to leave when IDF soldiers reached the hospital. The babies were left in their beds and later found during the ceasefire in late November in a state of decomposition as nobody cared for them.³⁷

The value of Palestinian lives is incredibly cheap. In one case, a car with six civilians was attacked, killing four. A 15 year old girl called the Palestinian Red Crescent, but was apparently killed during the conversation. Her cousin, a 6 year old girl, called again and stayed on the line, terrified and surrounded by her dead family members, for 3 hours. The Palestinian Red Crescent sent two paramedics to retrieve her, informing the IDF of their movement. All connections with the girl and the paramedics were lost, and 12 days later the girl's decomposing corpse was found in the car, while the paramedics were killed nearby when an IDF tank shot their ambulance.³⁸ In another case, IDF troops entered a family home and killed the two parents in sight of their children (aged 11, 9 and 5; the youngest, with cerebral palsy, lost his eye to a grenade the soldiers threw).³⁹ In a different case, the IDF sent a handcuffed prisoner to deliver a message to evacuate a hospital in Khan Younis, then shot him as he tried to walk outside the gate.⁴⁰ The IDF subsequently bombed the hospital.⁴¹ An American doctor that returned from Gaza told the Los Angeles Times that during her time there "a handful of children" around 5-8 were brought to the emergency room, all of whom had single sniper shots to the head.⁴²

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reiterated that there is no safe space in Gaza.⁴³ There have been multiple mass graves where corpses of Palestinians have been deposited,⁴⁴ with additional decomposed corpses in the streets.⁴⁵ Preliminary reports have "documented dozens of cases of field executions carried out by the Israeli army".⁴⁶ In one such event, on 19 Dec. IDF troops are said to have executed at least 19 unarmed Palestinian men in front of their family members.⁴⁷ In another, over 30 Palestinian corpses were found in black plastic bags, blindfolded and handcuffed.⁴⁸ Few of these cases have even been covered in Israeli media.⁴⁹

In a recent poll, two thirds of Israelis preferred to continue the war in its current form of excessive bombardment and violence.⁵⁰

³⁵ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20231228-app-01-00-en.pdf> (#90); <https://twitter.com/Timesofgaza/status/1744041205938409756>; <https://twitter.com/NourNaim88/status/1743662116614070495>; <https://twitter.com/NourNaim88/status/1745135460270096699>; <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6108/Israel-kills-dozens-of-academics.-destroys-every-university-in-the-Gaza-Strip>; list with names at <https://twitter.com/sawporg/status/1755224105249333643>

³⁶ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

³⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/03/gaza-premature-babies-dead-nasr/>

³⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/10/body-of-6-year-old-killed-in-deliberate-israeli-fire-found-after-12-days>

³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RDXQapOtUg>

⁴⁰ <https://theintercept.com/2024/02/14/gaza-nasser-hospital-evacuation-israel-prisoner/>

⁴¹ https://twitter.com/Ahmad_tibi/status/1758038092353503495

⁴² <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2024-02-16/rafah-gaza-hospitals-surgery-israel-bombing-ground-offensive-children>

⁴³ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-82>

⁴⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/pictures/all-cemeteries-are-full-palestinians-buried-mass-grave-gaza-2023-11-22/>

⁴⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Poydd3EG_-8.

⁴⁶ <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6058/Euro-Med-Monitor-sends-UN-rapporteurs.-ICC-Prosecutor-primary-report-documenting-dozens-of-field-execution-cases-in-Gaza>; <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/war-gaza-survivors-recount-harrowing-israeli-field-executions>; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1745259688801816854>

⁴⁷ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unlawful-killings-in-gaza-city-ohchr-press-release/>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/20/palestinians-accuse-israeli-forces-of-executing-19-civilians-in-gaza>

⁴⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/1/palestinians-demand-international-inquiry-after-mass-grave-found-in-gaza>

⁴⁹ <https://www.ynet.co.il/yedioth/article/yokra13792905>; <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/syv8bslop>

⁵⁰ <https://www.idi.org.il/articles/52071>

Causing the deaths of civilian populations

Israel has placed a stranglehold on the Palestinian population of Gaza since the beginning of the war. The amounts of food, fuel, medicine and water are extremely limited. The absence of supplies in Gaza – a siege – has been the stated policy of top Israeli officials since the beginning of the war.⁵¹ Only about 20-30% of the 500 trucks necessary to supply Gaza for humanitarian causes are allowed in daily, and encounter multiple problems as they try to do so.⁵² Gaza is experiencing full electricity blackout.⁵³ Fuel prices, for example, have increased by over 500 percent.⁵⁴ In the northern parts of the Gaza strip in early February, the price of a bag of flour, 30 shekels (~\$8) before the war, reached 500-1000 shekels (~\$125-250), 15-30 times higher.⁵⁵

As a result, the vast majority of Gaza's population is at risk of famine. Virtually all households are skipping meals every day, with 50-80% of households going entire days and nights without eating.⁵⁶ Some 90% of civilians in Gaza experience "high levels of acute food insecurity".⁵⁷ In late January the World Health Organization's Director-General noted the food shortages that result in medical staffs and patients receiving only one meal per day.⁵⁸ Some 40% experience "emergency levels" and over 15% (378,000) experience catastrophic levels, namely "extreme lack of food, starvation and exhaustion of coping capacities".⁵⁹ The Chief Economist of the World Food Program has stressed that "In my life, I've never seen anything like this in terms of severity, in terms of scale, and then in terms of speed."⁶⁰ A prominent scholar of famine and Executive Director of the World Peace Foundation stated that he had never seen the war crime of starvation perpetrated in such scale over the 40 years of his career⁶¹ and that "The rigor, scale and speed of the destruction of the structures necessary for survival, and enforcement of the siege, surpasses any other case of man-made famine in the last 75 years".⁶² Media coverage refers to people eating grass and drinking contaminated water or sea water.⁶³ Images and videos from the strip appear to confirm these findings.⁶⁴ Despite this situation, IDF officers demand a further lowering of the humanitarian aid to Gaza.⁶⁵ Almost 60 percent of Israeli Jews oppose humanitarian aid to Gaza, a stable figure over time.⁶⁶ Jewish activists

⁵¹ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/defense-minister-announces-complete-siege-of-gaza-no-power-food-or-fuel/ ; <https://twitter.com/KnessetT/status/1716502486331113922>

⁵² <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/remarks-media-secretary-general>

⁵³ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

⁵⁴ <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000154766/download/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/2024-02-07/ty-article-magazine/.highlight/0000018d-8213-daa1-a9fd-e21b04660000> ; <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231117-give-us-our-daily-bread-gaza-faces-flour-crisis>

⁵⁶ https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Nov2023_Feb2024.pdf ; <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/01/world/middleeast/gaza-israel-hunger.html>; <https://www.972mag.com/rafah-children-hunger-aid/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-113>;

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2023-12-21/ty-article/.premium/0000018c-8908-d60e-afdf-ed0e2bb70000>

⁵⁸ <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-on-gaza--the-who-executive-board--trans-fats-and-leprosy>

⁵⁹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-113>

⁶⁰ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/gaza-is-starving>

⁶¹ https://youtu.be/0pGqFZovlAw?si=mone7I85_SobAivS&t=875

⁶² <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/11/health/gaza-israel-hunger-starvation.html> ;

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/31/israel-gaza-starvation-international-law>

⁶³ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/30/middleeast/famine-looms-in-gaza-israel-war-intl/index.html> ;

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/2024-02-07/ty-article-magazine/.highlight/0000018d-8213-daa1-a9fd-e21b04660000>

⁶⁴ <https://twitter.com/NourNaim88/status/1750503719806923075> ;

<https://twitter.com/NABEELRAJAB/status/1750017231197544706>;

<https://twitter.com/jakeshieldsajj/status/1751580352601309591>

⁶⁵ <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3633138>

⁶⁶ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-01-30/ty-article/.premium/a-new-low-the-israelis-advocating-to-starve-the-people-of-gaza/0000018d-5b42-d0fc-a9bd-5f5fc0740000>

have completely blocked the entrance of aid to Gaza on several days over the past few weeks.⁶⁷ IDF soldiers recorded themselves destroying and burning food warehouses in Gaza.⁶⁸

The average water supply per person in Gaza is between 1.5-1.8 liters daily (the minimum average volume of water for drinking and domestic hygiene should be 15 liters).⁶⁹ The lack of medical supplies has resulted in the conduction of medical operations, including C-sections and amputations, without anesthesia or blood supplies.⁷⁰ An online video shows a Gazan doctor who had to amputate his daughter's foot on the dining table in their home without anesthesia.⁷¹ Women who face postpartum bleeding as they give birth have undergone hysterotomies for lack of medicine and blood supply, preventing them from giving birth in the future.⁷² Oxfam's Middle East Regional Director stated that "Amongst the horror and carnage in Gaza, we are now at the abhorrent stage of babies dying because of diarrhoea and hypothermia. It is shattering that newborns are coming into the world and due to the apocalyptic conditions, stand little chance of survival." In some cases, mothers had to give birth in classrooms full with 70 other people, which the director described as "simply inhumane".⁷³ Miscarriages in Gaza have increased by 300% compared to the pre-war situation.⁷⁴

Gaza's health system has all but collapsed, with only a third of Gaza's hospitals and a sixth of its primary health centers still partially operational.⁷⁵ There are over 400,000 reported cases of diseases in Gaza so far.⁷⁶ Over 100,000 cases of diarrhea have been reported, half of which are among children aged 5 or less (25 times the pre-war frequency).⁷⁷ In a single week in mid-December, 3,200 cases of diarrhea were reported every day (compared to 2,000 per month before the war).⁷⁸ On average, there is one shower in Gaza for every 4,500 people, and a toilet for every 220.⁷⁹ Important public voices in Israel – such as a former general and head of Israel's National Security Council and official wartime advisor to Israel's Defense Minister⁸⁰ – have spoken in favor of allowing diseases to decimate the civilian population in Gaza.⁸¹

As a result of the above, the chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh has stated that "the world faces the prospect of almost a quarter of Gaza's 2 million population - close to half a million human beings - dying within a year. These would be largely deaths from preventable health causes and the collapse of the medical system".⁸²

⁶⁷ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-125>

⁶⁸ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1757406177883750809>

⁶⁹ <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000154766/download/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-32>; <https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/nightmarish-gazas-pregnant-women-endure-c-sections-without-anesthesia-15823792>; <https://news.un.org/en/interview/2023/11/1143327>; <https://healthnews.com/news/c-sections-are-performed-without-anesthesia-in-gaza/>; https://www.juzoor.org/cached_uploads/download/2023/11/11/maternal-health-report-final-1699726911.pdf

⁷¹ <https://twitter.com/NourNaim88/status/1746887014337671410>

⁷² https://www.juzoor.org/cached_uploads/download/2023/11/11/maternal-health-report-final-1699726911.pdf

⁷³ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/babies-dying-preventable-causes-besieged-gaza-oxfam>

⁷⁴ <https://jezebel.com/miscarriages-in-gaza-have-increased-300-under-israeli-1851168680>

⁷⁵ <https://twitter.com/Channel4News/status/1755234190147158510>; <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-125>

⁷⁶ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-82>

⁷⁷ <https://www.who.int/news/item/21-12-2023-lethal-combination-of-hunger-and-disease-to-lead-to-more-deaths-in-gaza>

⁷⁸ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-86>

⁷⁹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/21-12-2023-lethal-combination-of-hunger-and-disease-to-lead-to-more-deaths-in-gaza>; in early January in UNRWA shelters the ratio was 1 toilet for over 486 people. <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-59-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>

⁸⁰ <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/r1zlcnoga>

⁸¹ <https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001462900>

⁸² <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/dec/29/health-organisations-disease-gaza-population-outbreaks-conflict>

Israeli discourse and de-humanization of Palestinians

Much of the above is made possible through the consistent de-humanization of Palestinians, fore and foremost those living in Gaza. This dehumanization has proceeded from the top of the Israeli state. Israel's Prime Minister has described the conflict as "a struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness, between humanity and the law of the jungle",⁸³ stated that "this war is civilization against barbarism"⁸⁴ and defined the war as a battle against the Biblical Amalek,⁸⁵ which the Bible directs to annihilate completely.⁸⁶ Israel's President has stated that Israel did not distinguish between militants and civilians, "it's an entire nation out there that is responsible".⁸⁷ He also personally wrote a message on an artillery shell to be shot into Gaza.⁸⁸ Israel's Minister of Defense has described the Palestinians in Gaza as "human animals". At least five other government ministers have made similar statements.⁸⁹ Israel's National Security minister told Border Police troops they should shoot terrorists even if the terrorists do not threaten them, against procedure.⁹⁰ A ruling party MP has stated on TV that he was told "it is clear that we need to destroy [or annihilate, depending on translation of להשמיד] all Gazans".⁹¹ Other politicians have done the same.⁹² Institutionalized dehumanization was conducted as well. The IDF ran a Telegram channel ("72 Virgins – Uncensored") that propagandized Israeli audiences through explicit and uncensored "exclusive" videos and images that depicted killings and corpses in Gaza, using explicit language that also compared Gazans to cockroaches and rats.⁹³

In November, 90 Israeli doctors signed a letter calling to bomb hospitals in Gaza.⁹⁴ In early January, a long list of rabbis, academics and ten MPs have called for the cessation of all humanitarian aid to Gaza.⁹⁵ In February, a former senior Mossad figure and an important journalist agreed that children aged 5 and up in Gaza are not uninvolved in the conflict and therefore do not deserve humanitarian aid.⁹⁶ An Israeli media outlet has also noted with glee that the number of deaths of "Arabs" in Gaza in the current war is higher than all previous wars.⁹⁷

The dehumanization of Palestinians is now pervasive and obvious in countless videos⁹⁸ that present shooting civilians waving white flags,⁹⁹ abuse of individuals,¹⁰⁰ captives and corpses,¹⁰¹ gleefully

⁸³ <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/children-post-deleted-netanyahu/>

⁸⁴ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-to-dutch-leader-this-war-is-civilization-vs-barbarism/

⁸⁵ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/Article-1049593>; <https://www.npr.org/2023/11/07/1211133201/netanyahus-references-to-violent-biblical-passages-raise-alarm-among-critics>

⁸⁶ 1 Samuel 15.2-3.

⁸⁷ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/israel-gaza-isaac-herzog_n_65295ee8e4b03ea0c004e2a8

⁸⁸ <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2024-01-03/ty-article/.premium/a-munition-signed-by-israeli-president-could-hit-a-child/0000018c-cbc4-d4e1-ad8f-fff5a0c70000>

⁸⁹ <https://www.ici-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20231228-app-01-00-en.pdf>, pp. 60-62.

⁹⁰ <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/bkxx1alft>

⁹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfMxnNkQSfM>

⁹² <https://twitter.com/AmirHetsroni/status/1743063371551822292> (speaker is Moshe Feiglin);

<https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/syq0011n006>

⁹³ <https://www.haaretz.com/news/security/2023-12-12/ty-article/.premium/0000018c-3918-dc03-a9ec-3d7b95f80000>;

<https://www.haaretz.com/news/security/2024-02-04/ty-article/.premium/0000018d-7042-dd6e-a98d-f462d6a00000>

⁹⁴ <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/11/israeli-doctors-urge-the-bombing-of-gaza-hospitals/>

⁹⁵ <https://twitter.com/shilofreid/status/1742919348401135788>

⁹⁶ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1757837275830907052>

⁹⁷ https://twitter.com/itamar_green/status/1741504115874627765

⁹⁸ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/videos-of-israeli-soldiers-acting-maliciously-emerge-amid-international-outcry-against-tactics-in-gaza> ; <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1757920440155242710>

⁹⁹ <https://twitter.com/middleeasteye/status/1744351540435935525> ;

<https://twitter.com/muhammadshehad2/status/1750601287102542296>;

<https://twitter.com/RamAbdu/status/1749971465422745729>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.mistaclam.org/he/post/%D7%94%D7%92%D7%99%D7%91%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%A0%D7%95>

¹⁰¹ Long list of videos at: <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1713533460290076817>,

<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1744296383174025397> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1745427870216851736> ;

<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1747994879156793524> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1752258519900766489> ;

damaging or destroying houses¹⁰², various structures and institutions,¹⁰³ religious sites¹⁰⁴ and theft of personal belongings,¹⁰⁵ as well as shooting local animals,¹⁰⁶ destroying private property¹⁰⁷ and defacing Palestinian symbols.¹⁰⁸ One such video, for example, shows tens of Palestinian captives from Gaza sitting in a bus tied up and with their eyes covered. An Israeli soldier then demands that they praise his family and state that they want to become slaves to his family “forever and ever”.¹⁰⁹ Another testimony of a Gazan doctor states that the detained director of Al-Shifa medical complex was made to crawl like an animal, had a chain placed around his neck and was told to eat from a bowl like a dog.¹¹⁰ A Gazan detainee said that IDF soldiers placed women detainees from Gaza into the men’s section while being completely naked, and cut the hair of some of the women detainees.¹¹¹ Looting has become normalized to the extent that one case was featured approvingly in a popular Friday evening news segment,¹¹² while a military doctor noted that it had become “almost institutionalized”.¹¹³

Many soldiers release humoristic videos about their experience and destruction in Gaza,¹¹⁴ or content that ignores the war, such as conducting a yoga class in an abandoned home in Gaza,¹¹⁵ or a soldier holding up a sign advertising a barber shop in Israel with corpses of dead Palestinians around him.¹¹⁶ Ha’aretz, the left-leaning Israel newspaper, covered the good food that IDF soldiers were eating in abandoned homes in Gaza at the same time as their displaced owners were starving.¹¹⁷ The IDF has even brought influencers to mockingly “review” a “hotel” in Gaza.¹¹⁸ Revenge is a recurring

<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1755891061015064836> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1758617748383453638> ;
<https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1758914324150538698>

¹⁰² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiC4ApANLwg>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiolU7WwpUQ> ;
<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240103-israeli-soldiers-invade-damaged-house-in-gaza-and-destroy-it/>;
<https://twitter.com/RamAbdu/status/1743665392722059344> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1748137507319939548> ;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1746581304999542901> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1751618405453422875> ;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1753158451734220834> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1756458915473105113> ;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1757155595877032104> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1757163079207358570>

¹⁰³ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1742346460559995063>; <https://twitter.com/NourNaim88/status/1743626241104543942>

¹⁰⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if_Z2ZeqrN8 ; <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1754458148276990180> ;
<https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1757054593656103198>

¹⁰⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/amid-ongoing-genocide-gaza-systematic-israeli-theft-occurring-palestinian-civilian-homes-enar>; <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-gaza-singer-helpless-israeli-soldier-filmed-tiktok-his-guitar> ; <https://twitter.com/BChutzpah19416/status/1750186862579269867>; written report that includes a soldier confessing to looting homes before demolishing them: <https://medium.com/@dillontelem/gaza-warzone-musings-a-soldiers-reflections-on-demolition-and-humanity-7ddea313c00> ; <https://twitter.com/adinitay/status/1756791144111816917> ;
<https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1757157210356936804>

¹⁰⁶ https://twitter.com/Sarah_Hassan94/status/1754620276271149451

¹⁰⁷ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1748130778737729911>

¹⁰⁸ <https://twitter.com/NourNaim88/status/1742273606699106542>; <https://twitter.com/QudsNen/status/1743712184725594564>

¹⁰⁹ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1752433175320478060>

¹¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/adham922/status/1756068057779245412>

¹¹¹ <https://twitter.com/NourNaim88/status/1756605167946899965>

¹¹² <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1756438313899024862>

¹¹³ <https://www.ynet.co.il/yedioth/article/yokra13792905>

¹¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1745063720080793681>; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1745491460525375587>;
<https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1748075046294163757> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1746696846817325288> ;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1746685595366125951> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1745973511301026092>;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1749272544975229438>; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1749593678861984045> ;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1750782757326795020> ; <https://twitter.com/NABEELRAJAB/status/1750228266193969448>;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1750627849948532763> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1750540763413287350> ;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1749795644532035602> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1750197302579343870> ;
<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1753422534555427299> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1753536164085010674> ;
<https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1754091912040968444> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1754553057696784519> ; a long list of additional videos here: <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1755973157515669708> ;

<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1757094979460067773>

¹¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1749956154975744455> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1753536576791970148>

¹¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/Mistaclim/status/1755129771825000637>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/food/2024-02-13/tv-article-magazine/-premium/0000018d-82c5-d6dc-ab9f-cfd1ebc0000>

¹¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1743296706576269446>;

<https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1739728935779234254>

theme in many of these videos.¹¹⁹ More videos are covered by the New York Times¹²⁰ and CNN.¹²¹ In January alone, the IDF burned hundreds of houses and apartments in Gaza which Israeli soldiers temporarily occupied, without legal approval in a procedure that became normative.¹²²

Israeli demonstrators have repeatedly attempted to block humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, including holding a rave/protest just outside the border wall.¹²³ On one occasion, the IDF attacked a food convoy.¹²⁴

Significant but unknown numbers of Palestinians have been detained and moved to camps within Israel.¹²⁵ Many of these Palestinians (as much as 85-90% according to Israeli media) are arrested without any concrete connection to Hamas.¹²⁶ The conditions throughout the process of arrest and detainment are appalling, as a released Gazan poet has recently narrated in detail.¹²⁷ Many others have shared similar stories.¹²⁸ Online videos provide more evidence.¹²⁹ In one, a Gazan doctor who was detained by Israel said that he was held for 45 days, throughout which he was blindfolded and handcuffed, with his legs tied in clamps in what amounts to torture. He was subsequently released.¹³⁰ To date, at least 7 Palestinian prisoners and captives have died in Israeli jails since the beginning of the war.¹³¹ The IDF has admitted that additional detained Palestinians from Gaza have died but refused to supply additional details.¹³² The IDF refused to answer whether it opened Military Police investigations for the deaths of Gazan captives.¹³³ According to a law amendment that was passed after the beginning of the war, Israel can now hold “illegal fighters” as detainees for up to 45 days without a warrant or notifying their families, and putting a detainee in contact with their lawyer can be delayed for up to 75 days (or half a year, if a judge approves).¹³⁴ The same law was used, for example, to detain an imprison an 82-year old woman with Alzheimer disease for almost two months.¹³⁵

Ethnic cleansing

¹¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1750219568428036237> ;

<https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1756652152607457781>

¹²⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/06/world/middleeast/israel-idf-soldiers-war-social-media-video.html>

¹²¹ <https://twitter.com/amanpour/status/1758204651927744784>

¹²² <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2024-01-31/ty-article/.premium/0000018d-5fea-d9df-a9cd-7ffe4e820000> ;

<https://twitter.com/OmerArvili/status/1753754952155934999>

¹²³ <https://twitter.com/LowkeyOnline/status/1757326323712774650>

¹²⁴ <https://palestine.un.org/en/259747-food-convoy-waiting-move-northern-gaza-was-hit-israeli-naval-gunfire>

¹²⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/09/gaza-civilians-detained-israel/> ;

<https://twitter.com/YinonMagal/status/1754505872753979498> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1755342772670804416>

¹²⁶ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2023-12-10/ty-article/.premium/0000018c-542b-df2f-adac-fe2f4bf80000>

¹²⁷ <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/01/01/a-palestinian-poets-perilous-journey-out-of-gaza>

¹²⁸ <https://www.mekomit.co.il/20-%d7%a9%d7%a2%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%a2%d7%9c-%d7%94%d7%91%d7%a8%d7%9b%d7%99%d7%99%d7%9d-%d7%9e%d7%99-%d7%a9%d7%96%d7%96-%d7%9e%d7%95%d6%bc%d7%9b%d6%b6%d6%bc%d7%94-%d7%90%d7%96%d7%a8%d7%97%d7%99%d7%9d/> ;

<https://twitter.com/QudsNen/status/1747273886264443173> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1756754492790349978>

¹²⁹ https://twitter.com/brown_johnbrown/status/1743021596682371453 ;

<https://twitter.com/Mistaclim/status/1753512387322474545> ; <https://twitter.com/NourNaim88/status/1753044873974849578>

¹³⁰ <https://twitter.com/ReneeLevant/status/1754269959927079245>

¹³¹ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2023-12-06/ty-article-magazine/.premium/0000018c-3b9b-d11b-a3bf-ffbb16d80000> ;

<https://twitter.com/KhalilAsslan/status/1741926482463633866>

¹³² <https://www.mekomit.co.il/20-%d7%A9%d7%A2%d7%95%d7%AA-%d7%A2%d7%9C-%d7%94%d7%91%d7%A8%d7%9B%d7%99%d7%99%d7%9D-%d7%9E%d7%99-%d7%A9%d7%96%d7%96-%d7%9E%d7%95%D6%BC%d7%9B%D6%B6%D6%BC%d7%94-%d7%90%d7%96%d7%A8%d7%97%d7%99%d7%9D/>

¹³³ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2024-01-02/ty-article/.premium/0000018c-c6e1-d6c4-ab8d-e7f5fd670000>

¹³⁴ <https://www.mekomit.co.il/20-%d7%a9%d7%a2%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%a2%d7%9c-%d7%94%d7%91%d7%a8%d7%9b%d7%99%d7%99%d7%9d-%d7%9e%d7%99-%d7%a9%d7%96%d7%96-%d7%9e%d7%95%d6%bc%d7%9b%d6%b6%d6%bc%d7%94-%d7%90%d7%96%d7%a8%d7%97%d7%99%d7%9d/>

¹³⁵ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2024-02-01/ty-article/.premium/0000018d-5f18-d0af-a3af-7fbcea840000>

Ethnic cleansing is openly discussed in Israeli discourse, including by ministers in the ruling government. This includes the ministers of Finance,¹³⁶ National Security,¹³⁷ the former minister of Information¹³⁸ and a former Minister of Justice.¹³⁹ Israel MPs have also participated in the discussion.¹⁴⁰ A Israeli government plan proposal to repopulate all Gazans to the Sinai Peninsula (part of Egypt) has been leaked.¹⁴¹ Israel has also attempted to get the US to pressure Egypt into accepting Gazan refugees,¹⁴² and has attempted to convince several countries including Congo to accept Palestinian refugees.¹⁴³ Other locations members of Israel government suggested as potential resettlement locations include Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the European Union and Chile.¹⁴⁴ According to Israeli media, Chad and Rwanda have expressed interest to accept tens of thousands of Palestinians in exchange for generous financial support that included military support.¹⁴⁵ In mid-February a local human rights organization revealed that Egypt was building a high-security area for the reception of Palestinian refugees.¹⁴⁶

The absence of clear war goals or a clear end game to the war has allowed many Israelis to support the resettling of Gaza with Jewish settlements after the war.¹⁴⁷ Over 30 right-wing organizations have supported this goal in a late January conference.¹⁴⁸ A total of 11 ministers and 15 MPs (of a total of 120) participated in the conference.¹⁴⁹ Several IDF soldiers have stated their will to resettle Gaza while uniformed and within Gaza.¹⁵⁰ IDF soldiers appear to have constructed “the first synagogue in Khan Younis”,¹⁵¹ another synagogue there,¹⁵² as well as inaugurated a Torah scroll in three occasions (Sheikh Radwan in Gaza City, the Islamic University in Gaza, and Khan Younis).¹⁵³ One soldier filmed himself spray painting the Temple in Jerusalem on the ruins of a destroyed mosque in Gaza.¹⁵⁴ An IDF military “pizzeria” has allegedly opened in Khan Younis, and soldiers placed a sign of a fast food restaurant that might soon open in Gaza.¹⁵⁵ Donna Italia (an international pizzeria chain) appears to have opened a pizzeria in a displaced family’s home in Khan Younis to support IDF troops.¹⁵⁶

All the evidence I have seen indicates that Israel is systematically destroying Gaza to make it unlivable in the future. Israel is said to have dropped over 500 2,000-pound bombs within the densely populated urban area, despite the massive collateral damage these bombs cause (causing death or injury in a radius of up to 365 meters around the target). These bombs are four times

¹³⁶ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ministers-call-for-resettling-gazas-palestinians-building-settlements-in-strip/>

¹³⁷ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ministers-call-for-resettling-gazas-palestinians-building-settlements-in-strip/>

¹³⁸ <https://www.hidabroot.org/article/1187840>

¹³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEu-dQWOIL4>

¹⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/tzvisuccot/status/1754822778950148138>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.mekomit.co.il/%d7%94%d7%9e%d7%a1%d7%9e%d7%9a-%d7%94%d7%9e%d7%9c%d7%90-%d7%a9%d7%9c-%d7%9e%d7%a9%d7%a8%d7%93-%d7%94%d7%9e%d7%95%d7%93%d7%99%d7%a2%d7%99%d7%9f-%d7%9b%d7%99%d7%91%d7%95%d7%a9-%d7%a2%d7%96%d7%94-%d7%95/>

¹⁴² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/12/21/biden-netanyahu-dispute-palestinian-state/>

¹⁴³ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/israeli-officials-said-in-talks-with-congo-others-on-taking-in-gaza-emigrants/

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/01/04/gaza-displaced-civilians-resettlement-israel/>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.zman.co.il/453910/popup/>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/war-gaza-egypt-building-buffer-zone-palestinian-refugees>

¹⁴⁷ https://www.mako.co.il/news-politics/2023_q4/Article-9f47fed9563eb81027.htm

¹⁴⁸ <https://twitter.com/AlonLeeGreen/status/1746855797328433438>

¹⁴⁹ https://www.mako.co.il/news-politics/2024_q1/Article-7ce65d03aa05d81027.htm

¹⁵⁰ <https://twitter.com/Mistaclim/status/1746854844818681861>; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1745907053426565605>

¹⁵¹ <https://twitter.com/yanivkub/status/1742189448006127715>

¹⁵² <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1745979741931282775>

¹⁵³ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1743588216630919271>; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1750793042850664750>; <https://twitter.com/KhalilAsslan/status/1753364384800252200>

¹⁵⁴ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1756666882331988140>

¹⁵⁵ <https://twitter.com/arixegal/status/1747704367145201666>

¹⁵⁶ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1753547113638604865>

heavier than the largest bombs the United States used when fighting ISIS in Mosul.¹⁵⁷ Over 60 percent of Gaza's housing units have been destroyed or damaged.¹⁵⁸ As of mid-January experts estimate based on satellite imagery that between 142,900 to 176,900 buildings have been damaged.¹⁵⁹ Israel has destroyed not only buildings whose connection to Hamas militants is weak,¹⁶⁰ but also a long list of cultural institutions,¹⁶¹ historical and archaeological sites,¹⁶² dozens of governmental buildings (including the parliament¹⁶³ and the main courthouse)¹⁶⁴, religious buildings (over 184 mosques and 3 churches¹⁶⁵), universities (most or all universities in Gaza have been destroyed according to Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor),¹⁶⁶ public libraries¹⁶⁷ and archives.¹⁶⁸ Already in early December, Israeli attacks destroyed or damaged more than 100 heritage sites,¹⁶⁹ including buildings from Gaza's medieval, Byzantine and Roman periods. Soldiers have been filmed within a warehouse filled with antiquities, and there appears to have been a post by the director of the Israel Antiquities Authority that claimed that some of those antiquities were taken to Israel and presented in the Knesset (the post was later deleted).¹⁷⁰ About 92% of all school buildings have sustained damage.¹⁷¹ One IDF soldier claims his unit received orders to destroy the village of Khuza'a and uploaded a video showing that they accomplished the mission over two weeks.¹⁷² At least 16 cemeteries have been desecrated by the IDF, often by bulldozing.¹⁷³ A video shows the results of such an operation, with corpses left scattered across the landscape.¹⁷⁴ The IDF further bulldozed broad areas in the Gaza strip.¹⁷⁵ The amount of debris created by the destruction of residential areas (>8,000,000 metric tons) will take over 3 years to remove according to estimates.¹⁷⁶

After two months of fighting, Israel had already caused more destruction in Gaza than Syria in Aleppo (2012-2016), Russia in Mariupol in 2022, or (proportionally) the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II.¹⁷⁷ The destruction in Gaza has resulted in the displacement of some 75 percent of Gaza's population.¹⁷⁸

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.cnn.com/gaza-israel-big-bombs/index.html>; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/12/israel-opt-us-made-munitions-killed-43-civilians-in-two-documented-israeli-air-strikes-in-gaza-new-investigation/>

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2024/jan/30/how-war-destroyed-gazas-neighbourhoods-visual-investigation>

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.972mag.com/mass-assassination-factory-israel-calculated-bombing-gaza/>

¹⁶¹ E.g. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/israeli-army-says-it-struck-islamic-university-of-gaza/3015542>

¹⁶² <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-12-26/ty-article-magazine/.premium/bombing-historical-sites-in-gaza-israel-is-destroying-everything-beautiful/0000018c-a565-df1f-a7bf-b7e53e8e0000>; <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/12/22/gaza-city-archives-among-heritage-sites-destroyed-in-israel-hamas-war>

¹⁶³ <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/gaza-destruction-bombing-israel-aa528542>

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.newarab.com/news/israel-destroys-gaza-courthouse-dozens-govt-buildings>

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

¹⁶⁶ <https://twitter.com/PeruginiNic/status/1747730495482310771>; <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6108/Israel-kills-dozens-of-academics.-destroys-every-university-in-the-Gaza-Strip>; <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6163/Israel%E2%80%99s-demolition-of-educational-institutions.-cultural-objects-in-Gaza-is-additional-manifestation-of-genocide>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-12-12/gaza-library-bombing>; <https://lithub.com/gazas-main-public-library-has-been-destroyed/>

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCNftkL7cx4>

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.npr.org/2023/12/03/1216200754/gaza-heritage-sites-destroyed-israel>, <https://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Report-of-the-effects-of-the-last-war-of-2023-on-the-cultural-heritage-in-Gaza-Strip-Palestine-english.pdf>

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240122-israel-army-displays-artefacts-stolen-from-gaza-in-the-knesset/>;

<https://twitter.com/EmekShavehHeb/status/1749030636529008651>

¹⁷¹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

¹⁷² <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1744195835577921772>

¹⁷³ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/20/middleeast/israel-gaza-cemeteries-desecrated-investigation-intl-cmd/index.html>;

<https://twitter.com/QudsNen/status/1749145986595713498>

¹⁷⁴ <https://twitter.com/RamAbdu/status/1743386378606412188>

¹⁷⁵ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1750443193575886945>

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-104>

¹⁷⁷ <https://apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-bombs-destruction-death-toll-scope-419488c511f83c85baea22458472a796>

¹⁷⁸ <https://twitter.com/UNHumanRights/status/1742863747683668418>; <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-132>

Evidence supports the conclusion that Israel is attempting to destroy all buildings inside the Gaza Strip within a kilometer of the Israel-Gaza fence to create a “buffer zone”.¹⁷⁹ Such destruction has been described by the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights as a “grave breach of the Fourth Geneva convention and a war crime”.¹⁸⁰

Hostages

Within this context, the Israeli government – and significant segments in Israeli society – has refrained from making serious moves to release the 134 Israeli hostages that remain in Gaza.¹⁸¹ To date, three hostages of some 240 hostages taken on October 7 have been released by military operations.¹⁸² The military operation that released two of them also killed some 100 Gazans.¹⁸³ Three other Israeli hostages were killed by IDF forces within Gaza despite waving white flags and calling for help.¹⁸⁴ Another was killed during an attempted rescue operation.¹⁸⁵ Three others were supposedly killed by gas that the IDF flooded the tunnels with.¹⁸⁶

On the other hand, a temporary ceasefire has resulted in the release of 105 hostages.¹⁸⁷ Instead of negotiating additional hostage releases, the Israeli government prefers to continue its military operation, despite the obvious risk to the hostages. Those hostages who have been released in the previous exchange have repeatedly stated that Israeli bombardments they experienced were among the most terrifying things they experienced during their captivity.¹⁸⁸ The spokesperson for the Likud, the largest party in the Israeli parliament, met the families of the hostages and warned them against pushing for an early election because “it will be bad for the hostages” and “in such a period [i.e. elections] a lot of filth will surface”.¹⁸⁹

The West Bank

The West Bank has received less attention in media and public discourse. Nonetheless, the situation there has deteriorated quickly since the beginning of the war. At least 15 herding/Bedouin Palestinian settlements there have been abandoned after attacks by Israeli Jewish settlers (552 recorded since October 7).¹⁹⁰ These settlers have killed several Palestinians.¹⁹¹ A total of 389 Palestinians have been killed so far.¹⁹² Half the fatalities in the West Bank since the beginning of 2023 (four times higher than in 2022) were reported in operations that did not involve armed clashes. The deputy mayor of Jerusalem stated that Israeli police in Jerusalem used live ammunition and shot-to-kill rioters, killing five in early-mid October.¹⁹³ Since October 7, 4,503 Palestinians have

¹⁷⁹ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1758376261628436523>

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/widespread-destruction-israeli-defence-forces-civilian-infrastructure-gaza>

¹⁸¹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-113>

¹⁸² <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-30/ty-article/.premium/israel-rescues-woman-soldier-kidnapped-to-gaza-by-hamas/0000018b-81cc-df47-a3df-ffcdbcdc0000> ; <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/11/world/middleeast/israel-hostages-rescued.html>

¹⁸³ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/12/middleeast/israel-airstrikes-rafah-ground-offensive-looms-intl-hnk/index.html>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/2e299603-2fed-4855-9694-9801008c48dc>

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/rjzpo117da>

¹⁸⁶ <https://twitter.com/tomashinyu3/status/1747651031737979233>

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2023/12/world/hostage-israel-amas-deal-dg/>

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-1061467>

¹⁸⁹ https://twitter.com/Bar_ShemUr/status/1757852992215056477

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-120> ;

<https://twitter.com/YehudaShaul/status/1758122975386014057>

¹⁹¹ For example: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2024/01/09/israel-settler-violence-qusra-west-bank/>

¹⁹² <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-120>

¹⁹³ <https://twitter.com/ireallyhateyou/status/1754079208643420204>

been injured in the West Bank.¹⁹⁴ Several videos depict the killing of unarmed and unthreatening Palestinians.¹⁹⁵ Israeli troops disguised as medical workers and Muslim women have entered a hospital in the West Bank and killed three unarmed militants there in their beds as they slept, including one who was paralyzed for three months.¹⁹⁶ Multiple videos present Israeli troops humiliating Palestinians¹⁹⁷ and destroying their property¹⁹⁸ or public infrastructure.¹⁹⁹ One image claimed to have stolen a bag full of money notes.²⁰⁰ Another shows a soldier celebrating his birthday(?) with balloons while a handcuffed and blindfolded Palestinian is lying on the ground behind him.²⁰¹ One video showed Israeli forces kidnap or detain a Palestinian, dressed him in uniform, cuffed his hands and feet, and apparently used him as a human shield.²⁰² Like Gaza, here too there are video clips humiliating Palestinians.²⁰³ Other videos show settlers stealing Palestinian property.²⁰⁴

More Palestinians are being arrested in the West Bank. In the first month of fighting, over 2,200 Palestinians were arrested. Over 2,000 Palestinians were held in administrative detention, without charge or trial. These have been subjected to torture and degrading treatment, according to Amnesty.²⁰⁵ Many descriptions of released detainees refer to constant abuse by their prison staff.²⁰⁶ One recently said that daily, since Oct. 7 their guards require them to crawl while draped in an Israeli flag and kiss the Israeli flag, beating them if they refuse to do so. Food was thrown to the floor and stepped on.²⁰⁷

As I hope to have demonstrated through the evidence above, the situation in Gaza is a horrible catastrophe that continues to unfold daily in front of our eyes. The least I can do is to gather the evidence and speak up now.

Lee Mordechai

Do not go gentle into that good night \ Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-120>

¹⁹⁵ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1746987605034447294>

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-forces-kill-3-gunmen-west-bank-hospital-army-says-2024-01-30/>

¹⁹⁷ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1741445118333222937> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1748100280560845092>;

<https://twitter.com/Mistaclim/status/1747358396519493874> ; <https://twitter.com/Mistaclim/status/1751689800254476390>

¹⁹⁸ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1743038305581593033> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1756688401233817855>

¹⁹⁹ <https://twitter.com/QudsNen/status/1751125745701671025>

²⁰⁰ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1756695309239939117>

²⁰¹ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1758619734809928130>

²⁰² <https://twitter.com/TameeOliveFern/status/1752615765092815206>

²⁰³ <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1756696385510883830> ; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1756697908907233406>

²⁰⁴ <https://twitter.com/Mistaclim/status/1753732272816029757>

²⁰⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/11/israel-opt-horrifying-cases-of-torture-and-degrading-treatment-of-palestinian-detainees-amid-spike-in-arbitrary-arrests/>

²⁰⁶ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/law/2023-12-30/ty-article/0000018c-b51e-d45c-a98e-bf5e7a340000>

²⁰⁷ <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/2024-01-02/ty-article/premium/0000018c-c6e5-d6c4-ab8d-e7f561840000>

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.