

# How Gaza Broke Israel

A A A / A A

A chronicle of witness, silence and  
reckoning in the world's first  
livestreamed genocide

Richard Powell



# PARIAH

## How Gaza Broke Israel

*A chronicle of witness, silence and reckoning  
in the world's first livestreamed genocide*

Richard Powell



First edition published in 2026 by Videowire Limited (06541901)

Solo House, The Courtyard, London Road, Horsham, West Sussex. UK RH12 1AT

Text copyright © 2026 Richard Powell

Richard Powell has asserted his moral right to be identified as author of this work

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 979-8-2776325-1-2

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher

Cover design copyright © 2026 Richard Powell




# CONTENTS

Dedication	1
Prologue	3
The World Watched Gaza Burn	
PART I — THE FIRE BEFORE THE FIRE	9
Chapter 1	10
The Architecture of Siege	
Chapter 2	19
A Century of Massacres	
PART II — RUPTURE & WAR FOR REALITY	30
Chapter 3	31
The Breach	
Chapter 4	50
Manufactured Myth: The Information War	
Chapter 5	95
The Collapse of Credibility: Media Complicity	
Chapter 6	133
The Legal Reckoning	
Chapter 7	204
The War Comes Home	
VISUAL RECORD	250

PART IV — THE WORLD AFTER GAZA	282
Chapter 8	283
The New Global Alignment	
Chapter 9	316
The West's Reckoning	
PART V — PARIAH	346
Chapter 10	347
Pariah	
Chapter 11	389
The Erasure of the Future	
Afterword	431
Reference Materials	435
Notes	475



DEDICATION



*To the more than 260 Palestinian reporters, photographers and editors who were killed documenting this genocide after Israel tried to blindfold the world to it. May their record be the conscience of our time.*

*Gaza is the "worst ever conflict for reporters" with more journalists killed in two years than World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan, combined.*

**Costs of War Project, Brown University**

*"We make the best weapons in the world, we've given a lot to Israel ... and you used them well"*

**US President Donald Trump, 13 October 2025, Speech to Israeli Knesset**

*"Genocide... is a crime which shocks the conscience of mankind."*

**United Nations General Assembly Resolution 96(I), 1946**

*"Young people won't remember October 7 the same way. We need to ensure when history books are written, they don't write about the victims of Gaza."*

**Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, 13 January 2026, Israel Security Briefing at MirYam Institute**

*"By way of deception, thou shalt do war"*

**A maxim of Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency**

## PROLOGUE

### *The World Watched Gaza Burn*

*This book is a record of the world's first livestreamed genocide: documented not by foreign correspondents in the field, but largely by the Palestinians being killed.*

In October 2023, the world looked directly into Gaza and did not turn away. For the first time in history, a modern army's destruction of a civilian population was recorded from inside the kill-zone by the people being killed. Palestinians filmed their final hours, broadcasting the end of their existence to billions; the genocide unfolded in real time, undeniable, unmissable.

No one would ever be able to claim they had not known.

This chronicle draws on the author's 300+ Gaza news reports published since 2023, supplemented by third-party documentation, eyewitness testimony, government records, leaked memos, court filings and the vast digital archive created by Palestinians themselves. Every claim has been cross-referenced against multiple sources and every statistic traced to its origin. The sourcing style favours narrative integration over academic footnoting but the evidentiary foundation is forensic.

This is not advocacy disguised as journalism; it is journalism that refuses to sanitise what the evidence shows. The goal is

neither to persuade nor to inflame, but to create a record that survives the fog of propaganda and the erosion of memory.

The author of this book has reported from war zones over two decades, beginning with the theatre of Kosovo as a journalism student, then on to Iraq, Sudan, Liberia and Beirut. Every conflict had a familiar script; the press briefings, the escorts, the military censors, the managed tours of curated ruins... but Gaza was different. Israel sealed the enclave not only from essential supplies but from the journalists who would normally bear witness. There were no convoys of correspondents driving into a battered city, no roving crews juggling the risk of injury or death with the reward of recording era-defining coverage on the front line... this was the first war where the press was deliberately excluded in total.

Gaza became a black box: its only light, the flicker of its people's phones. The truth of the assault survived only because Palestinians recorded it until their batteries died or their lives were taken. Each morning from October 2023 onward, the global public opened screens to new ruins, new children wrapped in sheets, new livestreams cut short mid-sentence. The global viewer became a front-seat witness. Governments mouthed the familiar ritual "Israel has the right to defend itself," even as entire districts were pounded into dust. The propaganda machine did what it always does in the first hours of a war: it built a wall of myth, but this time that wall crumbled as quickly as it was erected while reality was being streamed from beneath it.

The footage from Gaza was raw, immediate and human. Mothers clutching dead children, journalists broadcasting until an airstrike hit beside them, surgeons working by the

light of their iPhones as generators failed. In the absence of the foreign press, Palestinians became the chroniclers of their own destruction; reporting, filming and speaking to us as it was happening. More than 100 journalists would be killed in the first year alone, the highest death toll for the profession in any conflict in history.

What made Gaza different was not only the scale of the killing, but the impossibility of looking away. Global audiences watched hospitals overwhelmed, watched families digging through rubble with bare hands, watched children starve while mile-long aid convoys waited at sealed gates.

And yet, Gaza's journalists worked unflinchingly. Wael al-Dahdouh, Al Jazeera's local bureau chief, continued broadcasting even after Israeli strikes killed his wife, son, daughter and grandson in October 2023. When asked why he returned to reporting within hours of burying his family, he answered simply: "The world must see." In January 2024, his eldest son Hamza, also a journalist, was killed by another Israeli strike. Yet, Dahdouh patiently waited for the gallery in Doha to tell him when to start speaking again... his presence on-screen a symbol of Palestinian witness and a refusal to let grief silence truth.

Gaza's genocide was not hidden behind narrative; it struggled to be hidden at all. For the first time in modern warfare, truth outran the machinery built to bury it.

*Hasbara* – the Israeli state's propaganda system – found itself fighting a more difficult enemy than militants: the world's eyes. For two years, some followed this onslaught day-by-day, night-by-night, tracking every statement, every denial, every attempt to invert the meaning of what the

cameras showed. The archive is vast: eyewitness testimonies, official briefings, leaked documents, satellite imagery and the tens of thousands of videos and messages Palestinians uploaded before their accounts went dark.

What began as journalism became record-keeping that will ensure Gaza will be one of the most documented crimes in history... and, simultaneously, one of the most contested. The struggle was no longer only over territory or sovereignty but over memory itself.

This book is an attempt to preserve that memory. It is not a catalogue of atrocity for its own sake, but a record of how truth fought to survive systematic distortion. It charts how governments, media institutions and political elites rehearsed language to blunt the horror: “surgical strikes,” “human shields,” “terror targets” and “collateral damage.” Words became the instruments of a second assault: one aimed not at bodies but at comprehension. The goal was clear; fracture the public’s ability to understand what it was watching, or who to apportion blame to.

Yet millions of ordinary people understood instinctively when they saw children pulled from the rubble, and recognised what was happening. They saw the journalists killed while wearing press vests and they saw the starvation, the siege, the bombed hospitals. People did not *need* experts to decode the meaning of what they could not see.

Gaza’s raw footage cut through decades of finely-honed narrative discipline. It exposed the fragility of Western self-image, the failure of international law to prevent what it was designed to prevent and democracies that built their reputations on human rights promises yet continued

weapons transfers and diplomatic protection despite vast civilian casualties.

That protection did not emerge spontaneously; it was cultivated through a dense ecosystem of political financing that rewarded compliance and punished deviation. Data compiled by Track AIPAC, analysing Federal Election Commission records, shows that the most reliable defenders of Israel's Gaza campaign in US Congress were also its most heavily-funded beneficiaries.

By 2025, the five largest lifetime recipients of pro-Israel lobby money in Congress had collectively received more than \$7 million. At the top was Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who had received approximately \$1.95 million. In October 2023 he declared, "Israel is our strongest ally in the world. We trust them," and then championed an unconditional \$14 billion arms package. Senator Ted Cruz, recipient of roughly \$1.87 million, went further: "The United States must ensure that Israel has all the weapons and all the time that it needs to utterly eradicate Hamas."

On the Democratic side, Senator Ron Wyden, with lifetime pro-Israel contributions exceeding \$1.28 million, criticised Netanyahu's conduct while voting to sustain the weapons pipeline that made the devastation possible. In the House, Speaker Mike Johnson, recipient of more than \$1 million, used his agenda-setting power to force Israel-only aid bills and denounce ceasefire calls as "outrageous."

Track AIPAC's data does not allege illegality. Its significance lies elsewhere: lawmakers who receive the most pro-Israel funding deliver the most reliable political outcomes. In this sense, Gaza was defended not only by weapons and

vetoed, but by a financial architecture that transformed donor preference into US foreign policy.

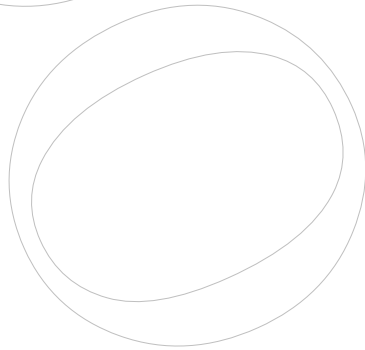
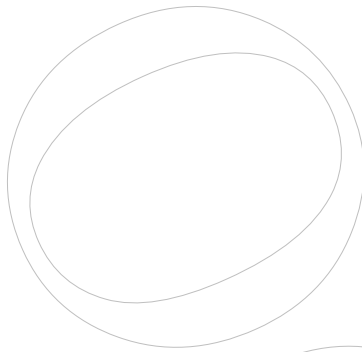
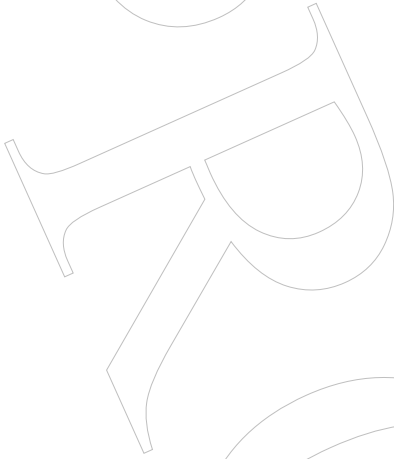
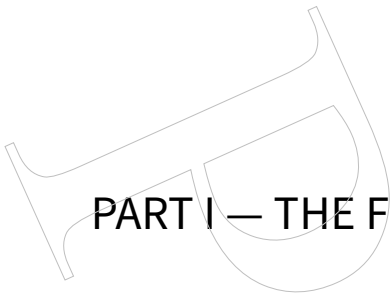
This book is written for the record, but also out of conscience. It follows the collapse of official stories and the emergence of the truth. It examines how a global audience, connected by empathy and witness, challenged the power of the most sophisticated information apparatus in the Middle East, with micromanaged guidance by the world's only superpower. It asks why, despite the relentless visibility of the crime, the killing is allowed to continue.

Gaza held up a mirror to the world and in it, nations saw not an enemy but their own moral collapse. This book does not argue that every death was intentional; it argues something more precise... that the structures in place - the siege, the dehumanisation, the impunity - made mass civilian death inevitable, and that those who maintained those structures knew this.

The genocide did not happen in darkness, but under a spotlight: and yet, still the bombs fell and still governments continued to arm Israel throughout.

The account of it that follows does not begin on 7 October nor with the failure of intelligence systems or with the collapse of political leadership... It begins decades before in the architecture of siege that made such an explosion inevitable, and it begins with a system built to contain a people and erase their history: a structure of domination that was inevitably set to produce catastrophe.

PART I — THE FIRE BEFORE THE FIRE



## CHAPTER 1

### *The Architecture of Siege*

*Gaza's destruction did not begin on 7 October 2023. It began with the architecture of siege: a system designed to cage, starve and ultimately break a population into submission.*

Long before rockets, massacres, or mass graves, Gaza existed in a state of engineered suffocation. Its slow death was not a secret; it was a policy, meticulously documented and quietly accepted by a world that had grown accustomed to the abnormality of its suffering.

For sixteen years after the 2006 elections brought Hamas to power - an outcome international observers certified as free and fair - the 2.3 million Palestinians of the Gaza Strip lived within an architecture of control unique in its totality. Israel's perimeter fence, a billion-dollar lattice of steel and concrete, was perpetually watched by a silent army of drones, automated gun turrets and surveillance towers covered in cameras so powerful they could read a licence plate from half a mile away.

Beyond the shore, Israeli gunboats enforced a maritime blockade, penning fishermen into a shrinking zone of three nautical miles, sometimes less. In this hermetically-sealed world, every person crossing a checkpoint, every calorie entering the Strip, every watt of electricity flowing through its crippled grid and every byte transmitted from

a smartphone or laptop was counted, controlled, and weaponised.

The system's architects termed it 'economic warfare'. The Israeli lawyer and special advisor, Dov Weisglass, expressed its cruel precision in 2006 when he stated that the goal was to "put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger." This was no rogue comment; it had crystallised into state policy. It was the arithmetic of cruelty turned into governance.

The consequences were relentless. Electricity – the lifeblood of modern society – arrived in fits and starts for four to eight hours a day, its flow dictated by Israel's strategic calculations and Egypt's reluctant co-operation. Without power, water pumps failed, flooding streets with sewage where children played.

Brackish, contaminated water poisoned the wells. Fuel convoys were rationed by spreadsheet; hospitals, running on generators, were forced to shut down ventilators and incubators at night to conserve power. Israel's political and military leadership labelled this intricate system of deprivation 'security'. Under international law, it was known by its true name: collective punishment.

Even Britain's future prime minister, David Cameron – a politician with no sympathy for Hamas – described Gaza in 2010 as "an open-air prison". António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, told the UN General Assembly 10 years after that, "If there is a hell on earth, it is the lives of children in Gaza today."

This architecture of suppression did not begin on 7 October 2023. It was already deeply embedded in Western

institutions, quietly disciplining Palestinian visibility even when no war was underway. One of the clearest examples unfolded not in a parliament or courtroom, but in the corridor of a London children's hospital.

## **The Hospital That Censored Gaza's Children**

In February 2023, eight months before the Gaza war would return to the world's front pages, a quiet act of erasure took place inside one of London's most respected hospitals.

Along a corridor outside the children's outpatient department at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, a display had stood for more than a decade. It was not political in any conventional sense. It consisted of ceramic plates, each hand-painted by schoolchildren in Gaza as part of a cultural exchange project with pupils attending the hospital's own specialist school for young patients.

The project was called 'Crossing Borders - A Festival of Plates'. The images were simple and unmistakably childlike: olive trees, fishing boats, birds, houses, sunrises. One plate showed the golden dome of al-Aqsa mosque. Another included a Palestinian flag. Others depicted ordinary scenes of life in Gaza: markets, families, the sea. Each was accompanied by a small handwritten caption explaining what the child had drawn and why. The plates had hung there quietly for years, offering sick children and their families a moment of colour and connection. They had generated no controversy. No protests, no petitions, no complaints from patients... until a letter arrived.

In early February 2023, the hospital's chief executive received a formal legal communication from UK Lawyers for Israel, a well-funded advocacy group that specialises in

legal and regulatory pressure on public bodies. The letter asserted that the presence of the Gaza children's artwork was making Jewish patients feel "vulnerable, harassed and victimised." It claimed that certain images, particularly the Dome of the Rock with a Palestinian flag, could be interpreted as denying Jewish religious ties to Jerusalem and therefore amounted to discrimination.

The letter invoked the Equality Act. It warned the hospital that allowing the plates to remain on display could expose it to legal liability. There was no evidence that any patient had complained. No named individual and no recorded grievance; just the letter. The hospital removed the artwork within days. A decade-long display created by children in Gaza was taken down from the walls of a British children's hospital not because it was disruptive, inflammatory, or hateful, but because a legal lobby group had said it might offend. When the decision became public, the hospital issued a carefully-worded statement.

It said it regretted that the artwork had offended some communities and that its removal had offended others and promised to "work with relevant parties" to find a way forward. The plates were placed in storage, but the damage had already been done. Freedom of Information disclosures later revealed what many had suspected: no formal complaints from patients or families had ever been logged. The sole trigger for the removal was the intervention by UK Lawyers for Israel.

The hospital had not weighed competing patient views. It had not consulted the children who created the artwork or considered the broader principle of artistic expression; it had simply complied. The message was unmistakable:

Palestinian identity itself had been deemed too risky for a public hospital wall. The reaction was swift. Civil liberties groups, educators and campaigners condemned the decision as censorship. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign described it as a case study in how legal intimidation was being used to silence Palestinian voices in British institutions. Writers and artists warned that even the most innocent expressions of Palestinian life were now being treated as suspect.

The Palestinian diplomatic representative in London at the time, Husam Zomlot, wrote directly to the hospital. He called the removal discriminatory and dehumanising, an act that erased Palestinian children from a space designed to care for children. Two years later, after the United Kingdom formally recognised the State of Palestine, that same mission became the Embassy of Palestine in London. The legal status of Palestinian representation changed, but the plates did not return.

What made the Chelsea Hospital episode so revealing was not simply that art had been removed, but how it had been removed. No riot, no protest or emergency; just a lawyer's letter and institutional fear. This was not war: this was peace-time Britain. Even here, in a hospital corridor decorated by children, Palestinian existence had been ruled incompatible with neutrality. It was a warning of what was to come

### **The Prophet of Demographic Doom**

The hermetically-sealed siege locking up over two million people from every angle in Gaza was not improvisation. It was the fulfilment of a vision articulated decades earlier by Israel's most influential demographic strategist, a man

whose prophecies shaped government policy at the highest levels and whose words would prove prescient.

Arnon Soffer, an emeritus professor of geography at the University of Haifa, began his career in the early 1970s observing what he called “growing Arab population centres” in Israel’s northern Galilee region. This demographic shift, he believed, threatened the security and Jewish identity of the state. As founder of the university’s geography department, he drew maps highlighting what he viewed as crucial geographic and demographic trends, presenting them to government and military officials who listened with rapt attention. His warnings resonated deeply within political circles.

Ariel Sharon, Israel’s former prime minister, reportedly sought Soffer’s advice when developing the 2005 Gaza Disengagement Plan. The plan proposed a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza not to grant Palestinians freedom, but to avoid what Soffer called the “demographic bomb”: the reality that a single state controlling all the territory from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River would soon have an Arab majority.

In a 2004 interview with *The Jerusalem Post*, titled “It’s the Demography, Stupid,” Soffer laid out a vision that was equal parts pragmatic and apocalyptic... “When 2.5 million people live in a closed-off Gaza, it’s going to be a human catastrophe,” he predicted with disturbing accuracy. Then came the statement that would define his legacy and reveal the genocidal logic at the heart of Israeli policy: “So, if we want to remain alive, we will have to kill and kill and kill. All day, every day.” The words hung in the air like a verdict already pronounced. Soffer

continued: “Unilateral separation doesn’t guarantee ‘peace.’ It guarantees a Zionist-Jewish state with an overwhelming majority of Jews.”

His message was brutally clear: the only way Israel could secure its Jewish identity was to cage Gaza’s population behind walls and fences, and then systematically destroy any resistance that emerged from that open-air prison. Critics on the left accused Soffer of justifying violence and ethnic cleansing, others saw his words as a harrowing but realistic assessment of what Israel might face without decisive action.

Three years later, in 2007, Soffer sought to clarify what he claimed had been widely-misunderstood: “I didn’t recommend that we kill Palestinians. I said we’ll *have* to kill them.” The distinction, to Soffer, was crucial: he was not advocating murder, he was predicting it as an inevitability of demographic mathematics. “We are living in a 100-year period of terrorism,” he stated in that 2007 interview, “and we have another 100 years of terrorism ahead of us. We will forever be forced to live by the sword.” He detailed the disengagement from Gaza as necessary not for peace but for preservation: “The purpose of disengagement was not to put an end to terrorism or Kassam fire. Its purpose was to stop being responsible for a million and a half Arabs who continue to multiply in conditions of poverty and madness.”

Today, Arnon Soffer is semi-retired but still lectures at Israel’s National Defence College, sharing his hardline demographic theories with the next generation of Israeli military leaders. His core belief has never wavered: “If we don’t kill, we will cease to exist.” For Soffer, the numbers are not merely statistics; they are the nation’s fate, and Gaza’s destruction is not a war crime but a demographic necessity.

By 2023, Soffer's prophecy had materialised exactly as he predicted... the prison was buckling under its own weight.

A United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had already published a report eight years prior warning that the years-long blockade and three Israeli military operations in six years meant Gaza "could become uninhabitable by 2020" if the trend continued. UNICEF documented that 97 percent of its water supply was unfit for human consumption. The World Bank estimated youth unemployment at over 60 percent, a figure that spoke of a generation with no future. Control had become algorithmic: Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) published meticulous import lists dictating which fruits could enter, which construction materials were forbidden, even how many litres of milk were permitted per child per day. It was occupation by macro-management, a humanitarian catastrophe administered through Excel sheets.

### **Energy Apartheid: The \$35 Billion Betrayal**

The cruelty of the siege extended beyond bullets and barriers. Even as Gaza's 2.3 million residents lived with less than four hours of electricity per day, Israel and Egypt finalised a deal that laid bare the architecture of resource plunder and economic exclusion. In August 2025, Israel signed a \$35 billion, 15-year contract with Egypt to export 4.8 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from the Leviathan gas field off its coast. Egypt, positioning itself as a regional energy hub, would become Israel's largest gas customer, cementing an economic alliance built on mutual profit from Palestinian dispossession.

Court-released emails show that years earlier, former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak had worked with the financier Jeffrey Epstein - later exposed as a human trafficker, child sex offender and serial rapist - to line up Wall Street backing for Leviathan. Epstein acted as an intermediary between Israeli officials and JPMorgan executives during the same period that Israel's tax framework for the gas field was being finalised.

The Leviathan gas deal revealed something more disturbing than profiteering amid siege. It exposed how completely Palestinian absence has been normalised and how an entire population can be sealed off, impoverished and rendered invisible while their land and sea are quietly absorbed into global markets. This was not a moral collapse triggered by war, nor a temporary suspension of principles in the name of security, it was the smooth functioning of a system long-practised: one that treats Palestinian life as an obstacle to be removed, managed or ignored altogether.

To understand how such a system could operate so openly - and with so little international resistance - it is necessary to look beyond the present siege. The destruction of Gaza did not emerge from a vacuum: it was the latest chapter in a pattern established long before blockades, borders or energy contracts existed.

## CHAPTER 2

### *A Century of Massacres*

*The violence that would culminate in Gaza's destruction was not an aberration but the continuation of a century-long pattern: conquest through terror, displacement and the systematic erasure of Palestinian existence.*

#### **The Unbroken Pattern**

Long before the Nakba, before the term 'Israeli' even existed, European settlers arriving in Palestine under British colonial protection formed armed militias – the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi (the Stern Gang) – that pioneered the tactics of Israeli statehood: assassinations, bombings and the systematic terrorising of the indigenous population.

Between 1936 and 1939, during the Arab Revolt against British colonial rule and Zionist settlement, these militias worked alongside British forces to crush Palestinian resistance with unprecedented brutality. Villages from Haifa to Jerusalem (Al-Quds) to Balad al-Sheikh were attacked, homes torched, inhabitants driven out or murdered. These early massacres established the template: terrorise the population until they flee, then claim their land as abandoned. This pattern would repeat for nearly a century.

On 22 July 1946, Zionist militants from the Irgun – led by Menachem Begin – planted bombs in the King David

Hotel in Jerusalem, which housed the British administrative headquarters for Mandatory Palestine. The explosion killed 91 people, including 28 British soldiers and officials, 41 Arabs and 17 Jews. It remains one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in the region's history.

At the time, British Pathé newsreels and the international press called the Irgun exactly what they were: "Jewish terrorists." The British government declared the Irgun a terrorist organisation. Yet just three decades later, the man who commanded that bombing, Menachem Begin, would become Prime Minister of Israel, celebrated as a statesman and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize alongside Egypt's Anwar Sadat.

The bombing was not an isolated incident but part of a broader campaign of terror. The Irgun and Stern Gang carried out systematic attacks on British, Arab, and even Jewish targets deemed insufficiently militant. Their objective was clear: make Palestine ungovernable until the British withdrew and the land could be seized by force. This history is rarely taught. The state of Israel was not founded by peace-loving pioneers fleeing persecution; it was founded by armed European settlers who used terror as a calculated tool of conquest, and who later whitewashed their origins beneath the language of national liberation.

As the UN pushed partition in 1947, Zionist forces unleashed a campaign of terror across Palestine designed to empty the land of its indigenous inhabitants. Massacres were carried out in Abbasiya, Al-Khisas, Bab al-Amud, Sheikh Bureik and Jerusalem, aimed at clearing Palestinians from strategic areas that would become the new Israeli state. Then came Deir Yassin on 9 April 1948: the massacre that would define

the Nakba. Irgun and Lehi forces entered the village near Jerusalem and executed over 100 villagers, including women and children. Survivors described soldiers going house to house, shooting families in their homes, throwing grenades into shelters, others spoke of rape and flamethrowers. The terror was deliberate and strategic: word of Deir Yassin spread panic across Palestine, triggering a mass exodus.

Massacres at Jaffa and Tantura followed the same script. By the time Israel declared statehood on 15 May 1948, more than 750,000 Palestinians had been ethnically cleansed, over 500 villages destroyed and entire regions emptied of their population. Towns were seized and renamed; Arabic street signs vanished, replaced by newly-minted Hebrew toponyms. The newborn state was baptised in blood and denial.

Every Palestinian family carries such a history. Ali Abunimah, the Palestinian-American journalist and co-founder of The Electronic Intifada, has documented what the Nakba meant through his own family's experience. "Both sides of my family experienced the whole range of horrors that Zionism inflicted on us," he said.

His father's family was from Battir, a village near Bethlehem. In 1948, as Zionist militias advanced, the family fled under fire. This was one of the few Palestinian villages not destroyed that year, and the family returned after the armistice; only to find themselves living under Israeli military occupation after 1967. "When they occupied the West Bank, the Israelis gave a window for Palestinians to apply for residency cards," Abunimah explains. "My father was outside Palestine at the time. He was unable to establish his residency. So even though all his family, his mother, his

sisters, all of them were there, he was never able to go back and see them after 1967.”

His mother’s story was even more emblematic. She was born in Lifta, on the northwest edge of Jerusalem, one of the first villages attacked and depopulated in December 1947. She was ten years old when the violence forced her family first to take shelter in Jerusalem, then to flee to Jordan. “They never went back. They lost their house, their property, everything.” Lifta’s stone homes still stand today, uninhabited, above the highway into Jerusalem, preserved by a years-long campaign but still off-limits to those expelled. It is one of the few remaining examples of Palestinian village architecture from that time.

The violence did not end with statehood. In 1953, Israeli forces under Ariel Sharon’s command massacred civilians in the village of Qibya in the West Bank, destroying 45 houses and killing 69 people, mostly women and children hiding in their homes. In November 1956, in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, Israeli troops carried out one of the worst massacres in the new state’s history. In Khan Yunis, Gaza, soldiers executed hundreds of Palestinian civilians, with many shot in their doorways or forced into lines and mown down with machine guns. A week later, in Rafah, they did it again. The pattern had calcified: military control justified as retaliation, the occupied turned into permanent suspects.

When Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war, it extended this regime of military control across all of historic Palestine. A dual legal system emerged: military law governed Palestinians while civilian law applied to Israeli settlers, apartheid encoded in legislation.

Even exile offered no safety. In September 1982, Israeli forces commanded by Defence Minister Ariel Sharon surrounded the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut while allied Lebanese Christian militias entered and massacred more than 3,000 Palestinian and Lebanese Shia civilians over three days. The IDF provided illumination flares throughout the night to light the killing, controlled all entry and exit points and watched through binoculars as the slaughter unfolded. An Israeli government inquiry found Sharon “personally responsible” for the massacre, forcing his resignation. Yet, he would later return as Prime Minister, and the massacre – like all that came before – would be framed as a regrettable but understandable response to terrorism.

The massacres continued through the decades. In 1994, an Israeli settler named Baruch Goldstein opened fire in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron during Ramadan prayers, killing 29 Palestinian worshippers and wounding more than 100. Israeli soldiers guarding the mosque stood by and, in some cases, prevented Palestinians from fleeing or fighting back.

In 2002, during the Second Intifada, Israeli forces invaded the Jenin refugee camp in a massive military operation. Bulldozers demolished entire city blocks with families still inside. The exact death toll remains disputed - Israel blocked UN investigators from entering for weeks - but survivors described systematic executions, the use of Palestinian civilians as human shields and the deliberate destruction of medical facilities. Human rights organisations documented what they called a “massacre buried under rubble and censorship.”

For the past two decades, Israel has treated Gaza as both prison and testing ground. Massive military operations were launched in regular intervals, each one marketed as a “defensive response” to rocket fire:

- Operation Cast Lead (2008-09): More than 1,400 Palestinians killed, over half civilians;
- Operation Pillar of Defence (2012): Hundreds killed in sustained bombardment;
- Operation Protective Edge (2014): Over 2,100 Palestinians killed, including 500 children;
- Great March of Return (2018-2019): Israeli snipers shot at thousands of unarmed protesters at the fence, killing more than 200 and permanently disabling many more;
- Operation Guardian of the Walls (2021): Sustained bombing campaign killing hundreds.

Each offensive systematically destroyed schools, clinics and power plants. Each time, reconstruction was deliberately blocked or delayed, and each time, the same weapons tested on Gaza’s dense neighbourhoods were later marketed at international arms fairs as ‘combat-proven.’

### **The Reinvention of the Conqueror**

Israel’s founding generation, lionised as pioneers, were in fact European émigrés reinvented as natives. David Ben-Gurion began life as David Grün in Poland; Moshe Sharett as Moshe Chertok of Ukraine; Golda Meir as Golda Mabovitch of Kyiv. Menachem Begin (Begun) and Yitzhak Shamir (Yezernitsky) came from Belarus and Poland, commanding militias Britain rightly called terrorist

organisations. In 1937, Szymon Perski applied for Palestinian citizenship under the British Mandate; decades later, as 'Shimon Peres', he would claim that Palestine never existed.

After 1948, surnames were Hebraised: Scheinerman became Sharon, Brog became Barak, masking origins beneath a script of biblical authenticity. These acts of self-creation built the ideological scaffolding for a settler state that claimed ancient indigeneity while practising modern colonialism. The myth of return hid the reality of reinvention.

A century later, that mythology still underwrites every policy of exclusion from citizenship laws to the Genetic Information Law, which restricts ancestry testing to state-approved labs, ensuring the story of origin remains state property. Beneath every Hebrew name echoes a Slavic ghost.

### **Codifying Collective Punishment**

This violence was not spontaneous but doctrinal. In the aftermath of the 2006 Lebanon war, Israeli strategists formalised the Dahiya Doctrine, named from the Beirut suburb reduced to rubble by Israel's aerial bombardment. It promised deterrence through overwhelming, disproportionate destruction of civilian infrastructure: the punishment of entire societies until resistance became impossible. Gaza would ultimately become this concept's ground zero.

Western governments, eager clients of the Israeli defence industry, consistently framed the many assaults leading up to the one the world is most familiar with today as 'security operations.' The media consistently framed them as

sudden ‘flare-ups’ disconnected from the siege and decades of occupation. The slow violence of deprivation and medical collapse – the violence of malnutrition and permits denied – barely registered. For international audiences, Gaza existed only when it was exploding.

Inside Israel, democracy corroded. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, indicted for bribery and fraud, faced mass protests over his judicial overhaul. In what analysts widely interpreted as a move to preserve power, he allied with ultranationalist and religious-supremacist factions led by Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich: figures who spoke openly of “purging terrorist villages” and annexing the West Bank. Dissent became treason. Gaza, ever the common enemy, offered dark unity to a nation turning inward.

Across the fence, despair hardened into resolve. Nearly half the population was unemployed; two-thirds of youth had no work. Families survived on UNRWA (the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) food parcels worth less than two dollars a day. Anaesthetics were rationed in hospitals; surgeons performed amputations under local sedation while the Strip’s cancer centre ran on Qatari diesel donations... every metric – economic, medical, social – pointed toward total collapse. In 2022, UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese described Gaza as “a territory under permanent siege designed to destroy hope.” Her report detailed the denial of exit permits for critically-ill patients; over a thousand deaths between 2018 and 2022 alone. International outrage, when it came, was brief and performative.

Politicians praised Israel’s patience, knowing full-well the arsenal of American weaponry it was sitting on, and

what it could do. The abnormal had not just become mundane; it had been institutionalised. This normalisation depended on the erosion of language... Official military vocabulary stripped Palestinians of humanity: “neutralising infrastructures” instead of killing families, “operatives eliminated” instead of civilians incinerated. When a UN school sheltering hundreds was shelled, it was called “a precision strike on Hamas assets.”

Through compliant media repetition, occupation was rebranded as “counterterrorism.” Words like “terror tunnels” and “surgical strikes” pre-empted moral comprehension. Entire families vanished from municipal registers just as villages once vanished from maps. The same bureaucracy that issued ration cards now issued target lists while colonial theology had evolved into algorithmic management.

By 2023, the occupied West Bank simmered. Israeli raids on Jenin and Nablus killed teenagers; settlers torched homes with impunity. Ministers spoke of “voluntary migration” from Gaza: a euphemism for ethnic cleansing. Analysts warned that a society stripped of hope was being pushed beyond endurance, their memos were ignored. Western leaders who had celebrated the Abraham Accords and courted Saudi Arabia, spoke of “a new era of peace” but Gaza was omitted from the script.

Inside the besieged enclave, despair was giving way to something colder and harder. A generation that had known nothing but drones and darkness was reaching its limit. Graduates drove donkey carts; children played war amid ruins. Hope had been replaced by endurance, which was turning into defiance.

For approaching two decades, the blockade had maintained an equilibrium of despair: a containment strategy disguised as conflict management. Western capitals could speak of “de-escalation” while funding the weapons that maintained the cage. Each bombardment was framed as a “round of fighting,” as if it were sport rather than the destruction of a trapped population. Diplomats praised “restraint” while infants died in powerless incubators: the silence was not ignorance, it was complicity.

Then came the morning of 7 October, 2023...

At dawn, the illusion ruptured. Fighters from Gaza breached the barrier in a stunning, multi-pronged assault. They overran bases and settlements along the border and within hours, Israeli command collapsed and chaotic footage flooded global screens. The world that had ignored Gaza’s slow death suddenly rediscovered it, but only as perpetrator.

By midday, before facts could be verified, the narrative was fixed: Hamas terrorists had launched a barbaric invasion; Israel faced an existential threat. Western leaders repeated the phrase “unprovoked attack.” All context – years of siege, decades of dispossession, a century of massacres – was erased. Editors deleted the word ‘occupation’ as being political, civilisation was under assault by savagery.

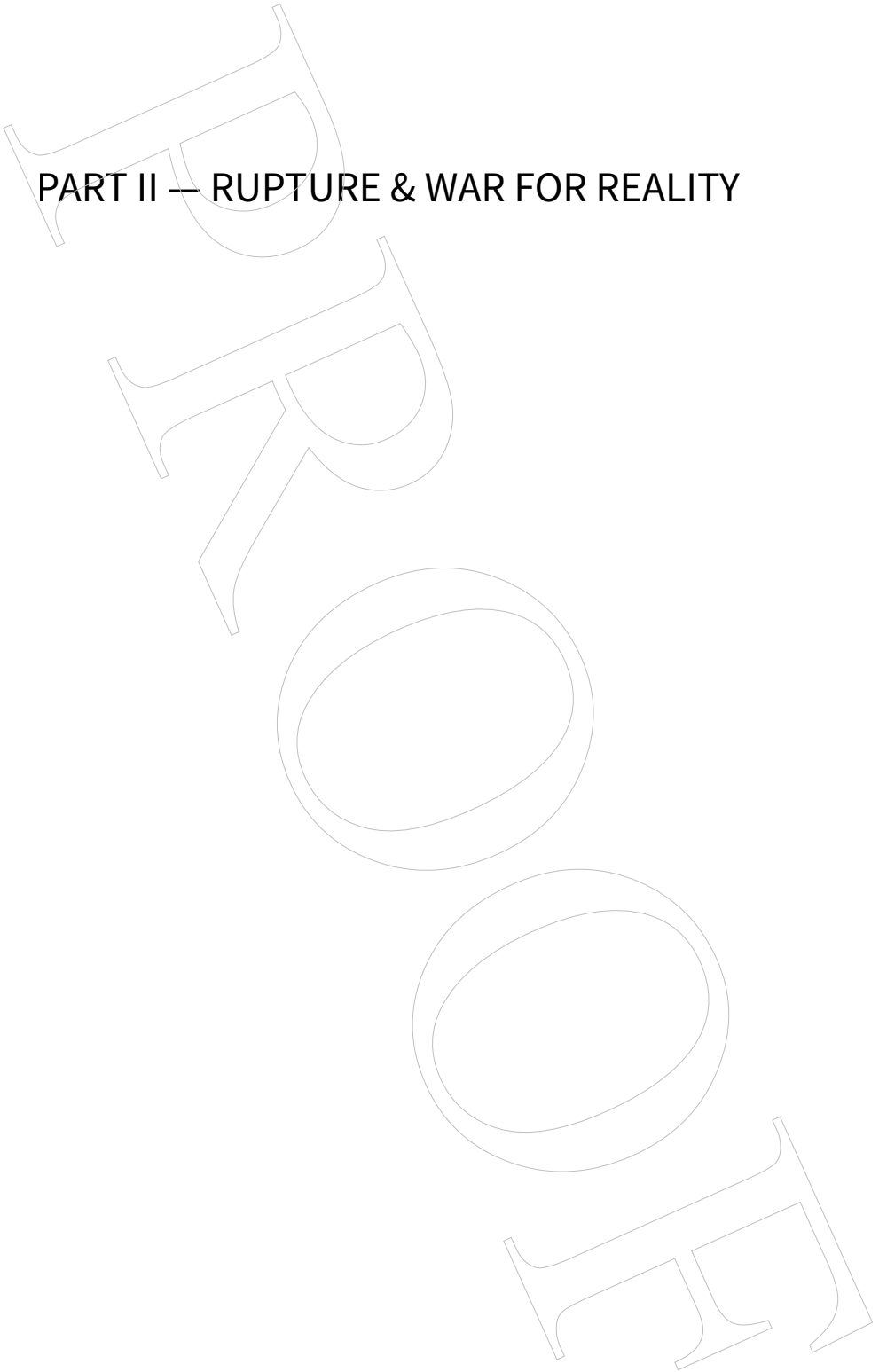
Israel’s retaliation began within hours, with a fury that eclipsed all before it. Entire districts of Gaza City were erased on the first night. Israeli captives taken back to Gaza could have been in any building, under any bomb. To grasp what follows – the deliberate starvation orders, the massacres in so-called safe zones, the obliteration of hospitals – one must first understand the silence that made such crimes possible.

Think-tanks rebranded siege as “containment” as diplomats stayed silent, afraid to offend a donor. News editors diligently sanitised language while governments measured stability by Palestinian submission. For years, the world’s power brokers and opinion-shapers had rehearsed their respective parts until it had become habit. The international community spoke of “conflict” when the accurate term was imprisonment, of “clashes” when the reality was decimation.

When Gazans finally broke through the fence on 7 October it shattered the silence those individuals had so long held in the face of their suffering. The flames that rose that morning were not born of chaos but of history: a fire stoked by strangulation, fortified by neglect and fanned by a century of systematic violence that had never been meaningfully challenged. What the world saw as an explosive eruption was, in truth, the inevitable culmination of years of engineered despair, and the response to a century of massacres that began in Haifa in 1937 and had never stopped.

One must consider this series of events if they are to understand why a response was given that day. But grasping the truth of what happened on 7 October requires cutting through layers of mythology that would be constructed within hours of the first shots, myths designed to justify the annihilation that followed.

PART II — RUPTURE & WAR FOR REALITY



## CHAPTER 3

### *The Breach*

*In October 2023, the illusion of Israeli invincibility shattered in a single morning ... not because of Hamas's military strength, but because of catastrophic failures, ignored warnings and a doctrine that may have killed more Israelis than it saved.*

At dawn on Saturday, 7 October 2023, the perimeter that had imprisoned Gaza for sixteen years cracked open. What followed was not merely a military assault, but the construction of a narrative; a carefully-orchestrated mythology that would shape the global response and provide moral cover for genocide. Within hours – before a single fact had settled – that narrative ossified into gospel, designed not to inform but to justify eradication.

Fighters from several factions – Hamas's Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and smaller resistance cells – breached Israel's security fence in more than twenty locations. Bulldozers cleared paths through the sensor-wired barriers; motorbikes and pickup trucks poured through. Others crossed by paraglider, soaring above the gun towers that had fired on anyone who approached them for years before.

Within minutes Israeli surveillance feeds went dark. Within hours the world was staring at an event it had been told was impossible. Israel, the state that marketed itself as

omniscient – its intelligence service described as the best in the world, its AI surveillance system “The Gospel” celebrated for predicting human behaviour – was suddenly blind. Southern communities from Sderot to Be’eri and Kfar Aza awoke to chaos. Sirens failed and the army did not answer calls. A population drilled for constant war was struck by its own myth of invincibility.

The first footage appeared on Telegram channels at 06:45 local time: paragliders descending over music-festival tents near Re’im, gunmen in pickup trucks entering army posts and civilians fleeing along the highways. Within minutes international outlets were streaming the clips without verification. Numbers of the dead changed hourly while rumour and reality fused.

In London, Washington, and Brussels, statements of solidarity were drafted before the smoke had cleared. “Israel has the right to defend itself,” said one head of government after another, an automatic refrain that required no evidence, no definition, no memory. No leader asked the question buried beneath that phrase: can an occupying power claim self-defence against those it occupies?

The blockade that international law defined as collective punishment had been effaced. In diplomatic language, context itself became a threat to narrative.

### **Mythmaking: Architecture of a Manufactured Crisis**

Within forty-eight hours, the story hardened into creed. Western newspapers printed Israeli military bulletins as verified fact. The early estimate of 1,400 dead - later quietly revised to 1,139 – was repeated endlessly until it became history. The New York Times headlined it as “the worst

massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.” Television anchors recited lurid details - beheaded babies, raped women, burned infants – without corroboration.

The claims originated from Israeli officials and were amplified by the prime minister’s office; no forensic evidence was produced... yet presidents, prime ministers and ambassadors repeated them verbatim. By the time human-rights investigators arrived weeks later, many of the stories had collapsed. Israeli police admitted no evidence of mass beheadings existed; no photographs supported the claimed atrocities. Regardless, the damage had been done. The moral licence for annihilation had been issued and the world’s sympathy had been conscripted into complicity.

### **The Collapse of the Rape Narrative**

Months later, in a Tel Aviv District Court, Israel’s own prosecutors quietly confirmed what many independent journalists had already begun to suspect: that one of the most shocking claims of 7 October - the alleged mass rapes committed by Hamas - had no evidentiary basis. Prosecutor Adi Livni told judges that “after extensive review, no verified forensic or witness-based proof of rape or sexual assault has been submitted to the Attorney General’s office.”

From the earliest days of the war, Israeli officials and Western media had invoked “systematic rape” as the moral cornerstone of their narrative, portraying the assault as pure barbarism and the ensuing Gaza invasion as a righteous crusade. But investigators were denied access to alleged sites, and no victims or witnesses were ever presented. Reporters who questioned the story faced censorship by Israel’s military censor or professional retaliation abroad. Israeli lawyers and activists began demanding a parliamentary

inquiry. “War crimes were excused using lies,” said one Tel Aviv attorney. “The damage to truth and to real victims of sexual violence is irreparable.”

For many Israelis, the episode marked a point of no return in their government’s credibility crisis. The collapse of credibility did not rest on anonymous rumours alone; it was reinforced by the handling of specific cases elevated into national symbols and then treated as political assets rather than matters requiring transparency.

### **The Bibas Case**

One of the most emotionally-charged stories of the Gaza war was the Bibas family: a mother and two red-haired children torn from their home, endlessly replayed as an emblem of helpless civilian innocence and used to harden public consent for the scale of Israel’s retaliation. Their images became moral ammunition, yet behind the scenes, the Israeli military itself was telling a very different story.

In early February 2024, Israeli troops recovered CCTV footage from a command-and-control centre used by the Mujahideen Brigades, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad-aligned group operating in Khan Younis. The footage showed Shiri Bibas and her two sons, Ariel and Kfir, being brought alive into the compound by militants on 7 October. It then showed them being moved again on 10 October, loaded onto a truck and taken elsewhere, still alive.

Based on this material, Israeli military sources told journalists that the family was not being held by Hamas at all, but by the Mujahideen Brigades, and that they were believed to have been killed later when the Israeli Air Force bombed buildings in the area where they were being held. This

was Israel's own battlefield intelligence assessment, derived from recovered enemy CCTV and communicated directly to the press.

On February 6 and 7, 2024, those conclusions were published by two of Israel's most prominent aligned outlets. The Times of Israel ran a report citing Israeli military sources and IDF-recovered footage, stating that the Bibas family had been taken by a PIJ-affiliated group and was "likely killed in an Israeli strike in Khan Younis." The Jewish Chronicle published the same assessment, reporting that the family "were likely killed when Israel struck the Khan Younis building where they were being held," based on the recovered CCTV and military analysis.

Both articles noted that the Mujahideen Brigades themselves had already claimed the family was killed in an Israeli airstrike, and that Hamas had made the same claim. But in February 2024, for the first time, those claims were being corroborated by Israeli military intelligence, not contradicted by it; then, quietly, the record was erased. Both the Jewish Chronicle and The Times of Israel removed these articles from their websites. No retractions, no corrections or explanation. The published Israeli military assessment that Israeli bombs likely killed Israeli children simply vanished from the accessible record.

A year later, in February 2025, when the bodies of Shiri, Ariel and Kfir were returned, Israeli officials announced a radically different story. Now they said the children and their mother had been murdered in captivity by their captors. No forensic reports were released, no CCTV was shown and no intelligence transcripts were published. The earlier military

assessment was never acknowledged and the outlets that had reported it had already deleted the evidence.

Yet one fact remained stubbornly incompatible with the new narrative. Yarden Bibas, the children's father, was kept alive for more than a year and released by Hamas as part of a negotiated exchange under a ceasefire. In hostage systems, captors do not normally execute their most emotionally powerful hostages – a baby, a toddler, and their mother – while preserving the least useful bargaining chip.

What happened to the Bibas family was not just a tragedy, it was a case study in how a war story was rewritten. Israel's own military intelligence once concluded that its bombs had killed them. When that conclusion became politically intolerable, it was deleted and replaced with something else. The case came to represent not only civilian tragedy but a deeper collapse in narrative credibility: if even the most potent stories were being managed through selective disclosure, then the edifice of wartime communication itself was called into question.

The most incendiary claim was that Hamas committed systematic sexual violence on 7 October. But by January 2025, Israel's own prosecutors – notably Moran Gaz (who led the Southern District prosecutions and part of the 7 October investigative team) – acknowledged that there was “no evidence” of rape or sexual assault committed by Hamas fighters during the October 7 attack, and that no such cases were being filed. UN investigators confirmed that no concrete proof existed.

The New York Times' central source in its explosive major investigation titled “Screams Without Words” published in December 2023 claiming Hamas had “weaponized sexual

violence” was later found to have provided details that could not be verified, with some subsequently contradicted by other evidence. Critical follow-ups noted serious gaps and contradictions in the ‘evidence’ it had provided: family members of an alleged victim named in the article later denied that rape was ever reported to them, while other claims were not supported by forensic or medical corroboration.

By the time the claims began to unravel, the damage was already done. A macabre theatre had been constructed in plain sight: one in which fabricated allegations dehumanised Palestinians, neutralised dissent and converted mass punishment into moral obligation. The deception was systematic; and for a time, it succeeded.

### **The Campaign to Silence Truth-Tellers**

In late 2025, as the international community began to reckon with the scale of misinformation deployed to justify Israel’s assault on Gaza, the machinery of narrative control turned on those who dared state uncomfortable facts. Reem Alsalem, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, became the latest target after posting a factual statement: “No Palestinian applauded rape in Gaza. No independent investigation found that rape took place on the 7th of October.”

The Israeli Foreign Ministry demanded her resignation, claiming she “denies Hamas rape documented by Hamas itself,” but this was demonstrably false. A Haaretz investigation in April 2024 established that “the intelligence material collected by the police and the intelligence bodies, including footage from terrorists’ body cameras, does

not contain visual documentation of any acts of rape themselves.”

Alsalem’s statement was accurate on both counts: Israel had not permitted independent investigations, and two major UN examinations were unable to verify a single case of rape. Pramila Patten, the UN Secretary-General’s adviser on sexual violence in conflict, wrote in paragraph 74 of her report that “in the medico-legal assessment of available photos and videos, no tangible indications of rape could be identified.” Paragraph 77 added that while extensive material was reviewed, “no digital evidence specifically depicting acts of sexual violence was found in open sources.”

The UN Commission of Inquiry’s June 2024 report was equally clear. Paragraph 16 noted that the Commission had sent Israel requests for evidence. Israel did not respond. Paragraph 17 stated: “The commission notes the absence of forensic evidence of sexual crimes committed on 7 October.” Paragraph 18 added: “The commission has not met any survivors of sexual violence committed on 7 October despite its attempts to do so.” The Commission also found “some specific allegations to be false, inaccurate, or contradictory with other evidence or statements.”

Yet the campaign against Alsalem continued, amplified by media outlets that had never retracted their original unverified reports. The New York Times’ discredited story by Jeffrey Gettleman remained online without correction. The pattern was now unmistakable: those who stated verifiable facts were targeted, while those who spread unverified claims faced no accountability whatsoever.

## Ignored Warnings: A Deliberate Failure

In Israel, shock gave way to fury. The state's image of omnipotence had disintegrated overnight, but the evidence now available suggests that what collapsed on 7 October was not intelligence but will. Egypt's security services issued detailed warnings two weeks before the attack. Egyptian officials had detected unusual Hamas activity and alerted their Israeli counterparts to expect a significant operation. Years of reliance on drones and algorithms had replaced human reconnaissance. The Gaza Division of the IDF, deployed mainly along the fence, had been depleted to police West Bank protests. Senior commanders dismissed the Egyptian warnings as implausible: how could Hamas, under total surveillance, mount a coordinated assault?

But by early 2024, leaked documents published by Haaretz and The Intercept revealed that elite IDF units stationed along the border had received stand-down orders as Hamas fighters breached the fence. "We got a strange order ... don't engage, stay in place," one officer said. Authorisation to fire only came hours later, when the killing was already widespread. Not just Egypt but American intelligence agencies had detected suspicious Hamas preparations in the days before 7 October. Surveillance towers along the border were conveniently "under maintenance" – despite clear indicators, top Israeli officials failed to act.

A recording attributed to Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, allegedly from September 2023, circulated in Israeli media and added fuel to conspiracy theories about foreknowledge. In it, a voice claimed to be Gallant's states: "We need a big event – something that will free our hand completely." The recording's authenticity has been disputed; the Defence

Ministry declined to comment. Critics of Netanyahu's government cited it as evidence of deliberate inaction, while supporters dismissed it as fabrication.

The Shin Bet's own internal probe later acknowledged that the attack could have been prevented had the agency acted differently; a concession that led Israeli commentators to compare the failure to historical shocks like Pearl Harbor and 9/11. Opposition figures accused Netanyahu of allowing the assault to proceed to restore his political power and secure carte blanche for Gaza's destruction. At the time, Netanyahu faced corruption trials, mass protests over his judicial overhaul and plummeting approval ratings. His coalition with ultra-nationalist figures Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich was fracturing. He needed a unifying crisis and 7 October provided it.

Within hours, emergency powers were invoked and corruption trials suspended. A nation that had been tearing itself apart rallied behind its embattled prime minister. The attack – preventable, according to multiple intelligence sources – became the justification for Gaza's systematic destruction.

Norman Finkelstein, whose book *Gaza's Gravediggers* examines how powerful actors have undermined justice for Palestinians, has tracked this pattern for decades. "Israel has done this before," he said. "The Goldstone Report on Operation Cast Lead in 2008–09 was a moment when Israel briefly faced global scrutiny. But Judge Richard Goldstone's later retraction – which I attribute to blackmail or pressure – dismantled any momentum. Since then, Israel has never seriously been threatened with accountability again."

Finkelstein believes the Egyptian warnings were ignored because Netanyahu needed exactly what happened: a crisis large enough to justify total war. “Netanyahu faced corruption trials and massive protests. He was politically dead, but October 7 resurrected him,” he explains. “Within hours, emergency powers were invoked, trials suspended. The attack justified Gaza’s destruction. Israeli citizens may have been sacrificed by their government for strategic advantage.”

International jurists are now urging a full investigation. Legal experts warn that if these allegations are confirmed, they would represent one of the most cynical manipulations of national tragedy in modern times.

### **Chaos at Zikim Beach: Friendly Fire and Confusion**

As more evidence emerged, the story of 7 October grew darker still... Fresh video and radio intercepts from the IDF’s coastal base near Zikim Beach, just north of Gaza, revealed catastrophic confusion, with Israeli troops firing on both Hamas infiltrators and fleeing Israeli civilians.

Footage aired by Channel 12 captured soldiers shouting, “Who are we shooting at?” as tanks and drones pounded the shoreline. An internal IDF debrief obtained by Haaretz admitted that commanders had misidentified targets and issued orders to “fire on all movement” in the coastal sector, including beach resorts where Israeli civilians were sheltering.

Subsequent investigations, including a forensic reconstruction by Al Jazeera’s Investigative Unit and the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry (A/HRC/56/CRP.3, June 2024), indicated that Israeli security

forces killed a number of Israeli civilians and hostages during the fighting even though those victims were initially counted within the death toll attributed to Hamas. Investigators concluded that the Hannibal Directive – the secret protocol permitting the army to kill captured Israelis rather than let them be taken hostage – was activated at Zikim and other bases along the border. Israeli survivors described “a rain of fire from every direction.”

Opposition lawmakers demanded transparency. “What happened there was not a battle, it was total chaos,” Knesset member Ofer Cassif said. “Our own forces fired indiscriminately, and Israeli civilians were killed by Israeli fire. The government is now trying to conceal that.” The Zikim revelations undercut Israel’s casualty narratives and reinforced a growing pattern: a significant share of Israeli deaths on 7 October resulted from Israel’s own emergency doctrines, not from Hamas alone.

### **The Internal Truth: Better Dead Than Captured**

The full scale of the Hannibal Directive’s application on 7 October would only become clear through painstaking investigative journalism over the months that followed.

By mid-2024, a comprehensive Haaretz investigation documented that IDF operations under the directive had directly endangered at least 54 Israeli hostages. Drawing on military communications, survivor testimony and forensic analysis, it concluded that approximately 20 of those hostages were killed as a direct or indirect result of Israeli military actions, not by Hamas fighters, but by their own army’s doctrine that preventing capture took precedence over preserving life.

The Hannibal Directive, conceived in the 1980s following several high-profile hostage crises, codified a brutal calculus: better that Israeli soldiers die than be taken alive, where they might be used as bargaining chips in prisoner exchanges. The protocol authorised massive force – artillery, airstrikes and tank fire – to stop vehicles or groups believed to be transporting captured Israelis, even if it meant killing the hostages themselves. As Hamas fighters breached the border and seized captives from kibbutzim and the Nova music festival, the directive was activated across multiple sectors.

One tank commander, speaking anonymously in a recording obtained by investigators, described receiving the order: “We were told: no vehicle returns to Gaza with hostages. Use all force necessary. We understood what that meant. We fired on cars we knew had Israelis inside because the order was clear: better they die by our hand than be taken.”

The directive’s cold logic played out in real time across the border region. Israeli Apache helicopters fired on convoys of vehicles heading back toward Gaza. Many contained Hamas fighters, others contained Israeli hostages. The pilots could not always tell the difference, and under the Hannibal Directive, that uncertainty was resolved in favour of lethal force.

### **White Flag Incident**

The most haunting example came on 15 December 2023, more than two months into the war when three Israeli hostages – Yotam Haim, Alon Shamriz and Samer Talalka – escaped their captors in Gaza City. They emerged shirtless to show they were unarmed, waving a white flag fashioned

from cloth and calling out for help in Hebrew. IDF soldiers opened fire and all three were killed instantly.

An investigation later revealed the soldiers had been operating under standing orders that treated any movement in designated zones as hostile. The white flag – the international symbol of surrender recognised in every armed conflict since the Geneva Conventions – meant nothing in a kill zone where Hannibal logic prevailed: shoot first, identify later. “They were metres from safety,” said the mother of one victim before the Knesset. “They did everything right ... they escaped, they waved white, they called in Hebrew and our army shot them.”

The incident sent shockwaves through Israeli society. Families of hostages, already anguished by the lack of progress in negotiations, now faced the unbearable reality that their loved ones might be killed not by Hamas, but by the IDF’s own protocols.

By August 2025, as fragile ceasefire negotiations continued, the grim accounting of hostages had become clearer. Of the approximately 250 people taken into Gaza on 7 October: 148 had been returned alive – some through negotiations, others through military operations; 58 bodies had been repatriated; between 48 and 50 individuals were still believed to be in Gaza, with intelligence estimates suggesting roughly 20 remained alive. But the question that haunted every negotiation, every press conference, and every family vigil was this: how many of the dead had been killed not by Hamas, but by Israel’s own application of the Hannibal Directive? Israeli officials refused to provide a comprehensive accounting. Military censors blocked

investigations and families demanding answers were told their questions undermined national security.

The state that claimed to value every Jewish life above all else could not admit – or would not admit – how many of its own citizens it had killed to prevent their capture. Former soldiers began to speak anonymously. Their testimonies painted a picture of systematised violence against Israel's own people. "We were trained that capture was worse than death," one former Golani Brigade soldier told investigators. "On 7 October, we applied that training. We fired on vehicles we believed contained hostages. We knew we might be killing them but we were told it was necessary."

The doctrine that was supposed to protect soldiers from the horror of captivity had instead created a different horror: a military that would kill its own citizens to prevent their capture, and then classify the evidence to prevent accountability.

### **Families Demand Truth**

As the evidence mounted, families of hostages began to organise.

In January 2025, a coalition of hostage families filed a petition with the Israeli Supreme Court demanding a full investigation into the application of the Hannibal Directive on 7 October. They wanted to know how many had been killed by IDF fire, which commanders had authorised lethal force on vehicles carrying hostages and whether alternatives existed that were not pursued. "The state demanded absolute loyalty from its citizens: mandatory service, reserve duty, endless sacrifice," one petition stated. "... and in return, on their darkest day, the state chose their death over their

capture. That is not security, that is abandonment dressed up as doctrine.”

The petition was dismissed on national security grounds. The military censor classified key evidence. Families were warned that pursuing their inquiries could “harm operational security” and “embolden the enemy,” but the questions would not die. As one Israeli human rights lawyer put it: “We built an entire security doctrine on the principle that Israeli lives are sacred, that we will do anything to bring our people home. Then, when tested, we discovered the doctrine meant: we will kill you rather than let you be captured. That truth is destroying the moral foundation of the state.”

The Hannibal Directive, once a closely-guarded secret, had become a weapon turned inward, killing at least 20 Israeli hostages according to Haaretz investigations, not protecting them.

### **Hidden Dead: Concealing Military Losses**

While the public grappled with the horror of the Hannibal Directive, another, even more systematic deception was unfolding within the apparatus of the Israeli state. For months the government reported IDF casualties through carefully-managed press releases: a few dozen here, a few hundred there, each framed as the painful but necessary cost of a just war. The official death toll hovered stubbornly below 2,000. But determining actual IDF losses proved almost as difficult as counting Palestinian dead. Casualty reporting became another front in the information war; one in which opacity served political ends. The resulting void was filled by rumour, speculation and distortion.

Official IDF figures as of late 2025 placed soldier deaths at approximately 920 since 7 October 2023. For a military campaign of this duration and intensity – over a year of brutal urban combat in one of the most densely populated places on earth – the number strained credibility. Former defence minister Moshe Ya’alon publicly challenged the official narrative. In March 2025 he said that Israeli casualties in Gaza had reached 15,000 killed and wounded combined: an extraordinary admission from a former chief of staff and defence minister.

The scale of injuries was beyond dispute. The Ministry of Defence’s Rehabilitation Division reported treating over 20,000 soldiers for physical and psychological wounds since October 2023, with about 1,000 new cases each month. It projected 100,000 disabled veterans by 2030, implying either miraculous survival rates or massive undercounting of fatalities. Military families began speaking publicly about discrepancies: delayed death notifications, funerals held quietly without press coverage and loved ones whose names never appeared on public casualty lists. “We’ve been lied to from the beginning,” said one father whose son died in a tank ambush near Khan Younis. “My son died in November 2023. We buried him in January 2024. His name never appeared anywhere. They’re hiding the real cost of this war because the truth would destroy Netanyahu, politically.”

Into this vacuum rushed misinformation. Claims that 11,000 Israeli soldiers had been killed spread across social media. The number was false, but it came from something real: the number of soldiers newly-classified as disabled, or receiving psychological treatment, or listed among the wounded. Through mistranslation and deliberate conflation, injured became dead. No leaked

document existed and no whistleblower had come forward, but the rumour's persistence revealed something true: when a state refuses to provide credible information, its citizens and critics will fill the void with whatever narratives seem plausible.

Economist and former Israeli intelligence officer Shir Hever described the mechanism: "When a government hides the cost of war, it invites the worst assumptions. The families know something is wrong. The soldiers know. The official numbers don't match what they've seen, and so rumours flourish because the state has forfeited its credibility." Even if the official count of 920 dead were accepted, the ratio of wounded and disabled to killed – roughly twenty to one – was extraordinary. If Ya'alon's 15,000 figure was accurate, Israel had suffered casualties at a rate not seen since the Yom Kippur War. Either way, the "swift, decisive victory" Netanyahu promised was a fiction. The supposedly invincible IDF had been ground down in attritional urban warfare, taking losses the government could not politically afford to acknowledge.

For soldiers in the field, the uncertainty was corrosive. "We knew it was bad," one reserve officer said. "But we thought the brass knew what it was doing. Now we realise they were just managing the narrative. How do you keep fighting when you can't trust your own government to tell you how many of your brothers have died?"

The state that demanded absolute sacrifice from its citizens repaid that sacrifice with evasion and silence. Whether the true toll was 920 or far higher, one fact was undeniable: Israel had lost the ability to be believed. In wartime, that loss of credibility is itself a strategic defeat, measured not in

territory, but in the erosion of the bond between a nation and the young people it sends to die in its name. What shattered on 7 October was not only a fence, it was the credibility of a state.

Israel entered the Gaza war claiming moral clarity and strategic control but it emerged exposed as something far darker: a power willing to sacrifice truth, civilians and even its own citizens to preserve a narrative of righteousness. That breach - of law, of trust, of human life - would never close, and it would define everything that followed.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Manufactured Myth: The Information War*

*Within hours of the first shots, a mythology was deployed to justify annihilation: claims so explosive they licensed genocide, yet so fragile they would collapse under investigation.*

#### **Plans for Erasure**

Behind the rhetoric of vengeance, policy planners moved quickly. A document from Israel's Intelligence Ministry dated 13 October 2023 surfaced publicly later that month proposing the transfer of Gaza's entire population to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula under the guise of "voluntary migration."

Ministers discussed "creating buffer zones" and "resettlement corridors." The idea echoed through cabinet briefings: erase the people, then the problem. The leaked document cited the 1948 Nakba as "precedent."

Outside observers recalled another precedent: the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia's civilian infrastructure justified as humanitarian intervention. In that war, the West had shattered Belgrade to protect ethnic Albanians in Kosovo but in Gaza, the same states defended bombardment as counter-terrorism. The word genocide had not yet entered official discourse, but the logic was already visible.

## The Immediate Retaliation

On the very day of the attack, air strikes began. Gaza's apartment towers – Al-Hassan, Al-Watan, Hanadi – were erased within minutes. Drone footage released by the IDF showed fireballs over residential districts described as “ Hamas command centres”, by nightfall, ambulances were being hit on the roads to Shifa Hospital. The health ministry reported hundreds of casualties in the first twelve hours. Electricity to the Strip was cut the next day, water pumps failed and fuel deliveries were halted.

On 9 October, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant announced live on television: “ We are imposing a complete siege on Gaza. No electricity, no food, no fuel – everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we will act accordingly.” The phrase ricocheted across social media, translated into dozens of languages: it was the moment Israel dropped the mask of legality. Within hours, Sir Keir Starmer, a former human rights lawyer poised to become Britain's prime minister, told LBC that Israel “ did have that right,” lending the authority of British law to a policy of collective punishment banned by every major convention of war.

By the third day, artillery pounded the northern districts – Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, Zeitoun – while F-16s circled overhead. Entire families were erased; neighbours dug for survivors with bare hands. Satellite imagery soon showed destruction on a vast scale before the week was out. In Israel's briefings, this was “ retaliation.” In international law, it was reprisal against civilians: a war crime.

The United States explicitly warned Israel not to repeat America's post-9/11 mistakes. During a visit to Israel on 18 October 2023, President Joe Biden cautioned: “ While you

feel that rage, don't be consumed by it. After 9/11, we were enraged in the United States... and while we sought justice and got justice, we also made mistakes.”

After reporting this plea briefly, the global media continued repeating the framing: retaliation, self-defence, human-shield tactics. Every euphemism served to conceal proportionality and when reporters questioned the language, they were accused of antisemitism. The space for dissent closed instantly. Inside newsrooms, editors received talking points from government spokespeople... the distinction between information and influence dissolved.

On social networks, armies of coordinated accounts – some genuine, many automated – flooded timelines with identical phrasing. This was hasbara, Israel's decades-old propaganda network, functioning in real time. Its mission was simple: to control the first emotional frame of the story, knowing that once public outrage was fixed, truth would be irrelevant. Influencers, celebrities and Western politicians echoed the same script: barbarism versus civilisation. When corrections later appeared, they were buried on inside pages or flagged as updates so that few readers ever saw them.

### **Counting the Dead**

By mid-November, Gaza's health ministry reported over 15,000 Palestinians killed, nearly half of them children. Hospitals had ceased functioning; morgues overflowed and aid convoys were blocked at the Rafah crossing.

Journalists read aloud the lists of the dead – names, ages, identity numbers – until the power failed. The UN confirmed entire families had been erased from its census.

When servers went dark, local radio stations broadcast the names until their transmitters were hit; the world listened as Israel's bombing continued day and night, at a scale without precedent.

### **Unravelling the Narrative**

The mythology of 7 October with its selective horror and its weaponised grief became Israel's shield and the West's excuse but by the year's end, cracks had widened.

Investigations by Israeli and foreign journalists revealed that many civilians near the border had died from Israeli helicopter fire and tank shelling. Israeli outlets, under military censorship, suppressed the findings while families of victims began to demand answers.

Inside the digital sphere, truth leaked through the seams of control. Independent analysts geolocated footage, disproving official timelines while NGOs compiled casualty data inconsistent with state claims.

Even former Israeli intelligence officers spoke anonymously of deliberate misinformation: the story that had begun as righteous vengeance was mutating into exposure of systemic deceit.

### **The Meaning of the Day**

By December 2023, the world could see two parallel realities. In one, repeated nightly on Western television, was the myth: a civilised state defending itself from barbarism. In the other, visible through the screens of Gaza's own reporters, was the truth: a trapped population being methodically destroyed.

Norman Finkelstein's warnings echoed through the months that followed. "There's nothing stopping the killing machine," he said, echoing a line made famous by Toby Ziegler, the fictional White House Communications Director in the acclaimed TV series *The West Wing*, before concluding, "and once the cameras are gone, they get on with the business."

The shock that began at dawn had become, by nightfall, a weaponised story... and stories, once armed, kill with the same precision as bombs. The mythology constructed in those first hours would prove remarkably durable; not because it was true, but because it served power's immediate needs, licensing the annihilation that followed. As Israeli forces began the physical assault on Gaza, another war – conducted through headlines, social media feeds, and carefully-managed press briefings – was already determining how the world would understand what it was witnessing.

The assault on Gaza was conducted on two fronts simultaneously: one with missiles and white phosphorus, the other with crafted narratives and information control.

From the first hours of Israel's assault, words became weapons as precise and deadly, as a sniper's bullet. Every broadcast, every press statement, every headline was another front in the campaign to control perception. Truth itself was treated as a threat. The war was not only waged on land and in air, but across the airwaves and timelines of the world's screens. In the information age, narrative is strategy and Israel's most formidable weapon had always been control of the story.

By mid-morning on 7 October, Israel's Foreign Ministry had activated its Digital Diplomacy Unit: the 24-hour war room known internally as Hamaal. It mobilised thousands of volunteers to flood social platforms with pre-baked talking points and visual kits: #IsraelUnderAttack, #StandWithIsrael, #HamasisISIS. Within forty-eight hours the operation had logged more than fifteen million engagements. Behind it, the Hasbara Directorate issued daily memos to embassies and partner organisations across Europe and North America. Ambassadors were instructed to “shape the narrative,” seed interviews with massacre / atrocity / barbaric and repeat the line “the worst day for Jews since 1945.”

Delegations fanned out to major newsrooms, particularly in London, to make sure the hymn sheet was being sung correctly. Television anchors framed the bombardment as a counter-terror operation and politicians described the levelling of apartment blocks as “neutralising infrastructure.” International agencies parroted military briefings without independent verification. Editors quietly dropped the qualifier “Palestinian civilians,” and casualty reports from Gaza appeared only with the ritual disclaimer “according to the Hamas-run Ministry of Health” despite UN, World Health Organization and field-hospital corroborations.

A vocabulary of obfuscation allowed the extraordinary to appear ordinary: precision strike, neutralising threats, retaliation. Occupation vanished. Blockade became “security buffer.” Collective punishment – a crime explicitly prohibited by Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention – was banished to legal footnotes. Genocide, at first, was

treated as rhetorical excess, even as food, water, medicine and shelter were targeted as instruments of war.

Inside Gaza, journalists streamed from bomb sites as dust still hung in the air. Their footage contradicted official claims before the next briefing began. Cameras caught the characteristic tear-down arcs of white phosphorus over residential districts; morgues overflowing with children; convoys turned back at Rafah; hospitals going dark as incubators failed.

The army targeted transmitters and cellular towers; when that failed, the rhetorical campaign escalated: 'terror media', 'disinformation agents' and ' Hamas affiliates'. Foreign journalists were barred from entering Gaza. Those reporting from inside were overwhelmingly local freelancers armed with phones, batteries and impossible courage whose names soon moved from bylines to obituaries.

More than two years later, the language had changed, but the violence had not. What this architecture of language enabled was not abstract: it looked like this...

### **False Ceasefire**

On 8 January 2026, eleven year old Hamsa Housou lay dead on a cold metal table in the morgue at Al Shifa Hospital. Blood matted her hair and streaked the upper half of her striped pyjamas as a relative gently wiped her mouth and cheek with a damp cloth, sobbing as he did so. She had been asleep in her bed when Israeli fire struck her family's home in Jabaliya just before dawn, around 05:00, in an area west of what Israel itself had designated as the yellow line, a zone supposedly safe from attack.

“We were sleeping, and suddenly there were loud bangs, shells,” her uncle Aouni Housou said, standing beside her small body. “I live upstairs. There was screaming. We ran down and they said the girl had been injured. When we reached her she was covered in blood.” An ambulance took more than half an hour to arrive and by the time Hamsa reached hospital she was already dead.

Her killing did not occur during the active offensive but under what Israel, the United States and their allies called a ceasefire, one that had formally come into effect on 10 October 2025. In the same twenty four hour period, at least fourteen Palestinians, including five children, were killed in Israeli attacks across Gaza. Families who had been told they were safe were not safe at all.

Missile strikes, sniper fire and artillery continued almost daily, hitting areas east of the yellow line where Israeli troops still occupied territory under the truce and west of it where most of Gaza’s population was now confined. In the three months after the ceasefire began, at least 425 Palestinians were killed and more than 1,200 wounded, an average of nearly five deaths every day while diplomats spoke of de-escalation and restraint.

In the morgue at Al Shifa there were no abstractions, only a child in blood soaked pyjamas and a family left to grieve in a war that had never truly stopped.

### **Life Under the Truce**

The fiction of a ceasefire collapsed not only in statistics but in daily life. On 26 December 2025, Gaza based writer Aya Al Hattab described what the so-called truce meant on the ground.

“Here in Gaza we hear the word peace constantly,” she wrote. “It appears on television screens, in the statements of world leaders, in promises repeated again and again. Every country claims to want peace for Palestinians, yet have we ever lived it for a single day? The truth is that we have not.”

More than 360 Palestinians, including around 70 children, had been killed since the agreement was announced. Most homes were damaged or destroyed, electricity and clean water were scarce, cash could not be withdrawn because ATMs did not function and the streets were so cratered that walking or driving felt dangerous.

“My family and I are now renting a small, unsuitable apartment,” she wrote. “Access to water is limited, cash is hard to obtain. Families shelter in damaged buildings at risk of collapse or in tents exposed to winter rain and mud.” She described a new internal Israeli military boundary along Gaza’s eastern edge known locally as the yellow line. Homes were being demolished inside it and civilians risked being shot if they approached. “On the east side of the line, houses are demolished every day,” she wrote. “We hear stories that children are shot if they come near or cross the line that no-one can see.”

Near Gaza City, she said, entire blocks were being destroyed by remotely-operated ground explosives known as explosive robots, devices capable of levelling entire blocks of residential areas in one detonation. Smoke from nearby attacks forced families to keep windows closed in case it carried chemical residues. “World leaders discuss the day after and finalise their peace plans while we remain in the depths of the unknown,” she wrote. “They decide our fate while excluding us from the conversation.”

Her fiancé had travelled to Egypt in April 2024 and could not return, while she could not leave. “This is the true torment of a Palestinian,” she wrote. “Waiting for the unknown and trying to hold on to hope. Sometimes it feels worse than death.”

On the flip side of Israel’s use of remote APC “truck bombs” Hattab alludes to, each reportedly carrying up to three tons of explosives, some were intercepted before detonation. Combined with the significant proportion of air-dropped munitions that failed to explode - reported by Haaretz to be as high as 20% - Gaza’s underground has become a repository of residual explosives that analysts say armed groups can draw upon in future rounds of conflict.

### **Impunity, Secured**

As winter storms ripped through Gaza at the end of 2025, flattening tents and flooding displacement camps with sewage contaminated water, Israel moved to remove the last remaining witnesses.

Within thirty six hours, dozens of humanitarian organisations including Médecins Sans Frontières, Oxfam affiliates, CARE, Caritas and the International Rescue Committee were ordered to surrender detailed personal data on their Palestinian and international staff or lose their right to operate inside Gaza. At the same time, Israel reaffirmed its ban on foreign journalists entering the territory, ensuring that both humanitarian workers and independent media would be excluded from the catastrophe they were trying to document.

The official justification was security and transparency. Aid groups said it amounted to forced intelligence cooperation.

Once names, ID numbers and employment details were handed over, there would be nothing to prevent Israel from arresting, targeting or blacklisting humanitarian staff and their families. More than 200 aid workers had already been killed since October 2023.

The tactic mirrored Israel's earlier campaign against UNRWA. After accusing some staff of Hamas links, Israel severed the agency from electricity, water, communications and banking. The International Court of Justice later cleared UNRWA of institutional wrongdoing, but by then the damage was done. Now the same pattern was being applied to all NGOs: accuse, restrict, expel and remove witnesses.

COGAT claimed these organisations accounted for only one percent of total aid volume, but what that ignored was what they actually provided. Emergency surgery, trauma care, disease surveillance, child protection, mortality tracking and war crimes documentation. They were not merely delivering boxes, they were Gaza's civil infrastructure and its forensic memory.

With journalists banned and NGOs forced out, Israel was not reducing risk; it was closing a crime scene. The remaining battlefield was geography itself.

### **The War on the Map Itself**

As journalists inside Gaza streamed footage that contradicted official claims, Israel waged war on yet another front... The visual evidence of satellite imagery, geolocation data and digital cartography quickly became a battlefield where truth could be manipulated before it reached the public. The geography of Gaza – its streets, hospitals, refugee camps, farmland, and the shifting boundaries

between life and death – became a contested domain where meaning could be redrawn with a few keystrokes. For years, Israel had understood that whoever controls the map controls the narrative.

During the war, this principle matured into a sophisticated information strategy: obscure, distort and overwhelm. Civilian areas struck by bombs were reclassified as “terror infrastructure”, agricultural fields became “launch sites” and apartment blocks were shaded with digital red zones indicating tunnels that, in many cases, could not be independently-verified. Each graphic circulated by the IDF on social media carried the implicit weight of cartographic authority: grids, arrows, coordinates, the language of scientific exactitude, but accuracy was often secondary to persuasion.

Meanwhile, independent analysts, open-source investigators and Palestinians with smartphones tried to reassert reality. They geolocated missile craters using distinctive rooflines or minaret silhouettes and compared pre-strike and post-strike satellite imagery to prove the destruction of entire neighbourhoods that Israel had insisted were intact. In some cases, the crowdsourced mapping efforts revealed that IDF-published visuals had mislabelled, or deliberately shifted, the positions of supposed Hamas facilities to retroactively justify strikes on civilian areas.

Digital cartography also imposed a subtler violence: erasing the lived landscape. Israeli maps frequently omitted the names of Palestinian localities or replaced them with military designations in Hebrew. To the outside viewer these graphics presented Gaza not as a dense, deeply-inhabited

space, but as a neutral grid of targets. The absence of names – Shuja'iyya, Nuseirat, Zeitoun – functioned as a quiet form of dehumanization, stripping context from the destruction. A bombed school could appear, on an IDF map, not as a place where thousands of families had sought refuge, but as a sterile square tagged with coordinates and a colour-coded threat label.

Western media hardened into orthodoxy. Newspapers called 7 October “Israel’s 9/11.” Television channels replayed footage of burning kibbutzim and bodies in cars without context or verification. The most explosive claims – beheaded babies, mass rapes – aired globally before investigators reached the sites. CNN said “40 infants were found butchered.” Sky News repeated it, the Daily Mail splashed it.

Weeks later, when Israeli officials admitted the claim could not be verified, corrections were non-existent. The falsehood had already fused outrage with impunity. By contrast, Palestinian casualty figures were treated as suspect by major broadcasters, routinely appended with disclaimers like “according to the Hamas-run health ministry” despite UN and WHO officials noting privately they matched independent counts.

Doubt, in this case, was not inquiry; it was distancing: a ritual to keep empathy at bay.

### **The Guardian’s Hidden Briefing**

What the public could not know was that behind the editorial orthodoxy lay a network of undisclosed contacts between Israel’s military establishment and the newsrooms shaping coverage. The most revealing example came

from The Guardian: a newspaper that brands itself as ‘independent, uncapturable, and answerable only to its own conscience’.

In early November 2023, The Guardian’s editor-in-chief Katharine Viner met privately with Aviv Kohavi, Israel’s former IDF chief of staff, as part of a coordinated Israeli campaign to “influence various target audiences” in Western media. Kohavi also met with editors at the BBC, Sky News and the Financial Times. No disclosure was made to readers.

The meeting only became public through documents released by Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs following a freedom-of-information request. The timing was deliberate: one month into Israel’s bombardment, with over 10,000 Palestinians dead, while the UN was warning of mass starvation and human rights groups were sounding alarms about ethnic cleansing. At such a moment, a private meeting between the paper’s editor and a former Israeli chief of staff, a man central to shaping the military onslaught now levelling Gaza, should have been disclosed as a matter of basic journalistic transparency.

An Israeli Ministry of Defence adviser described the purpose clearly: “Visits by high-ranking Israeli dignitaries to Western countries will help influence various target audiences... we see these meetings as highly important in dealing with individuals who have significant impact on the legitimacy of the State of Israel.”

When Declassified UK exposed the meeting in 2024, The Guardian’s public response did not appear on its own website and it did not appear in its Gaza coverage. Instead, one spokesperson offered one line to another newspaper: the meeting was “not an endorsement, but part

of responsible journalism.” Nothing more. No details, no context, no record. No explanation of what Kohavi said, what he asked for, what The Guardian asked him, or whether any materials were provided.

Inside the newsroom, several Guardian journalists had already compiled what one described as an “exhaustive spreadsheet” documenting dozens of examples of skewed Gaza coverage: amplifying unchallenged Israeli claims, using language that delegitimised Palestinian casualty figures, downplaying statements showing apparent genocidal intent, omitting international law implications from stories that clearly demanded them, using passive voice for Palestinian deaths while explicitly naming Hamas as perpetrators of Israeli deaths, treating Israeli military “evacuation orders” as humanitarian acts rather than potential war crimes. One journalist described the approach as “deceit by omission.”

Multiple independent studies confirmed the pattern. In headline analysis, Israeli victims received nearly twice as much emotive language as Palestinian victims, despite Palestinians suffering vastly higher casualties. The Guardian ran 47 headlines about Israeli hostages and just 7 about Palestinian prisoners, despite thousands of Palestinians, including children, being held without trial.

### **The Hebrew-Language Incitement Surge**

As Israel’s assault on Gaza escalated, a parallel war unfolded on Hebrew-language social media: a vast, largely-unregulated ecosystem of hatred, dehumanisation and explicit calls for genocide. While much of the world focused on the physical destruction and the manipulation

of English-language narratives, a far more candid story was unfolding inside Israel's own digital spaces.

Analysis from 7amleh: The Arab Centre for the Advancement of Social Media, offered the clearest picture to date. According to their reports, Hebrew users posted more than 10.6 million pieces of violent content in 2023, with three-quarters of it on X (formerly Twitter). After 7 October the volume surged to 23 violent or hateful posts every minute, roughly one every 2.1 seconds.

One widely shared post demanded: "Erase Gaza. Nothing else will satisfy us... Not to leave a child there... so that they will not have a resurrection." Another read: "Right now, we have one goal: Nakba! A Nakba that will overshadow the Nakba of 48."

Starvation was openly endorsed as a weapon of war. Israeli Minister Israel Katz posted: "They will not receive a drop of water or a single battery until they leave the world." The statement became part of the evidentiary record cited by lawyers and human rights monitors arguing that dehumanisation and collective punishment were not incidental, but explicit. The dehumanisation was not limited to anonymous extremists. On 8 December, the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem posted a photograph of blindfolded, stripped Palestinian detainees and described them as "hundreds of ants... sub-humans."

Yet much of this material was effectively invisible to global audiences. In late 2024 and early 2025, X users began reporting erratic translation behaviour on some Hebrew posts – especially those involving Gaza – and some claimed the platform's "Translate" button no longer appeared on certain content. As Ali Abunimah of The Electronic Intifada

observed: “With all the censorship and propaganda, you still find more truth in Yedioth Ahronoth, Haaretz or Kan 11 than in all the Western media combined. They think Hebrew is a secret code – that anything they say to each other in Hebrew, no-one else will ever hear.”

Israel was directly named as the perpetrator in a minority of Palestinian death reports; Hamas was directly named in the majority of Israeli death reports.

The Guardian was not alone. Similar patterns emerged at The New York Times, CNN and other major outlets. But The Guardian had staked its entire brand on independence; on being - as it repeatedly told readers when asking them to pay for it news - ‘impossible to buy’. The undisclosed meeting with Kohavi cut straight through that claim... The newspaper that asks readers to donate monthly because its journalism is supposedly answerable only to its own conscience had sat down, in secret, with one of the architects of the war it was covering at the precise moment when that war was entering its most lethal phase.

If The Guardian’s editor had met privately with Hamas officials during the same period, would the meeting have been omitted entirely from public view? Or would it have appeared in bold headlines? For a paper that preaches transparency, the answer was obvious.

### **British Media’s Architecture of Silence**

Mark Curtis of Declassified UK documented what internal critics suspected. His analysis of BBC’s online content across sixteen categories of UK policy toward Israel revealed systematic underreporting that represented institutional failure, not mere bias.

Curtis's research revealed that the BBC had failed to report critical aspects of UK support for Israel that were matters of public record and considerable public interest... Military training was one glaring omission: UK military personnel had trained Israeli armed forces in Britain, a fact admitted in Parliament but entirely absent from BBC coverage.

Intelligence collaboration presented a similar void: reports and parliamentary questions had confirmed that a British intelligence team was operating in Israel, aiding Israeli intelligence efforts, yet the BBC's narrative excluded this entirely.

Even more troubling was the BBC's silence on diplomatic immunity granted to senior Israeli military figures. In late 2023, the head of the Israeli military, Herzi Halevi, visited the UK to discuss military strategy with British counterparts. Despite his controversial role in operations in Gaza and the risk of arrest for alleged war crimes, the BBC neglected to report on his visit or the special immunity granted to shield him from legal accountability. For an organisation that routinely covered diplomatic visits and human rights controversies, the omission was conspicuous.

Perhaps most significant was the BBC's minimal coverage of RAF surveillance flights over Gaza. Since October 2023, the Royal Air Force had conducted frequent surveillance missions from a base in Cyprus. While the British government claimed these flights were solely for hostage-related intelligence, concerns persisted about broader intelligence-sharing that could facilitate Israeli military operations.

The BBC had published only one report on these flights in an entire year: a stunning abdication for a broadcaster that

prides itself on scrutinising government military activities. Curtis's investigation showed that the BBC wasn't simply failing to ask tough questions; it was actively avoiding stories that would reveal the extent of British complicity in Israel's actions.

The RAF flights, in particular, represented direct British military involvement in the theatre of operations. Intelligence gathered by these flights was almost certainly being shared with Israeli forces, making Britain an active participant in the military campaign. Yet the BBC treated this as barely newsworthy, relegating it to a single buried article while providing wall-to-wall coverage of Israeli government talking points.

The pattern was clear: where British complicity was most direct – training, intelligence, surveillance, diplomatic protection – BBC coverage was most absent. The broadcaster had, in effect, become an instrument of government policy rather than a check on it.

### **The State Turns on Its Journalists**

The clampdown did not stop at newsrooms or social-media platforms. By the summer of 2024 it had moved into airports and police cells.

On 22 August 2024, Richard Thomas Medhurst – a British national and internationally accredited independent journalist – was flying to London Heathrow when his aircraft was diverted before it reached the terminal. Six armed police officers boarded the plane and escorted him off in full view of passengers. He was arrested under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000, which criminalises the expression of opinions deemed to be supportive of

a proscribed organisation. Officers told him he was being detained because he had “expressed an opinion or belief” that fell within that definition.

The reporter was placed in restraints as his phone, laptop and work materials were seized. Police took a DNA sample and placed him in solitary confinement, where he was continuously video and audio-recorded. Although he was told he had the right to inform someone of his arrest, when he asked to contact his family he was refused. He was also denied immediate access to legal counsel. After fifteen hours in detention, Medhurst was interviewed by counter-terrorism detectives and released on bail. He was not charged, but he remained under investigation.

Section 12 carries a maximum sentence of fourteen years’ imprisonment... In theory it was designed to suppress terrorist propaganda but in practice it had now been used against a journalist whose work focused on Israel’s war on Gaza.

Two weeks later, on 4 September, Freedom of Information disclosures revealed that at least eleven journalists had been subjected to terrorism-related detentions since October 2023. None had been accused of planning or carrying out violence. Their common feature was that they had reported critically on Israel or on Britain’s support for its war.

What had once been framed as counter-terrorism had become something else entirely: a system for policing speech.

## **Asa Winstanley: Raided for Exposing Hannibal**

The crackdown intensified on 17 October 2024, when the home of Asa Winstanley, associate editor of The Electronic Intifada, was raided by around 10 officers from the Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism Command.

The raid, conducted under "Operation Incessantness," saw multiple electronic devices seized. Winstanley was handed a letter stating that authorities were "aware of your profession as a journalist" but were investigating possible offenses under the Terrorism Act (2006) for the "encouragement of terrorism," based on his social media activity. Winstanley, known for his investigative work such as the article "How Israel killed hundreds of its own people on 7 October," became a prime example of the state targeting journalists for critical reporting.

Press freedom organisations, including the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), jointly condemned the raids, emphasising that "Journalism is not a crime."

In late August 2024, the home of 61-year-old Sarah Wilkinson was also stormed in a dawn raid by 16 officers, many in plain clothes and balaclavas. She was restrained and moved to a waiting van before being taken to a local police station, where she was held and questioned under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act (2000). The use of counter-terror powers against a grandmother for her social media posts about Gaza revealed the desperation of authorities to silence dissent.

On 16 October 2024, counter-terror police detained Craig Murray, journalist, human rights campaigner and former

British diplomat, at Glasgow Airport after he attended a Palestine solidarity event. Police seized his phone and laptop.

Murray, who had served as UK Ambassador to Uzbekistan before becoming a whistleblower and human rights advocate, represented yet another example of the British state using terrorism legislation against those documenting Israeli war crimes.

### **Media Bodies Demand Answers**

On 5 September 2024, reporters responded with an open letter demanding to know how covering Gaza could constitute terrorism. The police cited “national security concerns” ... Translation: journalism itself had been recoded as a threat vector.

The NUJ and IFJ wrote a joint letter on 3 September 2024 to Matt Jukes, the UK Head of Counter Terrorism, expressing their profound concerns over the recent detentions of British journalists for their reporting of the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The letter stated:

*“We write as general secretaries of the NUJ and IFJ, to express grave concern over the apparent misuse of the Terrorism Act 2000 to detain and arrest journalists, thus undermining media freedom. The arrest of Richard Medhurst and the subsequent seizure of his journalistic equipment including recording devices essential for his work, has shocked both journalists based in the UK and those around the world. Powers contained in anti-terror legislation must always be deployed proportionately, yet actions by police in an apparent crackdown on genuine journalistic activity cause*

*significant cause for concern over efforts to stifle press freedom. We seek clarity from you on the nature of the investigation into Richard Medhurst and request an urgent meeting to discuss the use of police powers under anti-terror legislation to detain, question and arrest journalists. Without swift action to restore confidence over the treatment of journalists and activists, counter-terrorism policing faces an erosion of public confidence and risks a chilling effect on journalists fearing arrest for carrying out their work.”*

It was signed by Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, and Anthony Bellanger, IFJ general secretary, representing over 600,000 media professionals spanning more than 140 countries. Their warning was prescient: “Disproportionate use of powers contained in anti-terror legislation by British police runs contrary to the UK government’s commitment to upholding press freedom and ensuring journalists’ safety.” It did not give the authorities pause, however, it marked the moment the campaign went transnational.

In February 2025, as Medhurst was living and working in Vienna, Austrian police and intelligence agents raided his home there too, and confiscated all his electronic devices under a warrant alleging association with Hamas. The same reporting that had triggered his detention in Britain was now being pursued by a second state. What had begun as a British counter-terrorism investigation had become a cross-border security operation. Intelligence services across Western democracies were no longer merely observing Gaza journalists, they were coordinating against them.

In December 2025, British authorities quietly abandoned their own case. After more than a year under investigation, the Crown Prosecution Service confirmed that no charges would be brought against Medhurst under the Terrorism

Act. The journalist Britain had arrested as a suspected terrorist was cleared, but the file did not close, it was simply handed over. British investigators transferred their entire case to Austrian prosecutors, asserting that Austria now had jurisdiction, even though Medhurst had been arrested by British police months before any Austrian case existed. The theory of criminality simply migrated. In Britain, journalism had been framed as terrorist support, in Austria, the same work was recast as membership in a terrorist organisation.

During his British detention, Medhurst had refused to unlock his devices to protect confidential sources. Investigators were unable to access his encrypted communications. The collapse of the UK case – followed by the Austrian seizure of his equipment – revealed a single continuous effort to obtain what British authorities could not lawfully extract.

Britain stepped back, Austria stepped in. The same reporting that could not be criminalised in London was now being prosecuted in Vienna. The warning from the world's journalists had been right: what was unfolding was not law enforcement, but a system for turning journalism itself into a security threat.

### **Royal Television Society Buckles**

Even professional journalism institutions came under attack. In March 2025, the Royal Television Society (RTS) initially planned to honour Gaza-based journalists at its annual Television Journalism Awards on 5 March 2025.

But on the day of the awards, the RTS reversed its decision, citing “controversy around some Gaza coverage”, specifically

the BBC documentary Gaza: How to Survive a War Zone, which featured a teenager later revealed to be the son of Hamas's Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

The cancellation sparked immediate outrage. Veteran broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby called the move “craven,” arguing that it unfairly punished Gaza-based journalists for editorial issues in the UK. More than 300 media figures – including Channel 4 News presenter Krishnan Guru-Murthy, Sky News's Alex Crawford and BBC reporters Fergal Keane and Orla Guerin – signed an open letter expressing their “shock and disgust” at the RTS's failure to honour Gaza journalists.

The letter, also signed by Oscar-winning directors Kevin MacDonald and Asif Kapadia, highlighted concerns over the RTS's “lack of transparency” and called for an urgent meeting with King Charles III, who serves as the Royal Patron of the RTS. The context made the cancellation even more egregious: since 7 October, Israel had banned foreign journalists from entering Gaza, severely restricting independent reporting.

Meanwhile, Israeli military actions had resulted in the deaths of more than 200 journalists and media workers in Gaza, making it the deadliest conflict for journalists in modern history. Organisations such as Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists had called for independent investigations into whether these killings constitute war crimes.

On 24 October 2024, an IDF spokesperson had escalated the threat announcing Palestinian journalists operating in northern Gaza “will be treated as combatants.” Press watchdogs called it a declaration of intent to commit war

crimes. In the lexicon of power, the word “journalist” had been reclassified, downgraded to legitimate target.

Under intense pressure, the RTS reversed its cancellation on 15 March 2025, announcing that it would reinstate the Gaza journalism award. But advocacy groups continued to demand that the award be presented at the RTS Programme Awards on 25 March, rather than delayed further. “Any further delay and prevarication would only serve to undermine the RTS’s credibility further,” they stated.

The RTS scandal revealed how even institutions ostensibly dedicated to journalistic excellence could be pressured into suppressing recognition of Gaza coverage, and how collective action by journalists could force a reversal.

### **Teaching Genocide in British Schools**

More concerning evidence came not from government policy but from British classrooms where students justified killing Palestinian children.

In July 2025, a shocking moment went viral that exposed what many had long suspected: that some British religious schools were teaching children to view Palestinian lives as worthless and Israeli violence as divinely justified. The revelation came during a live interview conducted by Palestinian-American content creator Hamzah Saadah, who uses OmeTV – a free global video chat platform that connects strangers randomly – to document Israeli public sentiment.

What makes Saadah’s work significant is its randomness: he doesn’t select guests or stage conversations. With hundreds

of thousands of users online at any given time, his interviews offer a statistically honest snapshot of views, especially among younger generations.

During one such random connection, Saadah was matched with a British-born man who had recently moved to Israel. The unscripted conversation took a dark turn when the man openly justified the mass killing of Palestinian civilians, including over 20,000 children...

Hamzah: “The 20,000 children that were killed in Palestine. Is that justified?”

Guest: “Yeah, cuz they’re going to grow up to be Hamas. Exactly.”

Hamzah: “Did you learn this in England?”

Guest: “I learned this in Torah class... in England. Exactly.”

Hamzah: “You are brainwashed to the core. You are literally saying it’s okay for children to be killed in Palestine because they’re going to grow up to be [militants]. Are you crazy?”

The man repeated his claim multiple times, unprompted and enthusiastically. He wasn’t pressed into a corner; he volunteered these views and grounded his logic in religious instruction received in England.

### **LBC Censorship That Preceded the Confession**

What made this livestream confession so devastating was that it confirmed exactly what British media had just been forced to suppress under Zionist lobby pressure.

Just days earlier, UK broadcaster LBC became embroiled in controversy when radio presenter James O’Brien read

aloud a message from a listener named Chris. The message claimed that children in a Hertfordshire Jewish school were being taught that “one Jewish life is worth thousands of Arab lives” and that Arabs were described as “cockroaches to be crushed.”

O’Brien used the message to illustrate how mutual hatred is taught, but he quickly came under fire from pro-Israel groups including the Community Security Trust, Board of Deputies, and Jewish Leadership Council. The clip was deleted, and O’Brien issued an on-air apology: “The message has understandably upset a lot of people, and I regret taking those unsubstantiated claims at face value. I am genuinely sorry for that.”

Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Hertfordshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner, wrote to LBC warning that the segment could provoke “further antisemitic incidents” and accused O’Brien of making a “conscious and deliberate choice” to air it.

But then came the livestream... a British-Israeli citizen, selected completely at random from hundreds of thousands of global users, confirmed on camera – unprompted and enthusiastically – that he had been taught in “Torah class... in England” that Palestinian children deserved to die because they would “grow up to be Hamas.”

The LBC controversy had been dismissed as an unsubstantiated claim from an anonymous listener. Now, a randomly selected individual had vindicated it on a global platform, proving that the listener had been telling the truth all along.

## **Legal Implications Under UK Law**

The video not only exposed the ideological rot behind the ongoing genocide in Gaza, it may also expose legal liability for the individual involved and the British institutions he cited.

Under the UK's Public Order Act 1986, incitement to racial hatred is a criminal offence. Section 18 prohibits the use of "threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour" intended or likely to "stir up racial hatred." Justifying the killing of children – based on their ethnicity or nationality – could easily qualify.

If this individual returns to the UK, he may be subject to criminal investigation for inciting hatred. Even more troubling is the suggestion that religious educators in the UK were responsible for instilling this worldview. If proven, the Jewish schools or Torah classes he attended could also come under scrutiny for institutional incitement, especially if they operate as registered charities or receive public oversight.

The Department for Education, Ofsted and the Charity Commission now face serious questions about whether they have failed in their duty to prevent radicalisation and hate speech in faith-based education. Critics argue that if a Muslim school were found teaching children that Israeli or Jewish lives were worthless, the institution would be immediately investigated, shut down, and its leaders prosecuted. The same standard, they insist, must apply.

## **Silencing the Truth, Protecting the Powerful**

The man's livestreamed confession renewed criticism of LBC's decision to censor its listener and protect institutions

from scrutiny. Critics now argue that the station's apology – and the deletion of the segment – was not about responsible broadcasting but about capitulation to political pressure.

LBC had suppressed a truth that a random British-Israeli stranger later confirmed on a global platform. The listener had been vindicated. O'Brien had been right to air the claim, and the institutions that pressured LBC into censorship now stood exposed.

“They needed British Muslims to be the threat,” said one media analyst, “so they suppressed evidence that British Jewish schools were teaching genocide. They needed antisemitism to be the story, so they silenced the actual story – that children in Britain are being taught to view Palestinian lives as worthless.” The scandal encapsulated the entire information war around Gaza: truth suppressed, liars protected and institutions that should demand accountability instead providing cover.

The randomly selected man on OmeTV had accidentally torn down the facade, revealing what many had long suspected: that the genocidal logic justifying Gaza's destruction was being systematically taught to children in British religious schools. But media outlets and educational institutions were far from being the only playing fields this wanton repression of reality would take place on.

### **The Nandy Fabrication**

The Amsterdam football riots involving marauding fans of Maccabi Tel Aviv in November 2024 reverberated across the Channel in unexpected ways, igniting a political scandal that would expose how the British government further

manufactured antisemitism narratives to shield Israel from accountability.

The controversy centred on Lisa Nandy, Britain's Culture Secretary, and her handling of a subsequent Maccabi fixture in Birmingham; a scandal that would test the limits of ministerial honesty and reveal the apparatus of narrative control.

In the wake of the Amsterdam violence, Maccabi Tel Aviv was scheduled to face Aston Villa in a Europa Conference League match in Birmingham. British and Dutch police, having witnessed the chaos in Amsterdam, conducted a joint threat assessment. The intelligence was unambiguous: the primary security risk came not from Birmingham residents, but from extremist Maccabi supporters with a documented history of violence. Police reports warned of "racist fan elements" within the Israeli club's support base and noted that many young Maccabi fans were serving IDF members potentially involved in operations in Gaza.

Despite this clear police guidance, both Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Lisa Nandy publicly condemned the decision to implement security restrictions as "wrong" and an example of antisemitism. Nandy told Parliament that Israeli fans were being restricted because of "the risk posed to them because they are Israeli and because they are Jewish" – a claim directly contradicted by the leaked police intelligence, which identified the Maccabi supporters themselves as the threat.

### **Leaked Police Documents**

The fabrication unravelled when The Guardian published the leaked police assessments. Perry Barr MP Ayub Khan

rose in the House of Commons and accused Nandy of lying to Parliament, citing the leaked documents and warning that her statements represented “a blatant breach of the ministerial code.” Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle confirmed Khan’s comments would be entered into the record but said he lacked the power to compel Nandy to return to answer questions.

Independent MPs Adnan Hussein, Iqbal Mohamed, and Jeremy Corbyn joined the chorus of condemnation. Hussein pointedly asked why Israel was being treated differently from Russia, which faced international sporting bans for its invasion of Ukraine.

When Mohamed asked whether Israeli police were being antisemitic for cancelling a Tel Aviv derby due to hooligan violence, Nandy doubled down on her false claim, repeating that the UK’s restrictions were based on “the risk posed to [Maccabi fans] because they are Israeli and because they are Jewish”, a statement later proven categorically false by her own government’s intelligence services. The intelligence assessments were, in fact, more detailed – and more damning – than ministers initially acknowledged.

Joint briefings compiled by British and Dutch police in the days following the Amsterdam violence warned that the primary threat surrounding the Birmingham fixture came from Maccabi Tel Aviv’s own travelling support. The documents described a core group of “extremist Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters with a documented history of violence,” and recorded Dutch warnings that the same cohort had been identified during riots in Amsterdam earlier that month.

According to police reports, those disturbances involved assaults on Muslim bystanders and chants of “death

to Arabs” in public spaces – incidents that prompted Dutch police to advise British counterparts that the same individuals were likely to travel to the UK. West Midlands Police subsequently classified the match as “high risk,” warning that dozens of these supporters were expected to attend.

A community impact assessment obtained by The Guardian recorded an even more awkward truth for the government’s narrative: some Jewish community members themselves expressed concern that Maccabi supporters should be barred from attending, fearing that their presence would provoke violence and endanger local residents. One police source summarised the assessment bluntly: “the biggest risk was always the extreme Maccabi fans who want to fight.”

None of this intelligence suggested antisemitic discrimination by British authorities. On the contrary, it showed a standard public-order response to a known violent cohort; exactly the kind of restrictions routinely applied to football supporters with a record of disorder. The media’s role in amplifying the false narrative became harder to defend when Sky News was forced to issue an on-air correction. “We incorrectly said the decision was based solely on the inability of authorities to guarantee the safety of those fans,” Sky News admitted. “We should have also reflected concerns about previous violent clashes involving Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters.”

By the time the correction aired, the damage was irreversible. The original claim – broadcast prominently and repeated across social media – had reached millions. As in so many previous cases across media outlets, the clarification reached a fraction of that audience.

## The 2026 Rewrite

By January 2026, this attempt to erase reality had not quietly been kicked into the long grass... instead a co-ordinated effort instead resurrected and attempted to double down on it, to further corrupt the record.

Britain's largest Jewish lobby organisations — the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council — publicly demanded the resignation of West Midlands Police Chief Constable Craig Guildford for authorising the very restrictions that police intelligence had recommended. Their claim was that the force had acted on “unsubstantiated or erroneous” security concerns and had unfairly targeted Israeli supporters.

This was not a dispute about facts. Those facts had already been leaked, published, and acknowledged: Dutch and British police had jointly warned that a cohort of extremist Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters fresh from chanting “Death to Arabs!” and, in Amsterdam, “There are no schools in Gaza, as there are no children left!” posed a serious public-order risk if allowed to travel in numbers to Birmingham.

The attempt now underway was something else: narrative inversion. What had been a routine policing decision - identical in principle to restrictions imposed on Rangers, Legia Warsaw, Napoli, Celtic, and other high-risk supporter groups - was being retrospectively rebranded as antisemitic discrimination. The chants, the violence, the intelligence assessments and even Israel's own record of policing Maccabi's ultras were simply erased from the story.

The political right rushed to assist in that erasure. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch accused the police

of having “capitulated and collaborated with Islamists,” transforming a public-order operation into a culture-war fantasy in which British police were cast as enemies of the Jewish community rather than protectors of the public.

What made the moment revealing was not that lobby groups defended Israeli fans but that they demanded the destruction of police credibility to do so. The intelligence services that had warned of violent Israeli hooligans were now treated as the problem, while those who had filmed themselves celebrating the extermination of Gaza’s children in European streets were quietly laundered into victims. This was the same architecture that had already been deployed against UN agencies, journalists, broadcasters and civil servants: when reality threatens Israel’s narrative, reality must be recoded as prejudice.

### **Unprecedented Lie**

The scandal deepened when Nandy’s parliamentary claims were further exposed as fabrications. She had described the Birmingham security measures as “unique in modern times”, a claim demolished by simple fact-checking. Similar away-fan restrictions had been implemented during: Rangers vs Napoli (2022), Aston Villa vs Legia Warsaw (2023), Celtic vs Rangers (2025).

The “unprecedented” framing was designed to create the impression of unique antisemitic persecution where none existed. It was a false claim that weaponised antisemitism allegations against British Muslims and public safety officials who were simply doing their jobs based on solid intelligence about violent Israeli hooligans.

## **The Andrew Fox Phantom Organisation Scandal**

But the most significant revelation came when the media's own sources were exposed as fraudulent. Sky News, which had prominently covered the controversy, was forced to issue another on-air correction after its reporting came under scrutiny.

The broadcaster had relied heavily on testimony from Andrew Fox, presented as the “honorary president of the Aston Villa Jewish Villains Supporters Club.”

Subsequent investigations revealed that: Fox is not Jewish. Fox works for the Henry Jackson Society, a pro-Israel think tank with documented ties to neoconservative networks. The supporters' club he represented is unrecognised by Aston Villa or the Football Supporters' Association. The organisation appears to exist only on paper as a phantom organisation created to lend false legitimacy to the manufactured antisemitism narrative.

## **Nandy's Pattern of Complicity**

Once seen as a rising Labour star, Nandy's credibility was badly damaged. Before the general election, she had drawn criticism as shadow international development secretary for echoing unverified Israeli allegations against UNRWA, Gaza's main humanitarian agency, in the wake of claims about Hamas infiltration that were later discredited.

Critics argued her record demonstrated a consistent pattern: alignment with Israeli talking points and a readiness to weaponise antisemitism allegations for political cover, even when the facts told a different story. With growing calls for Nandy's resignation and pressure mounting on Prime

Minister Starmer, the affair became a test of truth and accountability in British public life. The police intelligence had been clear; the ministers had lied about it; the media had amplified those lies using fake sources and British Muslims had been smeared as threats to Jewish safety when the documented danger came from Israeli extremists.

As one senior political commentator noted: “This scandal shows what happens when government and media abandon honesty to protect Israel at all costs. The British public deserve answers, and the ministers responsible must face consequences.”

The Nandy affair would come to symbolise something larger: how Western governments, facing overwhelming public opposition to Israel’s actions in Gaza, resorted to manufacturing antisemitism crises to silence dissent and delegitimise solidarity with Palestinians. It was hasbara enacted through the organs of state power itself.

### **The Turning Tide**

Soon after, a new theatre of messaging opened: Washington began to signal concern. On 23 October 2024, the US government publicly urged Israel to allow media access and humanitarian aid into Gaza, warning that a blackout undermined American credibility... Human rights groups estimated more than a hundred journalists had been killed by then.

The legal lexicon caught up with the moral one. In January 2024, the International Court of Justice found a “plausible risk of genocide” in *South Africa v Israel* and ordered provisional measures. The phrasing was cautious; the effect, seismic.

States that had hedged, moved: Ireland, Spain and Norway recognised Palestine; Belgium froze arms exports; German complicity was litigated under Article III of the Genocide Convention. By early 2025, after the ICJ ordered Israel to prevent genocidal acts and allow aid, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed the court as “a disgrace to civilisation.”

Famine still spread... In February 2025, after the bombing of the UN-run Al-Mawasi camp killed hundreds, a BBC anchor said the forbidden word on air: “genocide.” For a moment the studio fell silent: it was the sound of a script ending.

In Washington, spokespeople continued: “Israel has the right to defend itself,” even as reports detailed mass graves and deliberate starvation. Behind closed doors, aides admitted the phrase had become “toxic.” Polls showed two-thirds of Americans wanted arms shipments halted; hearings on war crimes were announced, lawyers reached for the Leahy Laws. In Europe the shift accelerated. Recognition, freezes, lawsuits... to defend Israel was no longer to defend democracy; it was to defend the indefensible.

Some facts refused to die. By 4 November 2025, a body of evidence – Forensic Architecture, Haaretz, Channel 12, former pilots and police – confirmed that Israeli forces killed their own civilians on 7 October amid “indiscriminate fire orders.” Yet the BBC held to the singular grammar of “ Hamas massacre,” declining to report verified friendly-fire episodes with the prominence they deserved.

Media watchdogs noted the shift from bias to credibility crisis: if verifiable facts are unreportable because they complicate a narrative, the line has been crossed from journalism into reputation management.

## Revolt of Language

By the summer of 2024, Gaza's death toll surpassed 40,000. Neighbourhoods disappeared from maps, while euphemism faltered on air. CNN used "collective punishment", while the BBC tentatively described "systematic destruction." The New York Times, after months of internal revolt, ran an editorial titled "A War Beyond Justification."

Hasbara's moral credit – long underwritten by the memory of Jewish suffering – was overdrawn: what remained was naked power. Diplomatic cables leaked in late 2024 spoke of "unprecedented isolation." Ambassadors reported "hostile sentiment in Western capitals." Israel hired new PR firms and tested slogans – Israel: The Democracy at War with Terror – but branding cannot cauterise a livestream.

Corporations balked at weapons manufacturers; universities severed ties with research partners; sports teams cancelled friendlies. The pariah aura hardened.

By mid-2025, the global conversation had turned. The chant "From the river to the sea" – once criminalised, despite having previously been used by Netanyahu's Likud party – sounded in parliaments and city squares. Millions marched beneath Palestinian flags and governments that banned demonstrations under "security" pretexts now faced the outrage of their electorates.

Even in Washington, where lobbying had long dictated policy grammar, senators asked on camera whether support could be squared with law. The tables turned... In culture, the argument of British TV football commentator Gary Lineker matured into principle: that solidarity is not bias;

it is a human baseline. The pressure campaign that sought to isolate him instead clarified the stakes. When the BBC pulled its March Gaza documentaries and Channel 4 aired *The Wounded of Gaza*, it became obvious that impartiality had been weaponised to avoid accountability. Lineker stood with medics and journalists; his critics stood with silence.

The collapse of narrative control reached a symbolic peak when Israel's ambassador walked out of a UN General Assembly session as names of Gaza's slain journalists were read aloud. No rebuttal followed. The facts had finally spoken louder than the fiction.

### **Rise of the Bedroom Broadcasters**

By the time the guns fell silent, Gaza's surviving journalists had compiled the most comprehensive record of atrocity in modern history, but they had not done it alone. Alongside them, a new generation of citizen journalists – operating from bedrooms, buses and street corners – had broken Israel's information stranglehold in ways traditional media could not.

Among them was The Saviour, a British twenty-something behind the fast-growing platform S2F Uncensored. With nearly half a million followers on X and tens of thousands more on Instagram, he had become one of the most prolific young chroniclers of Gaza's genocide, delivering raw footage, breaking news and vox pop interviews at a pace and honesty that traditional media could not match.

What made his rise unusual was that none of it was planned. "I was just a normal guy using Twitter," he said. "I only had about 80 to 100 followers." He had joined the platform in late 2022, first following the Russia-Ukraine war with the instinct

many viewers of that conflict had: ‘Surely there’s more going on behind the headlines?’ As he dug deeper, he stumbled across something the mainstream largely ignored: daily Israeli violence in the West Bank months before October 7, and he began posting what he found.

When the Gaza genocide began and Israel launched one of the most aggressive propaganda campaigns in modern history – painting Palestinians as subhuman, flattening homes while calling it “precision warfare,” flooding Western media with unverified claims – his feed exploded from 500 followers to 50,000 in a single month, and became a go-to source for breaking updates. “I was literally sitting there all night posting breaking news,” he recalled. “It wasn’t planned. It just happened. Then I thought – well, now I have a responsibility.”

Unlike many online commentators, he did not stay behind the keyboard. He stepped into the streets. Equipped with a mic and a camera, he began interviewing ordinary people at protests, rallies and even right-wing demonstrations. His now-viral exchange with a Tommy Robinson supporter waving an Israeli flag – unable to explain why – captured something mainstream broadcasters rarely show: the raw confusion, hostility and emotional chaos of Britain’s culture war over Palestine. “They were all in their comfort zone,” he said of the Zionist-leaning crowd that day. “Their real colours were coming out.”

He remained calm, even as some became aggressive. The point, he said, was to let people speak freely on camera; something mainstream studios, with their tightly controlled debates and pre-approved talking heads, did not allow. His

street interviews regularly out-performed posts from legacy newsrooms with corporate budgets.

With influence, however, came retaliation. At first, he stayed anonymous, until Israeli networks found his identity and doxxed him, posting his face and personal details across the internet to intimidate him into silence, but that backfired too. Instead of retreating, he changed his profile photo to his own face. “It was something they were using against me,” he said, “but that wasn’t going to stop me.”

Then came coordinated bot attacks: thousands of fake accounts mass-liking his posts, then reporting him for “manipulated engagement,” getting posts removed, triggering recurring shadowbans. Even with nearly half a million followers, some posts barely reached two thousand people. “For an account my size,” he said, “the views are honestly shocking.”

Instagram, where he had far fewer followers, often gave him more reach than X. This was not paranoia. Many independent journalists – from Palestine to political dissenters in the West – reported the same pattern: suppression of on-the-ground content that challenged official narratives. “They try all the tactics,” he said. “Death threats, bots, mass reports... but it’s the genuine supporters who keep me going.”

People turned to accounts like his because mainstream outlets, from the BBC to CNN, filtered their coverage through political pressure, government briefings and editorial restraint. Scenes that Palestinians were living in real time – children pulled from rubble, hospitals bombed, families starving – were framed as “claims” or “unverified.” Independent voices filled the vacuum. “They’re thirsty for

raw information,” The Saviour said. “No propaganda. No bias.”

As Western governments criminalised Palestine activism, as big tech platforms tightened moderation policies and as billionaires with Zionist political ties bought up media companies, the battle over the truth of Gaza became more ferocious than ever, but it was also clearer than ever that the old system had lost control. “We’re meant to use these platforms for alternative media,” he added. “But they still manipulate them.”

Even so, audiences kept coming as they grew to discern the difference between scripted narratives and lived reality. It was also because, despite Israel’s digital warfare – bots, doxxing, threats, and censorship – this young content creator continued posting, filming, interviewing and amplifying voices that would otherwise never reach the outside world. From his bedroom to hundreds of thousands of screens worldwide, The Saviour had helped break the most tightly managed propaganda machine of the 21st century.

By the time the guns fell silent, Gaza’s surviving journalists had compiled the most comprehensive record of atrocity in modern history. Their footage – preserved by volunteer archivists from Dublin to Kuala Lumpur – seeded prosecutions and rewrote syllabi.

The very platforms Israel had tried to bend – TikTok, Instagram, Telegram – became inadvertent archives of evidence. Algorithms that once buried the truth now, accidentally, kept it and the empire of lies collapsed under the weight of its contradictions. Classrooms began to teach the Gaza genocide as a lesson in the weaponisation of

language: how “ Hamas-run ministry ” became shorthand for disbelief; how “ surgical strike ” masked incineration; how the verb to defend became licence to destroy. The lexicon of denial itself became evidence; a fossil record of how Western institutions rationalised atrocity in real time.

Editors who had purged apartheid from style guides restored it as standard. Journalists who had been sacked for accuracy were rehired with quiet apologies. Universities that had suspended staff for calling for a ceasefire now issued statements of solidarity with Gaza’s survivors and so, as 2025 drew to a close, the old sentences – Israel’s right to defend itself, the most moral army in the world – lay in ruins, relics of a discredited empire of words.

What remained were the testimonies of the living, the silence of the dead and a truth too vast for propaganda to contain. The war on language was the first war Israel began to lose, and in that loss, the world’s hearts and minds moved, at last, towards those who had endured the hell unleashed upon them.

The documentation from Gaza created an impossible situation for Western institutions that had spent decades positioning themselves as defenders of human rights and arbiters of truth. Broadcasters like the BBC, newspapers like The New York Times, governments from Washington to Berlin all faced a stark choice: acknowledge what the evidence showed, or protect the ally that had produced the evidence.

For most, the choice was made reflexively. Institutional self-preservation demanded maintaining the old framework, even as that framework was collapsing in real time under the weight of observable reality. The result

was not a simple failure of journalism or diplomacy, but a comprehensive collapse of credibility that would expose the architecture of complicity sustaining Israel's decades of impunity.

What Palestinians had documented could not be unseen. The question was whether institutions built on claims of objectivity, balance and moral authority could look or whether those claims were always hollow. The answer would arrive in the form of numbers, leaks, resignations and a reckoning that began with a broadcaster that had long-claimed to speak for truth itself. What followed was not merely the exposure of individual failures, but a systemic collapse that would reveal the architecture of complicity built into Western institutions over decades.

The cameras did not blink. The record was being written in real time.

## CHAPTER 5

### *The Collapse of Credibility: Media Complicity*

*Western media abandoned journalistic principles to shield Israel: that betrayal shattered their credibility.*

David, a veteran BBC producer who had covered conflicts from Bosnia to Iraq, sat in the newsroom watching footage from Gaza. "We're not reporting what we're seeing," he told a colleague quietly. "The gap between what's on our screens and what we're putting on air. I've never experienced anything like it." Within weeks, he would resign... he was not alone.

The institutions that had long-positioned themselves as guardians of truth - major broadcasters, newspapers, human rights organisations and Western governments - faced an unprecedented crisis as Gaza's reality proved impossible to spin.

By the last weeks of 2023, Gaza was not a headline but a heartbeat strobing across the world's screens. Every hour brought new footage: children lifted out of concrete dust by hands as white as flour; parents kneeling beside shrouded bundles; surgeons yelling for light while the torch from the same phone that was filming was held above the wound; ambulance sirens echoing out from tinny speakers in kitchens and buses and church halls.

The war no longer lived inside maps or briefings; it lived in the glow that haunted living rooms, hospital waiting rooms and subway platforms. The world was watching, and the world was paralysed.

### **Erasing America's Green Light**

In the first week of Israel's assault on Gaza, something extraordinary was reported and then quietly removed from history.

On 31 October 2023, Haaretz, Israel's newspaper of record, published a bombshell. Under the headline *"Don't Be Too Careful," US Told Israel in First Week of Gaza War, Promising Full Support*, military correspondent Yaniv Kubovich cited three senior Israeli officials with direct knowledge of deliberations inside Israel's War Cabinet. The article reported that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had delivered a message far more permissive than any public statement. In his emergency meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant and Benny Gantz in Tel Aviv, Blinken, they said, told Israel: "Don't be too careful."

The phrase was not rhetorical. According to the officials in the room, it was accompanied by assurances of "whatever you need" and promises that Washington would not second-guess Israeli military decisions. In diplomatic language this was not a warning, it was a green light: permission for unrestricted military force at the very moment Gaza was about to be subjected to one of the most intense bombing campaigns in modern history.

Within hours the US State Department moved to shut the story down. Spokesperson Matthew Miller issued a categorical denial, saying he had seen the report and that it

was absolutely false, adding that in all of their conversations the United States had emphasized the importance of taking every possible precaution to prevent civilian casualties and of respecting international humanitarian law.

Reuters, The Times of Israel, Al Jazeera and other major outlets reported Miller's denial the same day. For a brief moment the confrontation between Washington and Haaretz became one of the most important media events of the early war... then it vanished.

By January 2026, the original Haaretz article could no longer be found by any ordinary method. Searches using the full headline, the author's name, the publication date or quoted text returned nothing. The Times of Israel link that had once confirmed the story now returned a 403 Forbidden error, an active block rather than a missing page, and Reuters' wire story had disappeared from open archives.

Even more striking, the US State Department's own transcript of Miller's 31 October 2023 briefing, a 4,500-word, 38-minute record, contained no mention at all of the Haaretz report or of Miller's denial.

Yet the denial had unquestionably happened. Miller himself had said, "I've seen that report." Governments do not deny articles that never existed. The question was no longer whether the story was real, it was why it had been erased. The reason was simple: the Haaretz report did not contradict US policy, it revealed it.

Four days before Kubovich's article was published, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby had already told the world that the United States was not drawing red lines for Israel and would continue to support its security needs.

When asked again on 7 November 2023 whether the United States still had no red lines at all for Israel's assault on Gaza, Kirby replied that this was still the case.

The official American position, at the exact moment Gaza was being flattened, was that Israel faced no limits.

Other reporting confirmed the same reality. On 4 November 2023 Axios revealed Blinken's private message to Israeli leaders, telling them that the United States did not want to stop them but needed them to help Washington buy more time. Blinken himself later confirmed it.

In January 2025, as he left office, he told the New York Times that the only leverage he exercised in those first days was over humanitarian access, saying he had threatened to cancel President Biden's visit unless Israel allowed aid trucks into Gaza. He did not claim to have imposed any conditions on Israel's military campaign.

If food and water were the only pressure points, then the bombs were not: that was exactly what Haaretz had reported.

The final and most damaging piece fell into place when Matthew Miller spoke freely after leaving government. In a Sky News interview in 2024, he admitted, "I have no doubt that Israel committed war crimes." He then explained how his role had worked, saying that when you are at the podium you are not expressing your personal views but the position of the United States government.

Miller was not in Blinken's War Cabinet meeting, but the Israeli officials who spoke to Haaretz said they were. When Miller declared the report absolutely false, he was not

offering a factual rebuttal, he was enforcing policy: this is why the story had to disappear.

Even when Washington later tried to revive the language of restraint, it proved to be hollow. In March 2024, President Biden declared that a full Israeli assault on Rafah, where over a million displaced civilians had been herded, would cross a red line. Israel crossed it anyway.

Rafah was invaded, bombed and destroyed, the population driven into new killing zones, tens of thousands more civilians were killed or displaced. There were no consequences, no aid suspensions, no arms cut-offs and no diplomatic rupture. The United States continued to arm Israel and shield it at the United Nations exactly as before.

The Rafah episode revealed what the earlier record had already shown: red lines were never real, they were rhetorical devices for Western audiences, not operational limits for Israel. The real policy, articulated by Kirby, confirmed by Axios, admitted by Blinken and captured by Haaretz, was that Israel was free to do whatever it deemed necessary while Washington managed the optics.

That is why the Haaretz article was so dangerous. It fixed responsibility in time and showed definitively that in the decisive first days, when bombing doctrines, target rules and civilian thresholds were being set, the US Secretary of State did not urge restraint; he urged the opposite. So the record had to be erased, not because it was wrong, but because it was too accurate.

Governments repeated the same phrases as the body count rose. The United States vetoed ceasefire resolutions at the Security Council, Britain abstained. Europe hedged

behind the vocabulary of "humanitarian pauses"; diplomats performed empathy while warehouses of flour, anaesthetics and baby formula idled at sealed crossings.

The language of concern hardened into a ritual of avoidance. Nothing changed on the ground except the amount of misery and the number of graves. The broadcast of suffering became the mirror of a global moral failure. Viewers learned to read the rhythm of explosions and to count the beats between them. Some turned off the feed to sleep, while others refused to look away, convinced that bearing witness was the only agency left.

Therapists coined new vocabulary - vicarious trauma through real-time witness - but many of the afflicted used an older word for it: conscience.

In early 2024, a moment of administrative minutiae revealed how information becomes policy. On 22 January, the BBC News website altered a standard line about 7 October to read: " Hamas gunmen took about 250 people hostage and killed 1,300 others ... **Israeli authorities say.**" Three words - long fought for in complaints and correspondence - marked a small but critical shift from recital to attribution.

The same week, the corporation's complaints team reaffirmed its commitment to "accuracy, impartiality and comprehensive information," even as Israeli authorities publicly rejected calls to investigate friendly fire or to tally how many Israelis had died by its own hand.

## Fracture in the Mirror

Inside Western newsrooms, the pressure told. Reporters walked out or staged on-air revolts, declaring that the old ideal of balance had curdled into complicity. Veteran correspondents compared the silence over Gaza to the moral collapse around the 1994 Rwanda coverage. Producers whispered about "editorial guidance" from embassies and advertisers threatened to walk. The crisis of journalism had become visible to its own practitioners.

The language war was not abstract. Within days of 7 October, senior Israeli officials met editors in London to insist on their use of the word "hostages" rather than prisoners of war; "terror tunnels" rather than contested evidence; "self-defence" rather than reprisal; "deconfliction" rather than shelled aid convoys. Style guides quietly shifted.

A newsroom becomes a battlefield when words decide who is protected by law. To call captured, occupying soldiers "hostages" is not a semantic quibble; it withdraws Geneva protections and primes an audience to accept lethal rescue doctrines like Hannibal and the inevitable deaths of captives under friendly fire.

Nearly two years later, even as Israeli survivors and officials acknowledged friendly-fire incidents and orders such as "No vehicle returns to Gaza," broadcasters such as the BBC could still not answer follow-up queries from license-fee paying viewers: "We have no reliable evidence about any deaths from friendly fire incidents," one such response said.

Meanwhile, Israel itself revised its early casualty totals and the military composition of those killed became clearer; the record thickened but the hedges in copy did not.

## The Corporation Cracks

By November 2025, the BBC faced a reckoning that had been building since the first missiles fell on Gaza. Director General Tim Davie and CEO of BBC News Deborah Turness resigned within days of each other; not because the corporation had finally told the truth about Gaza, but because, among other allegations by US President Donald Trump, it was accused of telling too much.

But the accusations revealed something darker than bias. They exposed a machine designed to perform neutrality while systematically privileging power. The BBC had not failed because it strayed from impartiality, it had failed because impartiality, as practised, was itself a form of erasure.

For decades, the BBC's authority rested on a myth: that balance equals truth. The claim went unchallenged because the institution was taken for granted. Neutrality did not need to be earned; it only needed to be declared, but that assumption died very publicly in Gaza. The pattern was methodical. During the Corbyn years, the BBC had refined a technique: perform impartiality while selecting guests, questions and framing devices that rendered one conclusion inevitable. Dissent was not silenced, it was made to seem unserious.

The structure repeated in Gaza... Israel's assault on the besieged strip became "a conflict", starvation as policy became "a humanitarian crisis", occupation became "disputed territory." Euphemism replaced clarity, balance replaced fact and concern replaced identification.

## **Numbers Don't Lie**

The Centre for Media Monitoring analysed 35,000 pieces of BBC content from the first year of the war: what they found was not bias by accident, but by design.

Israeli deaths received 33 times more coverage per fatality despite 34 times more Palestinians being killed. Emotive language like "massacre" appeared 18 times more often for Israelis while Israeli victims were humanised with terms like "daughter" or "grandfather" four times more frequently than Palestinians.

The language gap extended to the most loaded terms. The word "murder" appeared 220 times in reference to Israeli victims and just once for Palestinians. Israeli perspectives were platformed eleven times more often than Palestinian ones, a disparity that could not be explained by resource limitations or news cycles.

The BBC interviewed 2,350 Israelis versus 1,085 Palestinians. When presenters offered "the Israeli perspective," it happened 2,340 times. "The Palestinian perspective" appeared 217 times.

Israeli lives had been given 33 times more narrative space than Palestinian ones. The BBC's problem was not inflating numbers, it was minimising them.

## **Revolt Inside the Walls**

Whistleblowers cited a defining moment from an editorial meeting in late 2023. Deborah Turness, then CEO of BBC News, told the room: "We've got to all remember that this all started on October 7." Liliane Landor, head of the World

Service, replied calmly: "No, that's not the case, and I'm sure that's not how you meant to phrase it."

That exchange became emblematic. The BBC's default position was to start the clock on 7 October, erase decades of occupation and strip Palestinians of historical context. The institution did not need to be instructed; the reflex was structural.

Some coverage was so egregious that public outrage forced retroactive correction. In July 2024, the BBC published a story headlined "The lonely death of Gaza man with Down's syndrome." It described Muhammed Bhar, 24, who had been attacked by an Israeli army dog, locked in a room and left to die. His family had been expelled from their home and returned to his decomposing body. Readers had to scroll 500 words to learn what had happened to him.

Under pressure, the headline changed: "Gaza man with Down's syndrome attacked by Israel Defence Forces dog and left to die, mother tells BBC." One journalist asked: "If this story isn't the moral line, then what is?"

A separate analysis by Dana Najjar and Jan Lietava found that spikes in BBC mentions of Palestinian deaths corresponded not to massacres in Gaza but to incidents where Westerners were also killed. When Israel bombed a World Central Kitchen convoy in April 2024 - killing several Western aid workers and their Palestinian driver, Saifeddin Abutaha - coverage surged. "It took Western deaths," the report concluded, "for Palestinian life to really matter."

## The Architecture of Silence

Whistleblowers also named Raffi Berg, the BBC's online Middle East editor, reportedly describing his approach as "death by a thousand cuts." Per multiple staffers interviewed by journalist Owen Jones in December 2024, Berg softened headlines and images that cast Israel negatively, foregrounded Israeli perspectives and systematically minimised Palestinian ones.

Berg had previously attended a pro-Israel rally and authored a book lauding operations by the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, describing a senior commander as a "legend" and a "very close friend." The book's launch was attended by Former Israeli Ambassador to the United Kingdom Mark Regev and other Israeli officials. A copy, he wrote, sat on Benjamin Netanyahu's bookshelf.

In November 2025, Berg filed High Court defamation proceedings against Jones over the whistleblower report. Berg instructed a solicitor who had previously served as director of UK Lawyers for Israel. The BBC defended him, stating all staff "must adhere to editorial guidelines," but whistleblowers said complaints were dismissed as "emotional issues" or attributed to "Muslim staff being too close to the story."

The decision to litigate rather than address the substance of internal concerns became part of the pattern itself. What whistleblowers described as institutional bias was now being defended through legal intimidation; a response that threatened to chill reporting on editorial practices at one of the world's most influential news organisations.

## Political Capture

The BBC's crisis was not separate from politics, it was entwined with them. Figures like Sir Robbie Gibb - brother of a Conservative minister, former BBC editor turned government spokesperson - had blurred the boundary between journalism and partisan interest. Journalist Emily Maitlis once called him "an active agent of the Conservative Party."

In 2020, Gibb helped lead a bid to buy The Jewish Chronicle, a newspaper that, according to an open letter signed by more than 400 BBC staffers and media figures criticizing his role on the BBC board, had "acted as a zealous cheerleader for the Israeli state." Inside the BBC, whistleblowers said Gibb and his allies shaped coverage standards, discouraging criticism of Israel while enforcing harsh "impartiality" rules on those who raised human rights concerns.

The pro-Israel lobby outside the BBC celebrated Davie's and Turness's resignations, claiming victory against "anti-Israel bias." The claim defied all available data, but it revealed the deeper truth: the accusation of bias had become a weapon to enforce silence.

The BBC's failures in Gaza were not lapses, they were design features. A state-funded institution bound to neutrality as a condition of legitimacy cannot name state violence plainly without risking its own survival, and so, when genocide unfolded, the BBC called it "a conflict." When starvation became policy, they called it "a crisis." When occupation defined reality, they called it "disputed."

The performance of neutrality had destroyed the BBC's authority. The public no longer needed a single

broadcaster to define reality. They could watch events live, access original documents and compare narratives across independent outlets. "This is one of the great journalistic crimes of our age," reporter Owen Jones concluded. "Palestine is the big moral test. You either passed it or you flunked it, and most of them flunked."

The BBC did not lose trust because the public became cynical, it lost trust because the public became observant. By late 2025, the building still stood, the broadcasts continued, but the authority was gone. The BBC no longer defined the truth, the audience did; and that audience no longer mistook neutrality for morality or silence for professionalism. What remained was a broadcaster that had sacrificed its purpose to preserve its structure, and in Gaza's unrelenting glare, that sacrifice had become visible to all.

The scale of the institutional failure was panoramic. The BBC's charter had bound it to neutrality as a condition of state legitimacy, but that same condition made honest reporting structurally impossible. A broadcaster funded by government cannot name government-backed violence without implicating itself; the mechanism of accountability becomes the mechanism of complicity.

This structural bind was older than Gaza. It had shaped coverage of Iraq, of Libya, of Yemen: conflicts where British policy enabled atrocity while British media treated that enabling as unavoidable context rather than conscious choice. Gaza simply made the pattern impossible to ignore. The death toll was too high, the documentation too complete, the contradictions too stark. BBC staff knew it: many had watched colleagues leave or burn out. Some

stayed and leaked, while others stayed silent and carried the moral weight alone.

One journalist there said: "You come into work and you know what you're being asked to do. You know the language is wrong. You know the framing erases half the story, and you do it anyway, because the alternative is being branded difficult, emotional, compromised."

By the time Davie and Turness left, the institution they had led was unrecognisable from the one they had inherited. The BBC's credibility, built over generations, had been sacrificed to protect access and avoid political discomfort. What remained was a broadcaster that could report facts but not their meaning, document atrocities but not their causes, count the dead but not name the killers.

Outside the BBC, audiences were drawing their own conclusions. Viewership for flagship news programmes declined month after month. Younger audiences had already migrated to independent platforms where journalists did not hedge genocide behind the language of diplomacy. Older viewers, who had trusted the BBC out of habit, began to notice the absences: the stories not told, the questions not asked, the historical context never provided.

The institution's defenders argued that all media faced impossible choices in covering Gaza, that no broadcaster could satisfy every critic, that accusations of bias came from all sides and therefore proved neutrality, but that defence mistook criticism for evidence of balance. The issue was not that the BBC pleased no-one; the issue was that it had abandoned the pursuit of truth in favour of the appearance of fairness, and the two were not the same.

Proposals circulated within the corporation for how to rebuild trust: more transparency in editorial decisions, clearer labelling of contested claims, proportional representation of affected voices, but the proposals avoided the core problem. The BBC could not report honestly on Gaza while remaining dependent on the state that enabled Gaza's destruction. The contradiction was not solvable through reform, it was structural. What Gaza exposed was not a failure of individuals but a failure of the model itself. A public broadcaster in a state complicit in atrocity cannot hold that state accountable without threatening its own existence.

The BBC's crisis was not unique, it was exemplary, and as long as the model remained unchanged, so would the outcome.

### **The Films That Told the Truth**

This pattern of institutional bias, censorship and silence had faced opposition from individual truth-tellers even before the advent of social media and independent news channels. There had been Westerners who swam hard against the tide, who went to Palestine themselves, listened to the people living the reality and returned with testimonies that Western power immediately tried to bury.

When English actress Vanessa Redgrave released her 1977 documentary *The Palestinian*, she ruptured the boundaries of acceptable Western discourse. Palestinians were to be shown as either passive victims or faceless threats, never as political agents with a history, a grievance or a right to resist. Redgrave refused that script entirely.

The most controversial element was not her footage of refugee camps or guerrilla units. It was the way she allowed Palestinian fighters and civilians to speak in their own terms as political agents shaped by dispossession, not caricatured extremists conjured by Western imagination. The film insisted on something simple but forbidden: that Palestinians were part of history, not intruders in it.

One of the most haunting scenes captures this truth with devastating clarity. Over grainy images that resemble the flattened modern remnants of Khan Younis - differing only in the film stock's loss of colour, washed out over time - a Palestinian man being interviewed by Redgrave suddenly breaks into song. Immediately, the women seated around him bury their heads in their hands, as if the memory he summons is too painful to confront.

He sings: "I was there from the first bullet to the last bomb. The worse it became, the more our heroes fought. I tell the truth and need no witness. One day 20,000 bombs on civilians and fighters alike, the next day 15,000 bombs. Smoke and flame rising. We had no water and food ran out. Children were thirsty and cried: Where is my father, where is my brother?"

The resonance is staggering. The Gaza of the 1970s is the Gaza of the 2020s. The same siege, the same displacement and the same forced starvation. The same asymmetrical war of superpower jets, tanks, bulldozers and artillery against indigenous civilians trapped in a sealed enclave... like shooting fish in a barrel. The 'fish' remain, as they were then, of course, largely innocent women and children: people who should have had their whole lives ahead of them.

Yet the Western narrative insists that the story began on 7 October 2023 ... that an "unprecedented" Hamas attack shattered an otherwise peaceful status quo. Redgrave's film proves, as today's footage reproves, that there was never a peace to shatter. There was only an illegal occupation most of the West refused to see and a people forced to survive beneath it.

If Redgrave broke the narrative from the stage and the set, the legendary American director Oliver Stone broke it from the battlefield. Stone served in Vietnam, was twice wounded and decorated for gallantry. He emerged from the war understanding the psychology of occupation - and the moral logic of resistance - at a level most Western commentators never come close to reaching.

That is why 2003's *Persona Non Grata* remains one of the most subversive documentaries ever broadcast in the United States. Filmed during the Second Intifada for HBO's *America Undercover* series, Stone crossed checkpoints, interviewed fighters, challenged Israeli officials and spoke directly - unmediated - to the Palestinians whom Western politicians preferred to define from afar.

One moment stands out. Stone sits with a young member of a Fatah-aligned brigade. The man is calm, composed, speaking perfect English: "Firstly, we consider ourselves Palestinian freedom fighters... and we take our orders from the Israelis," he says.

Stone, visibly startled, repeats the phrase: "You take your orders from the Israelis?"

The fighter clarifies: "Yes. When they do something to Palestinians, it becomes an order for us to defend ourselves

and respond against this. What do you expect us to do, while they are killing us and arresting us and taking our land and destroying our people? We must respond. What would you do?"

Stone - who had once fought on the occupying side of a war - answers quietly, "Probably the same as you."

The director then asks the question Western leaders deploy as a rhetorical shield: "Does Israel have a right to exist?" The fighter replies without hesitation: "Yes, if Palestine has a right to co-exist. We are fighting only against occupation."

It is a statement so coherent, so reasonable and so morally legible that Western politicians cannot allow it to enter mainstream discourse.

Taken together, *The Palestinian* and *Persona Non Grata* form a suppressed archive of Palestinians explaining themselves too clearly for Western governments to tolerate. Both works were targeted: Redgrave was professionally punished and smeared while Stone's documentary was quietly buried in HBO's catalogue, seldom rebroadcast.

Why? Because these films exposed what Western governments rely on keeping hidden: that Palestinian resistance is political, not pathological; that anti-colonial self-defence is predictable, not mysterious; that occupation is the origin point of the conflict - not religion, not ideology, not culture. These truths were not dangerous because they were radical, they were dangerous because they were obvious.

The pattern is unmistakable: the West almost never speaks with the oppressed. It speaks about them from podiums,

from studios, from think tanks. It constructs entire moral hierarchies without ever standing where Palestinians stand, walking where they walk or witnessing what they witness.

This is why the testimonies captured by Redgrave and Stone feel so explosive. They were Westerners who did the one thing Western governments and media institutions could not control: they looked directly at Palestinians and listened... and once you hear Palestinians speak for themselves, the official narrative collapses. Once you see the occupation with your own eyes, the language of "self-defence" evaporates, once you recognise the humanity of the oppressed, the propaganda of the powerful loses its grip.

Today, as Gaza forces a reckoning with decades of disinformation, these films no longer read as radical artefacts. They read as early warnings, ignored because acknowledging them would have required the West to confront its own role in sustaining a structure of domination. They told the truth before the rest of the world was ready to hear it.

But it wasn't only Westerners who contributed to this spurring of interest in generations before, alongside and after, for the Palestinian cause. Palestinians themselves, finding themselves exiled abroad, brought their own stories to anyone who was receptive to listen to them, providing premonitions that the world largely ignored.

Edward Said was a Palestinian and American academic who studied at Harvard and became a professor of literature at New York's Columbia University. An intellectual contemporary of Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky, whose works and prominence all overlapped, he produced

the film *The Shadow of the West* in 1983 focusing on the plight of his people.

"All Arab countries gained independence. All except Palestine," Said narrated. "For the Jews who settled in Palestine and founded the state of Israel, the land is theirs. For the Palestinian Arabs dispossessed... it is theirs, also. In any case, my birthplace is now inaccessible to me." His frustrations were evident: "Frankly, I spend a great deal of my time being angry... we are never described in ways that do not offend us. For us as Palestinians, obviously we have a greater challenge... this society is hostile to our history, our reality and our aspirations."

Then came the omen that would prove devastatingly accurate: "It is the very presence and survival of the Palestinian people that persistently trouble Israel. Surely the humiliation, anger and resistance will mount, even as daily life appears to proceed normally," he said. Decades before 7 October, the trajectory had been mapped by those with eyes to see.

What united Redgrave, Stone and Said was not ideology but method: each crossed a boundary Western institutions policed obsessively. They allowed Palestinians to speak as historical actors rather than as problems to be managed. That breach was never forgiven... Careers were damaged, broadcasts buried and reputations quietly re-written. Yet what those figures could only do intermittently, under conditions of access and privilege, Palestinians in Gaza would eventually do themselves, under bombardment, without permission and with no expectation of protection.

What emerged from Gaza during the first year of its destruction was not simply more footage, but a radical

inversion of authorship. Cinema made by people filming their own erasure as it unfolded.

### **From Ground Zero: Cinema Under Extermination**

In 2024, amid the devastation of Gaza's first year under Israel's unrelenting decimation, a group of Palestinian filmmakers living inside the Strip produced *From Ground Zero*, an anthology of twenty-two short films created during a genocide.

Conceived and co-ordinated by Palestinian director Rashid Masharawi, the project spans documentary, fiction, animation and experimental form. What unites the films is not genre but condition: they are testimonies made from within a sealed, bombarded enclave, by people who knew they might not survive to see their work shown.

Unlike the thousands of hours of phone footage circulating on social media, *From Ground Zero* is shot with professional-grade equipment, giving Gaza an unsettling cinematic clarity. Beaches, evening light and open skies appear with striking beauty, heightening rather than softening the violence that intrudes upon them. Destruction rendered in high definition does not aestheticize suffering, it makes it harder to dismiss. Gaza appears not as an abstraction or a data set, but as a lived place being erased in real time.

The films are intimate, restrained and devastating... A heartbroken young man mourns the sudden annihilation of his lover. Another, displaced and homeless, sleeps inside a body bag on stone flooring waiting for the day it becomes his final resting place. A young woman speaks of how her delight in her own beauty and in the world around her has been

replaced by never-ending terror and apocalypse in every direction. In one of the most harrowing segments, director Alaa Damo recounts the story of another young man, Musab, who was buried alive three times in three airstrikes within 24 hours. There is no commentary, no narration and no appeal to sympathy... It is striking proof, as if it were needed, that under all of those American 2,000lb bunker-buster bombs was a civilian population with nowhere to flee and no time to recover from attack.

The project received international backing and was executive-produced by American documentarian Michael Moore, who framed the films not as art objects but as moral necessity. He argued that no filmmaker, writer or artist should ever have to tell the story of their own extermination, describing *From Ground Zero* as both "a human and cinematic miracle": testimony and indictment at once. The films do not merely document Gaza, they expose the global system that allowed such documentation to become necessary.

Yet even this act of authorship met institutional resistance. *From Ground Zero* was removed from the official programme of the Cannes Film Festival by its leadership, a decision that stood in sharp contrast to Cannes' long tradition of honouring films confronting state violence, colonial war and atrocity. Films about other conflicts - from *The Battle of Algiers* to *Apocalypse Now* - have been celebrated for their willingness to confront the violence of their times. Palestinian cinema, produced during an unfolding catastrophe was conversely deemed too politically dangerous.

In response, Masharawi organised an alternative screening near the festival grounds, ensuring the films were shown regardless: their exclusion became part of their meaning. Even Palestinians filming their own destruction, in a war broadcast daily to the world, could still be denied full institutional recognition.

### **Who's Allowed a Memory? Cinema, Power, Asymmetry**

The suppression of Palestinian cinema is not accidental, nor is it the result of insufficient evidence or artistic immaturity, it is structural.

The Holocaust against Jews during the Second World War is one of the most extensively-filmed events in human history. Hundreds of feature films, documentaries and television series have been produced across Europe, the United States and Israel, supported by public funding, guaranteed distribution, festival prestige and educational mandates. This vast cinematic archive was enabled by Allied victory, the defeat of the perpetrators, the creation of state-backed memory institutions and a post-war moral consensus that framed Nazism as an unambiguous historical evil. Holocaust cinema benefits from legal protection, cultural reverence and infrastructural permanence without historical parallel.

By contrast, the Palestinian catastrophe - despite involving mass civilian death, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement, starvation, siege and collective punishment - has generated only a fraction of that cinematic record. This is not because the crimes are undocumented, nor because the history is unclear; it is because Palestinians have never enjoyed victory, sovereignty or control over the institutions that manufacture memory. Funding is restricted, distribution is blocked, festivals are pressured, broadcasters hesitate

and artists are punished... The same cultural systems that once enabled Holocaust remembrance to saturate global consciousness now function as gatekeepers against Palestinian testimony.

This asymmetry reveals something fundamental: Cinema is not merely an art form, it is a political infrastructure. Some histories are curated, archived and endlessly revisited while others are contested, delayed or denied until their witnesses are dead. *From Ground Zero* exists inside that imbalance: as cinema produced without the protections that make the medium durable. Its makers filmed knowing their work could be buried, dismissed or lost along with them; that alone marks it as one of the most ethically-significant film projects of the modern era.

### **Streets of Conscience**

While governments equivocated and traditional media became mouthpieces for Israel, outraged citizens from all walks of life filled the void. Bedroom broadcasters who found themselves with network-level audiences overnight, and working people with no interest in creating their own social media channels alike did what came naturally to them when they feel their leaders are either acting against their base instincts or ignoring them: they took to the streets. From Johannesburg to São Paulo, Jakarta to Dublin, millions upon millions of consciences marched.

In London, a national demonstration on 17 February 2024 drew over 250,000 people despite attempts to corral and delay the route. Police forced the march to halt several hundred metres from the Israeli embassy. The following day, broadcast headlines reduced the crowd to "tens of thousands" and dwelt on a handful of detentions - a line

that protesters recognised instantly: magnify arrests, bury the attendance.

Placards were handmade and moral rather than partisan: 'STOP the genocide', 'Ceasefire NOW'. Jewish anti-occupation blocs marched beside Muslim youth groups; nurses in scrubs walked alongside teachers, bus drivers and poets.

Across Europe and the Americas, students revived the language of boycott and divestment last heard at scale during the struggle against South African apartheid. University senates debated research funding tied to arms manufacturers and law faculties held teach-ins on collective punishment.

In some campuses, art schools painted studio doors red in mourning; medical students organised drives for trauma supplies. The protests were less about ideology than about rescuing meaning... when law fails, language becomes a form of resistance.

### **The Digital Uprising**

On social media, an awakening unfolded in real time. Students, doctors, delivery drivers, teachers - the informal civil service of the internet - translated Arabic testimonies into English, Spanish, Bahasa and Urdu, and posted them in threads that walked across time zones.

Each story became a node in a spontaneous archive of solidarity. Algorithms throttled the reach; users learned to outwit the filters. They posted mosaics of censored pictures, encoded captions and sonnets that slipped past content

moderation. A new digital commons emerged: horizontal, decentralised, stubbornly humane.

When platforms shadowbanned words like "Gaza," users wrote "G4Z4." When hashtags were suppressed, they embedded coordinates in imagery. Artists from Chile to Malaysia turned timelines into galleries of mourning: a child's plastic sandal rendered in pixel art, a mother's lullaby sampled into an electronic beat, the wailing of ambulance sirens stitched into protest anthems. Censorship minted a generation fluent in codes of witness.

Citizen analysts verified video coming out of Gaza by the angle of sunlight, the length of shadows, the time-stamps of car alarms. Open-source investigators mapped bomb craters to known munitions and traced convoy routes that had been "cleared" and then attacked. Human-rights lawyers harvested the data for future tribunals.

For the first time in the history of atrocity, the evidence was co-authored by millions. Denial - once a plausible political art - began to look ridiculous. The pattern would intensify: by mid-2025, as regional conflict widened, Israel's own citizens became unwitting archivists of a different truth.

When retaliatory Iranian missiles struck Israeli territory in June, the Home Front Command and IDF Spokesperson's Unit issued direct orders to civilians and the press: Do not film or post images of damage, missile impacts, casualties, or destruction. Public compliance was framed as a matter of "national security." The directive was explicit: "Publishing crash site locations constitutes assistance to the enemy."

But Israeli civilians defied the order. Videos appeared on Telegram and encrypted platforms within hours

showing devastating footage the state did not want seen, simultaneously allowing Iran to verify they had hit their mark. Massive explosions rocked Tel Aviv's business district. Iron Dome batteries, long marketed as near-infallible, failed to intercept incoming missiles. Entire buildings burned; partial collapses sent residents fleeing into metro stations for hours while sirens screamed through the night as emergency crews worked under media blackout.

Residents caught documenting the strikes faced arrest for aiding the enemy. Entire cities, including Haifa, were placed under sweeping news embargoes. The questions multiplied: What was being hidden... Damage to refineries? Port infrastructure? The myth of invincibility?

The censorship revealed the architecture of narrative control in its starkest form. For months, Israeli authorities had shaped global coverage of Gaza by managing access, framing language and restricting journalist movement. Now, facing attacks on their own soil, the same apparatus turned inward. The state that had demanded the world see 7 October its way, now criminalised its own citizens for filming what fell from the sky after it. It was information war as policy, and it operated on all fronts simultaneously: against Palestinians, against international media and ultimately against its own population when reality contradicted the preferred narrative.

The footage that escaped told a story officials could not. Israel's icon of technological supremacy and diplomatic sales pitch had failed to protect it. Iran's strikes were precise and the damage was real. The citizens uploading shaky mobile phone videos to encrypted channels were not enemies of the state, they were witnesses to it. Censorship,

once again, minted its own resistance... When the state forbids seeing, seeing becomes an act of defiance.

### **International Institutions and the Collapse of Credibility**

Among foreign agencies operating on the ground in Gaza, the dissonance was deafening.

On 23 February 2024, aid officials warned that over 100,000 Gazans had been killed or maimed in the first five months: not a precise tally, but a composite of verified deaths plus conservative estimates buried under rubble. The World Health Organisation's director warned that Gaza had become a "death zone."

Analysts noted Israel was dropping bombs four times heavier than those used against ISIS in Iraq, with munitions experts calling it the heaviest bombing campaign since the Vietnam War. Rebuilding costs were put at £20 billion by the first quarter of the year. Convoys were routinely blocked and bakeries and water desalination plants, targeted and destroyed. Israel's COGAT - the unit that controls Gaza's borders - restricted food and medicine to a trickle... in the North, a handful of aid distributions turned into "flour massacres."

A British airdrop, routed via a Jordanian Air Force plane to Tal Al-Hawa Hospital, was trumpeted as proof of generosity even as ground access was denied, but the pageantry did nothing to feed people. When humanitarian organisations published casualty data showing that over half of the dead were women and children, television panels questioned the accuracy of the spreadsheets rather than the killing.

In Geneva, exhausted UN officials briefed journalists on the brink of tears. One said: "We are documenting crimes faster than the world can read." In New York, Security Council speeches sounded like they were written for history, then suffocated by vetoes written for headlines. These were not rogue remarks, they were policy spoken aloud.

### **The Global South Rises**

Outside the West, public and political outrage led to a hitherto unseen mobilisation. In Latin America, states expelled Israeli ambassadors; in Africa and Asia, parliaments suspended trade and security ties. The contrast with Western silence was surgical. A new moral geography emerged: not East versus West but conscience versus convenience.

In South Africa, the comparison to apartheid was not metaphor but muscle memory. Lawyers who had once fought Pretoria's racial regime now drafted the International Court of Justice genocide case.

Their argument was methodical: the blockade constituted collective punishment; the rhetoric of dehumanisation satisfied intent; the systematic destruction of infrastructure met the threshold of annihilation.

When the court accepted jurisdiction and, in January 2024, ordered Israel to prevent acts that could be construed as genocide and to allow humanitarian aid, a tremor passed through chancelleries. For the first time in decades, a Western-backed state stood inside the dock of history while the bombs were still falling.

In Brazil, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva described Israel's campaign as a war "between a highly prepared army

and women and children," and compared its conduct to the Holocaust, a comparison intended to shock comfortable allies into looking. Malaysia, Turkey and Indonesia framed Gaza not as a distant crisis but as a test of the international order's claim to universality.

### **Art, Memory and Resistance**

Art moved faster than policy... Murals bloomed on city walls from Belfast to Buenos Aires: the map of Gaza overlaid with flowers, a mother's eyes staring from cracked plaster, the silhouette of a water tower next to a child's outline traced in chalk.

Poets wrote elegies for children they had never met, musicians staged rooftop concerts streamed to refugee camps and film students cut documentaries from open-source footage and eyewitness audio, inventing new languages of mourning.

In Ramallah, a gallery hung nothing but mirrors etched with the names of the dead; visitors saw themselves reflected among the lost. In Berlin, a collective projected lists of destroyed schools onto embassy walls. In Los Angeles, an orchestra performed Mahler's Kindertotenlieder interspersed with the reading of Gazan children's names. In Dublin, a choir sang the liturgy of the dead in Arabic phonetics learned phonetically overnight.

A heartbreaking art installation in Doha, Qatar featured over 15,000 teddy bear sculptures, each representing a child killed in the Gaza conflict. In "Echo of Lost Innocence" by artist Bachir Mohamad, the toys wore black T-shirts with the message "I'm not just a number... I am Palestine" to humanise the vast loss of young life. The exhibit was shown

in September 2024 and aimed to draw global attention to the humanitarian crisis affecting Palestinian children. After the display, the teddy bears were sold to raise funds, with 100% of proceeds donated to aid children in Gaza through charities.

Each creative act was a refusal of amnesia, and an expression of solidarity amidst a general feeling of helplessness by many people that they couldn't do anything else stop the killing. Reaction to such displays often provoked censorship however, and municipalities cancelled exhibitions under pressure from donors. Publishers withdrew anthologies that included Palestinian poets... A museum that commissioned a series on "siege" declined to display the work because the wall text used the word "starvation."

Yet, suppression amplified the work. Banned readings moved online and cancelled concerts became viral events. The attempt to suppress art mirrored the attempt to silence Gaza, and failed for the same reason: too many witnesses.

### **A Calendar of Complicity**

The record does not only consist of bombs, but also memoranda, votes, briefings and the choreography of polite statements...

*A short calendar from the winter and spring:*

26 February 2024 - Aaron Bushnell, a 25-year-old US Air Force cyber specialist, self-immolates outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C., saying he will "no longer be complicit in genocide," and shouting "Free Palestine" as he burns. In December 2023, an unidentified protester self-immolated at the Israeli Consulate in Atlanta.

29 February 2024 - State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller tells reporters: "Israel is a sovereign country that makes its own decisions. The United States does not dictate to Israel," drawing a rejoinder from a journalist: "Unless you invade them."

2 March 2024 - Prime Minister Rishi Sunak delivers a rare address outside No. 10, labelling the capital's vast public street marches as "hate" and promising a new extremism definition. The speech clashes with scenes of interfaith blocs calling for a ceasefire.

5 March 2024 - At the United Nations, Israel expects vindication from a report alleging systematic sexual violence on 7 October. The UN team reports it was unable to interview victims, finds key allegations unfounded or unverifiable and notes counter-allegations of sexual abuse against Palestinians in Israeli custody.

7 March 2024 - In the US Senate, Bernie Sanders says 31,000 Palestinians have been killed and 72,000 wounded; 70 percent of housing units are damaged or destroyed; 1.7 million are displaced; 97 trucks/day (down from 500/day pre-war) are entering; aid convoys are being fired upon. He calls to enforce US law prohibiting aid to countries that obstruct US humanitarian assistance.

April 2024 - Sanders again. "Now 33,000 dead, 77,000 wounded; 165 UN staff, 364 health workers and 132 journalists killed; more than 200 aid workers killed in total". Polls show 52 percent of Americans support halting weapons shipments until Israel stops attacking Gaza; 62 percent of Biden voters agree.

Spring 2024 - Reports count 126 media workers and 500 medics/aid workers killed to date; six-year-old Hind Rajab is killed after calling for help, and the paramedics who came for her are targeted and killed.

Each entry is a small stone, but together they form the cairn of a period when governments chose to turn away.

### **Political Fractures**

By early 2024, public pressure forced visible cracks in Western unity. Spain, Ireland and later Norway moved to recognise Palestine; France and Germany stalled. In Britain, Parliament endured weekly protests at its gates. Ministers spoke of "restraint" even as new export licences were stamped.

Within the Foreign Office, anonymous letters condemned complicity. Leaked legal advice warned ministers that continuing arms sales risked breaching international humanitarian law. The mechanisms of state morality began to grind on its own contradictions.

In Washington, congressional hearings turned rancorous. Officials faced satellite images of mass graves and maps of bombed hospitals. Some representatives invoked the Leahy Law to suspend military aid; others accused them of treason. The fault line was generational: younger politicians shaped by social media and protest culture confronted elders riveted to Cold War reflexes. America's self-image as moral arbiter fractured live on C-SPAN.

Across the Atlantic, the UK Ministry of Defence admitted RAF drones were flying over Gaza and that intelligence was shared with Israel. Press reports documented "ghost flights"

ferrying undisclosed cargo from Glasgow, Birmingham, Suffolk, and Oxfordshire to Israel, even as ministers insisted Britain was not assisting offensive operations.

A rare D-notice asked the press not to report on SAS UK special forces deployments. The circle squared itself: "We are not involved; we are helping."

### **The Psychology of Helplessness**

The psychological toll rippled far beyond the region. Viewers reported insomnia, despair and a paralysis that felt physical. Surveys across Europe found spikes in anxiety linked directly to war coverage. Teachers said children were drawing drones and craters; parents asked schools to "shield" lessons; teenagers taught their grandparents how to verify videos.

The ethics of viewing - how much, how often, and to what end - became dinner-table law, yet many refused to look away, believing witnessing itself was an ethical act. To turn off the feed felt like betrayal.

Clergy reframed viewing as vigil. Churches and mosques set up screens beside candles; congregants watched in silence, not quite an audience and not exactly a congregation, something in-between. The digital age created a new sacrament: the shared act of seeing.

### **The Machinery of Complicity**

All the while, the bombs continued. Western leaders mouthed condolences while approving new shipments of precision munitions. Each condolence statement became a preface to escalation. This was the grammar of modern power: empathy expressed, atrocity enabled...

Press conferences mourned the dead in the morning and approved the weapons that would replace them by afternoon.

Emails released under parliamentary pressure revealed co-ordination between defence contractors and ministries during the height of civilian bombardment. Lobbyists framed continued supply as "stabilising influence" where in truth, the contracts stabilised profit. A Whitehall aide summarised the logic in a memo: "Strategic relationship outweighs reputational risk," a sentence that could serve as the epitaph of an era.

The United States, Israel's principal armourer, had provided \$158 billion in military aid since 1948, with new tranches rushed through even as President Biden called the bombing "indiscriminate." The contradiction was not rhetorical, it was policy.

The Foreign Assistance Act forbids aid to any country that blocks US humanitarian assistance; still, convoys were denied, aid workers killed and still the money flowed. As Sanders put it, the absurdity was not procedural: an ally was using US weapons to block US aid.

### **Law, Language and the Evidence of Children**

Among lawyers, the case assembled itself like a grim equation: intent stated, group named, acts designed to destroy the group in whole or in part. Among the public, the threshold was lower: the admission that what we were seeing was not a glitch but a system.

A paediatrician described neonates losing weight in incubators that had no power. Another said: "Bombs struck

not only buildings, but chromosomes." A people starved; a generation maimed; a future chemically altered: history has a word for that. Refusing to use it does not save a single life, it saves only the conscience of those who refuse.

By early April 2024, Gaza had entered a condition of managed ruin. Even on what were described as "good days," the daily average of aid trucks hovered around 97 - barely a fifth of the pre-war flow of roughly 500 - dropping to zero whenever crossings were closed, and rising only briefly to around 180 before being throttled again. Tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians lay wounded, many beyond the reach of functioning hospitals, as displacement, hunger, and untreated injury became permanent features of daily life rather than emergency conditions.

The numbers are not the story, but they delimit the lie: the claim that what was happening in Gaza was either accidental, temporary or being meaningfully alleviated.

### **A New Moral Cartography**

Within weeks, the pattern was impossible to deny... the governments of the West had turned away, but their peoples had not.

Underneath official indifference, a quiet realignment took shape: alliances of climate activists, racial-justice movements and anti-war networks finding a shared language in solidarity with Gaza.

Boycotts spread, university unions severed ties with weapons manufacturers, municipal councils voted to suspend contracts with firms linked to the occupation and

faith leaders called for arms embargoes. Even investors whispered about "ethical exposure."

These were not sudden revolutions but the slow tectonics of conscience. In cafés and classrooms, the conversation changed. Gaza became shorthand for the failure of the post-war order and proof that international law without enforcement is theatre; that democracy without empathy is machinery.

A generation raised on endless war now saw, in high definition, the architecture of impunity, and they began to map its dismantling.

### **The Age of Witness**

By the first anniversary of the assault, Gaza had become the moral event of a lifetime. For millions it was the moment the abstract vocabulary of "rights" became tactile: a father's scream, a convoy halted, a child's name. It showed that atrocity can unfold in full view and still continue and that watching alone is not enough; yet the watching changed the watchers.

Students who once doomscrolled in apathy built mutual-aid networks, doctors volunteered for border missions, programmers coded databases of destroyed schools and artists painted in the colours of dust.

The transformation was quiet but irreversible. The line between witness and participant blurred; out of that blur a new politics began to take shape. History may record two simultaneous wars: one fought with bombs over Gaza; another fought with truth across the world... the second will decide whether the first ever truly ends.

For if the law fails and language fails and leaders fail, the archive remains: videos and affidavits; aid-convoy logs and border denials; ministerial quotes and parliamentary votes; a diary of famine and a calendar of choice. Perhaps it cannot compel justice, but it can abolish alibis.

Long after today's ministers are footnotes, the witnesses - the marchers, the translators, the medics, the stubborn archivists - will remain as authors of a memory that refuses to be managed. That archive of witness was about to become something more: evidence in the most comprehensive legal challenge to Western-backed impunity in modern history.

## CHAPTER 6

### *The Legal Reckoning*

*On 4 January 2026, one of the senior figures standing between Benjamin Netanyahu and a legal reckoning was suddenly gone.*

That evening, Judge Benny Sagi, President of the Be'er Sheva District Court, was killed while riding his motorcycle on Highway 6 in southern Israel when a vehicle driving off-road entered the highway and struck him. Paramedics from Magen David Adom arrived to find catastrophic injuries and no signs of life, he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Fifty-four-year-old Sagi spent nearly two decades as a prosecutor and judge, including service in Tel Aviv's magistrate and district courts, before becoming acting president of the Be'er Sheva District Court in 2024 and formally assuming the role in April 2025. Widely-respected for his management of complex cases and for his integrity, colleagues called him the 'biker president' because he commuted by motorcycle. He left behind a wife and three children.

Official tributes poured in. President Isaac Herzog called him one of the finest leaders of the judiciary. Justice Minister Yariv Levin praised his professionalism, but politically his death landed inside a judiciary already under sustained assault by Netanyahu's coalition, which was trying to strip

courts of independence and bring police and prosecutors under political control.

Whether or not foul play is ever proven, the institutional meaning is unavoidable. Netanyahu's corruption trials depend on a judiciary he has spent years trying to neutralise, and one of the senior figures inside that system was now gone.

The law in Israel is no longer simply contested, it is under siege... When the domestic rule of law collapses, international law is no longer an abstraction. It becomes the only remaining lens through which power can be judged. International law is not merely descriptive but predictive: it tells us what genocidal structures look like, and in Gaza every one of those indicators was now in place.

### **Still the world watched...**

As Gaza burned, an unprecedented legal mobilisation began, transforming documentation into prosecution, witness testimony into war crimes charges and social media footage into courtroom evidence.

The transformation of Gaza's devastation into a legal archive represented one of the most significant developments in modern international law. By the summer of 2024, the territory's ruins had become evidence in the most literal sense. Every collapsed school, every destroyed bakery, every child's name recorded by the Ministry of Health existed in a widening web of documentation that spanned continents.

Lawyers, coders and archivists across the globe began treating social media posts as legal exhibits, creating an extraordinary real-time record of alleged genocide. For the

first time in history, mass atrocities were being assembled into a comprehensive case file while the crimes were still unfolding, creating both an evidentiary treasure trove and an urgent moral imperative for the international legal system.

Thousands of fragments – drone footage, intercepted military communications, satellite imagery, GPS data, morgue ledgers – coalesced into a vast evidentiary mosaic that told a story of systematic destruction. Civilian phone cameras became affidavits; timestamps became testimonies; geolocation data became incontrovertible proof. The war was not only visible to the world through media coverage, it was becoming permanently archivable in ways that will haunt the perpetrators for generations.

In law offices from Johannesburg to Geneva, young attorneys worked through the night downloading videos and cross-referencing them with UN grid coordinates to verify time and place. Every clip of a wounded infant, everybody retrieved from under rubble, was logged, mirrored, encrypted and stored in multiple jurisdictions to prevent destruction or tampering. Digital archivists called this massive undertaking "the forensic resistance," recognising that in the digital age, justice itself had become a data structure that could be built even as the bombs continued to fall.

This extraordinary effort would soon be championed by new legal entities.

The Hind Rajab Foundation (HRF), which by 19 March 2025 would be described as part of a "multifaceted approach needed to address war crimes," focused particularly on "humanitarian efforts and victim support," while its partner,

the Global 195 coalition, pursued "legal accountability and prosecution through domestic courts worldwide." Together, they represented a new paradigm of international justice, leveraging what the coalition described as "135 first-hand eyewitness testimonies" to build cases for "private arrest warrants" and legal proceedings across multiple jurisdictions.

Tayab Ali, Director of the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP), explained the strategy: *"For too long, those responsible for serious violations of international law have acted with impunity. Global 195 is a decisive step toward ensuring accountability and justice for the victims in Gaza."* The coalition brought together legal experts, human rights organisations and policymakers from multiple jurisdictions in a bid to pursue justice where international institutions had failed or moved too slowly. The architecture of this new legal resistance was built on the principle of redundancy and decentralisation.

Rather than relying on any single institution or repository, the evidence was scattered across servers in fifteen countries, with mirroring systems ensuring that even if one node was compromised, the archive would survive. This approach recognised that the fight for accountability would be a marathon, not a sprint, and that the evidence needed to be preserved for future generations regardless of immediate political outcomes.

The very existence of this archive represented a radical democratisation of international justice; no longer solely the province of states and international organisations, but something that civil society could build and maintain independently.

## **Genocide as Law: A Framework for Industrial Murder**

Before examining the unprecedented legal mobilisation that followed October 2023, it is essential to establish what genocide actually is under law: not as rhetorical flourish, but as a precise legal charge with specific evidentiary requirements.

The term 'genocide' carries immense moral weight, often deployed loosely to describe any mass atrocity, but in law, genocide has an exact definition, codified in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Understanding this definition – and the evidentiary threshold it demands – is critical to evaluating the claims made against Israel in Gaza.

The Convention was drafted in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, when the international community sought to create a legal framework that would prevent such horrors from ever recurring. Raphael Lemkin, the Polish-Jewish lawyer who coined the term and championed the Convention, understood genocide not merely as mass killing, but as the deliberate destruction of a group's existence: their culture, their identity, their future.

The Convention he helped craft reflects this understanding: genocide is defined not by body count alone, but by intent to destroy a protected group "as such."

### **The Acts and the Element of Intent**

Article II of the Genocide Convention identifies five prohibited acts when committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group":

- (a) Killing members of the group
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

Critically, the Convention requires only one of these five acts to be proven – not all five. A state can be found guilty of genocide by committing any single prohibited act, provided the requisite intent is established. This is often misunderstood in public debate, where genocide is sometimes incorrectly assumed to require systematic killing on a massive scale. In fact, deliberately creating conditions designed to destroy a group – through starvation, disease, or displacement – can constitute genocide even if direct killing is not the primary method.

What distinguishes genocide from other atrocity crimes is the requirement of specific intent, what international law terms ‘*dolus specialis*’, meaning the perpetrator must act with the conscious goal of destroying the protected group, in whole or in part. This intent can be proven through direct evidence (explicit statements of genocidal purpose) or through circumstantial evidence (a systematic pattern of conduct that demonstrates such intent).

The "in whole or in part" qualification is significant. Genocide does not require the extermination of an entire people. The destruction of a substantial portion of the group, whether defined numerically or by the significance of the targeted part, can satisfy the Convention's requirements. Case law from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Court has established that targeting a group within a confined geographic area – such as Srebrenica or, potentially, Gaza – can constitute genocide of that group "in part."

International courts have established that intent need not be explicitly declared.

This principle came from the landmark Akayesu judgment at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Jean-Paul Akayesu was not a battlefield commander but the mayor of a small Rwandan town during the 1994 genocide. He did not need to order mass killing in writing... what convicted him was that Tutsi civilians were hunted, raped and murdered in public spaces under his authority, that he knew it was happening and that he allowed it to continue.

From that pattern of systematic violence, the tribunal ruled, genocidal intent could be inferred. In law, what mattered was not what Akayesu claimed to believe, but what the machinery he controlled was doing.

### **Mapping Evidence to Convention Elements**

By January 2024, when South Africa filed its case at the International Court of Justice, a substantial evidentiary record had accumulated that mapped onto each element of the Genocide Convention.

## **Article II(a): Killing members of the group**

The documented death toll in Gaza provides the most direct evidence. As of March 2025, Gaza's Health Ministry recorded over 50,000 direct deaths, with credible estimates suggesting the true toll – including those buried under rubble and indirect deaths from starvation and disease – exceeds 100,000.

The Lancet medical journal published an analysis estimating that total excess deaths could reach 186,000 when accounting for destruction of healthcare infrastructure, spread of infectious disease and malnutrition-related deaths. But raw numbers alone do not establish genocide; the critical question is whether these deaths resulted from lawful combat operations or from a systematic campaign to destroy Palestinians as a group.

The evidence points overwhelmingly toward the latter: women and children comprised approximately 70 percent of those killed; entire extended families were systematically eliminated in single strikes, including in areas designated as "safe zones"; strikes on residential buildings occurred with such frequency and precision as to suggest systematic targeting rather than collateral damage; the use of 2,000-pound bombs in densely populated civilian areas demonstrated a disregard for civilian life incompatible with the principle of proportionality in armed conflict.

## **Article II(b): Causing serious bodily or mental harm**

This element encompasses both physical injuries and psychological trauma inflicted on the targeted group. Over 100,000 Palestinians were wounded, many with life-altering

injuries including amputations, burns, and traumatic brain injuries.

The deliberate destruction of Gaza's healthcare system meant that many of these injuries could not be adequately treated, resulting in preventable deaths and permanent disabilities.

Médecins Sans Frontières reported conducting amputations without anaesthesia, treating infected wounds with no antibiotics and watching patients die from treatable conditions due to lack of basic medical supplies. The systematic nature of the assault created conditions of persistent terror.

Families were forced to relocate repeatedly; the average Palestinian in Gaza was displaced seven times during the conflict. Children grew up under constant bombardment, with UNICEF reporting that virtually every child in Gaza exhibited signs of severe trauma. The targeting of medical personnel and facilities compounded this harm.

By March 2025, over 500 healthcare workers had been killed and every hospital in northern Gaza had been either destroyed or rendered non-functional. The World Health Organisation documented 136 attacks on healthcare facilities in the first three months alone, often involving direct strikes on ambulances, operating theatres, and intensive care units.

### **Article II(c): Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction**

This is perhaps the most legally significant element in the Gaza case, as it does not require mass killing but rather the

creation of conditions designed to destroy the group. The evidence is methodical and damning.

Israel's closure of all land crossings, interdiction of aid convoys, and destruction of agricultural infrastructure created famine conditions unprecedented in modern history. By December 2024, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reported that 100 percent of Gaza's population faced acute food insecurity, with over 700,000 people experiencing catastrophic hunger: the highest number ever recorded in a single crisis.

The deliberate targeting of bakeries (all 17 in northern Gaza destroyed), fishing boats, agricultural lands and food warehouses demonstrated systematic intent to prevent Palestinians from sustaining themselves. Israel cut off water supplies and bombed desalination plants and water infrastructure, forcing Gaza's population to drink contaminated water.

The United Nations reported that average water availability dropped to three litres per person per day – far below the humanitarian minimum of 50 litres – leading to outbreaks of cholera, dysentery and other waterborne diseases. Children began dying of dehydration and preventable illness at rates comparable to the world's most severe humanitarian catastrophes.

The systematic demolition of residential buildings left 90 percent of Gaza's population homeless. But this was not mere displacement; it was the destruction of the physical infrastructure necessary for group survival. Entire neighbourhoods were razed using controlled demolitions.

In the bitter winter of 2024–2025, families huddled in makeshift tents without heat, protection from the elements, or sanitation facilities. The targeting of Gaza's healthcare system was comprehensive and systematic. Hospitals were besieged, invaded, and destroyed. Doctors were arrested, tortured, or killed. Medical supplies were blocked from entering. The pattern was so consistent that it could not plausibly be explained as collateral damage or military necessity.

The result was a population unable to treat war injuries, infectious disease, chronic conditions, or childbirth complications; conditions designed to maximise death rates.

### **Article II(d): Imposing measures intended to prevent births**

The collapse of prenatal and obstetric care meant that pregnant women in Gaza faced conditions comparable to those in the world's poorest countries. Hospitals lacked incubators, medical supplies for caesarean sections, and basic prenatal care. Doctors reported performing emergency deliveries without anaesthesia, often losing both mother and child.

The sustained stress of bombardment, malnutrition, and trauma led to dramatically elevated rates of miscarriage and stillbirth. Several maternity wards were directly bombed or rendered inoperable through sieges.

### **Article II(e): Forcibly transferring children**

While this element received less attention in the Gaza case, evidence emerged of systematic separation of Palestinian

children from their families. The systematic killing of entire families created thousands of orphans.

With extended family networks destroyed and social services eliminated, these children faced an uncertain future disconnected from their cultural and familial heritage. Human rights organisations documented cases of Palestinian children being detained separately from their families during military operations.

### **Distinguishing Genocide from Other Atrocity Crimes**

Understanding what genocide is requires understanding what it is not.

The Genocide Convention exists alongside other frameworks of international humanitarian law that prohibit war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of the laws of armed conflict. These distinctions matter both legally and morally.

War crimes are violations of the laws of armed conflict; the deliberate targeting of civilians, use of prohibited weapons, torture, or other acts that violate the Geneva Conventions. They can occur without genocidal intent as violations of how war is conducted, not necessarily aimed at destroying a group as such.

In Gaza, war crimes were abundant and well-documented: the use of white phosphorus in civilian areas, the targeting of clearly marked hospitals and schools, the killing of civilians waving white flags, the torture of detainees. These acts violated international humanitarian law regardless of whether genocide occurred.

Crimes against humanity are systematic attacks on a civilian population, including murder, extermination, torture, rape, persecution, and other inhumane acts. Unlike genocide, crimes against humanity do not require intent to destroy a group as such, they require only that the acts be committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population.

The Gaza conflict clearly involved crimes against humanity: the systematic bombardment of civilian areas, the forced displacement of virtually the entire population, the creation of conditions of extermination through starvation and disease.

Genocide occupies a unique position in international law because it targets the very existence of a group. It is, in the words of the Convention, "a crime which shocks the conscience of mankind." It is not merely killing on a large scale; it is killing with the specific purpose of eliminating a people from existence.

The significance of this distinction became central to the legal debate over Gaza. Defenders of Israel's actions argued that even if war crimes occurred, they resulted from the fog of war, Hamas's use of civilian areas, or individual soldiers acting beyond their orders – not from a systematic policy of group destruction. This framing attempted to contain the legal and moral consequences within the framework of war crimes rather than genocide.

This defence, however, confronted a fundamental problem: the systematic nature of the harm, the eliminationist rhetoric of Israeli leaders, and the creation of conditions incompatible with group survival demonstrated that this was not merely excessive force in armed conflict,

but a coordinated campaign of destruction directed at Palestinians as a people.

### **Confronting the Counterarguments**

Defenders of Israel's military campaign in Gaza advanced several arguments against the genocide charge, each demanding serious engagement...

*"It's self-defence, not genocide"*

International law recognises the right of states to defend themselves against armed attack. Article 51 of the UN Charter explicitly preserves this "inherent right." Israel's supporters argued that the 7 October attack – which killed approximately 1,200 people and resulted in the taking of over 200 hostages – triggered this right to self-defence.

However, the right to self-defence is not unlimited. International humanitarian law requires that defensive military action adhere to the principles of distinction (between combatants and civilians), proportionality (military advantage must not be outweighed by civilian harm), and necessity (force used must be necessary to achieve a legitimate military objective). The evidence from Gaza demonstrates systematic violation of all three principles, the civilian death toll was not proportional to any conceivable military objective and the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure far exceeded military necessity. The targeting of hospitals, schools, refugee camps and aid workers could not be justified by any plausible security concern.

Moreover, self-defence cannot be invoked to commit genocide. The Genocide Convention contains no exception

for self-defence. If a state's actions satisfy the elements of genocide, the claim of self-defence becomes legally irrelevant.

*" Hamas uses human shields "*

Israeli officials repeatedly claimed that Hamas deliberately placed military assets among civilians, making civilian casualties unavoidable. This argument was central to Israel's public defence. International humanitarian law does address this scenario. If an adversary uses protected sites for military purposes, those sites can lose their protected status but only if the military advantage of attacking them is proportional to the expected civilian harm, and only after warning is given when circumstances permit.

The evidence from Gaza demonstrates that Israel's response far exceeded these legal parameters. Entire residential blocks were destroyed to target individual militants. Hospitals were bombed based on assertions of militant presence that subsequent investigations failed to verify. The proportion of civilian deaths to combatant deaths – approximately 7:1 according to most estimates – far exceeded any historical precedent for urban warfare, even in situations where human shields were definitively employed.

Furthermore, even if Hamas systematically used human shields (a claim contested by many human rights organisations), this cannot justify the deliberate creation of famine conditions, the systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure unrelated to military operations, or the eliminationist rhetoric of Israeli leaders. The human shields argument might theoretically justify targeted military operations; it cannot justify genocide.

*"It's war, not genocide – civilian deaths are inevitable"*

This argument contends that all wars produce civilian casualties and that the deaths in Gaza, while tragic, are the inevitable consequence of armed conflict rather than genocide. This defence fails on both factual and legal grounds.

Factually, the scale, systematic nature, and deliberateness of civilian destruction in Gaza far exceeded normal warfare parameters. The use of 2,000-pound bombs in densely-populated areas, the targeting of entire apartment buildings to kill individual militants, the creation of deliberately induced famine; these actions cannot be explained as unfortunate by-products of war. Legally, the argument misunderstands the Genocide Convention.

Genocide can occur during war, indeed, most twentieth-century genocides occurred in wartime contexts. The Rwandan genocide happened during a civil war, the Srebrenica genocide occurred during the Bosnian conflict, the Holocaust was perpetrated during World War II.

The existence of armed conflict does not preclude genocide; it often provides the cover for it. The critical question is not whether war causes deaths, but whether those deaths result from military operations conducted within the bounds of international law or from a systematic campaign to destroy a protected group. The evidence demonstrates the latter.

*"Intent is impossible to prove"*

Some argued that even if Israel's actions caused immense harm, proving the specific intent required for genocide is insurmountably difficult: after all, Israeli officials did not

explicitly announce a plan to destroy Palestinians as a group. This argument misunderstands how intent is established in international law.

Genocidal intent can be proven through circumstantial evidence – the cumulative weight of statements, actions, and patterns that, taken together, demonstrate specific intent – and the evidentiary record from Gaza is overwhelming. Israeli political and military leaders made explicitly eliminationist statements.

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant declared, "We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly." He announced a "complete siege" with "no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed."

President Isaac Herzog stated, "It is an entire nation out there that is responsible... and we will fight until we break their backbone."

These statements, made by the highest-ranking officials, not rogue soldiers, demonstrated intent to target Palestinians as a group. The comprehensive nature of the destruction – targeting hospitals, universities, water systems, agricultural lands, residential buildings – demonstrated a pattern inconsistent with military necessity but consistent with intentional destruction of the group's capacity to survive in Gaza.

The ratio of civilian to military casualties far exceeded any historical precedent for urban warfare. Israel's sixteen-year blockade, the documented policy of "putting Palestinians on a diet," and the systematic denial of basic necessities provided crucial context. When 70 percent of a territory's housing is destroyed, when universities, cultural sites and

historical archives are systematically bombed, when the population is rendered unable to sustain itself through deliberate policy, intent can be inferred from conduct.

*"The population has actually increased, so there can't be genocide"*

This argument contends that because Gaza's population grew over previous decades, genocide cannot be occurring. It fundamentally misunderstands the legal definition of genocide.

Genocide does not require the complete elimination of a group or even the reduction of its overall population. The Convention explicitly covers destruction "in whole or in part." A state can commit genocide against a group within a defined territory even if members of that group survive elsewhere or if the group's historical population trend has been positive.

Moreover, population growth prior to genocide does not immunise later genocidal acts. The Jewish population of Europe increased in the decades before the Holocaust; this fact did not make the Holocaust any less a genocide.

The Tutsi population of Rwanda grew before 1994; this did not prevent the genocide that occurred that year. The relevant question is whether acts are being committed with intent to destroy the group in whole or in part; not whether those acts have achieved complete extermination or reversed long-term demographic trends.

*"Other conflicts kill more people, so why single out Israel?"*

This argument suggests that if Gaza constitutes genocide, then numerous other conflicts – Syria, Yemen, Sudan – must also be labelled as such, and that selective focus on

Israel reveals bias rather than legal principle: a deflection rather than a defence.

The question before international courts is not whether other conflicts also constitute genocide (though some may), but whether the specific actions in Gaza satisfy the elements of the Genocide Convention... other atrocities do not excuse these atrocities.

Moreover, the comparison fails on the merits. While other conflicts have produced higher absolute death tolls, few demonstrate the same combination of systematic destruction, eliminationist rhetoric, deliberate creation of conditions incompatible with group survival, and comprehensive targeting of a population's ability to sustain itself.

The issue is not body count alone, but the pattern of conduct and the intent behind it. The appropriate response to this argument is: if other situations constitute genocide, they should be prosecuted as such. The existence of other crimes does not excuse this one.

### **South Africa v. Israel: The Hague Proceedings**

When the Court opened hearings in January 2024, the contrast between the sterile legal environment of The Hague and the brutal reality in Gaza was stark.

South Africa's case received crucial contextual bolstering from profound legal arguments about the very foundation of the occupation. In a landmark address to the ICJ on behalf of the League of Arab States on 29 February 2024, Senior Counsel Dr Ralph Wilde outlined what he termed the "existential illegality of Israeli occupation." He presented

a comprehensive historical legal argument that Israel's statehood in 1948 constituted an "illegal secession" that violated the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, a right that originated in the sacred trust obligations of Article 22 of the League Covenant.

*"The Palestinian people have been denied the exercise of their legal right to self-determination through the century-long violent colonial and racist effort to establish a nation-state exclusively for the Jewish people in the land of Mandatory Palestine,"* Wilde stated with precision.

He detailed the violations arising from what he termed the "regime of racial domination (apartheid)" and concluded with a powerful demand: *"The occupation must end immediately. Israel must renounce all sovereignty claims, and all settlers must be removed immediately... Israel lacks any legal entitlement to exercise authority over the Palestinian territory."*

This framing provided the historical and legal bedrock upon which the charge of genocide was built, contextualising the immediate violence within decades of systematic oppression.

The stark reality of the genocide became increasingly unavoidable on the global stage, particularly at the United Nations. At the UN General Assembly on 5 March 2024, the world's patience with Israel's justifications visibly wore thin in a dramatic session that highlighted the growing isolation of the Israeli position.

While the Palestinian representative held up a picture of an emaciated child who had starved to death in a barely functioning hospital just the day before, Israel's Ambassador, Gilad Erdan, struck out with what observers described as a

"breathtakingly unprofessional" performance, regurgitating largely debunked allegations of sexual violence from 7 October.

He claimed the UN's silence on Hamas's sexual violence "turns this global initiative into a sick joke." However, a UN investigation into the matter released the same day revealed it was only "likely" there had been some sexual violence and notably was "unable to interview any of them," while finding some of the most graphic allegations, like that of a pregnant woman's womb being torn open, to be "unfounded."

The performance was so disastrous that Erdan was immediately recalled to Jerusalem for "consultations" – a rare diplomatic rebuke that crystallised how the world appeared to have run out of patience with Israel.

The spectacle highlighted the widening gap between Israel's narrative and the evidence being documented by independent investigators.

### **Theatre Of Contempt**

By the final year of the Gaza war, Israel's relationship with the United Nations had ceased to resemble diplomacy at all. It had become something closer to theatre, a sequence of stunts, provocations and deliberate humiliations designed not to persuade but to signal immunity from law and censure. This transformation was not accidental. It was embodied first by Israel's ambassador, Gilad Erdan, and then carried forward with a colder, more abrasive edge by his successor Danny Danon.

Erdan set the tone early. Years before the 2023 escalation, in televised Security Council debates he once triggered a

rocket siren recording during discussions about hostilities between Israel and Gaza, a theatrical auditory backdrop that shifted the session's gravity from legal discourse to emotional spectacle. The stunt was widely interpreted as a deliberate effort to frame the crisis not as a question of law and civilian protection but as one of fear and threat, sidestepping the very institutional norms the chamber was designed to uphold.

In October 2023, as Gaza's devastation mounted and UN scrutiny intensified, Erdan and other Israeli delegates appeared at the Security Council wearing yellow Star of David badges with the slogan "Never Again," invoking Holocaust imagery to deflect criticism of Israel's campaign. Yad Vashem, Israel's own Holocaust memorial authority, publicly condemned the gesture as a desecration of Holocaust memory and counterproductive to Israel's diplomatic standing.

At the height of the General Assembly debate, Erdan again blended symbolism with spectacle. In May 2024, as the Assembly advanced a vote on Palestinian statehood, he approached the podium with a miniature paper shredder and fed into it a printed copy of the United Nations Charter, the legal foundation of the institution. Cameras rolled as it was destroyed, transforming what should have been sober legal contention into a gesture of repudiation.

When Danny Danon succeeded Erdan in August 2024, the props were fewer but the contempt no less pronounced. In November 2024 he targeted a peace themed art installation in the General Assembly lobby that included children's drawings and quilted appeals from around the world, including Palestinian contributions. Danon denounced it as

hostile to Israel and the disputed pieces were removed from the UN's own headquarters.

All of this unfolded while the toll of Israel's military assault on Gaza became unprecedented for the United Nations itself. From October 2023 through mid 2024, at least 193 UN relief workers were killed in Gaza, the deadliest conflict on record for UN personnel in such a concentrated period. By late 2024, UNRWA alone reported more than 100 of its own staff killed, including teachers, doctors and aid workers who died while delivering food or sheltering families.

In September 2024, a UN run school sheltering displaced civilians in Nuseirat was struck, killing six UN staff. The UN leadership called it totally unacceptable. By 2025, global databases recorded the deadliest year ever for humanitarian workers, nearly half of them in Gaza. The UN humanitarian chief called it a shameful indictment of international inaction.

Yet inside the chambers where these deaths were discussed, Israel's posture was often one of dismissal. During long Security Council sessions in which European and Global South delegates laid out Israel's breaches of international law, Danon was frequently seen looking down at his phone, scrolling, barely acknowledging that the speeches were taking place. When the United States delegate spoke, he looked up, he listened. It was not accidental, it was performance. Israel did not need the United Nations because it had Washington.

From Erdan's sirens and shredders to Danon's removal of peace art and visible disengagement, Israel's UN mission became a theatre of defiance. The rules still existed. The institutions still met. The words were still spoken. But

everyone in the chamber could see which of those things Israel's representatives truly respected.

### **From Theatre to Tribunal**

Back in The Hague, South African Advocate Vaughan Lowe KC, his voice steady with the weight of the moment, argued that Israel's conduct represented "a calculated pattern of conduct indicating a genocidal intent." He presented the world with the images it had scrolled past in its social media feeds: the starving child, the doctor operating by phone light, the mass grave.

His methodical presentation wove together the statements of Israeli leaders with the operational reality on the ground, creating a compelling case that this was not random violence but a coordinated campaign.

On 26 January 2024, the ICJ issued its provisional ruling in a decision that would reverberate across the international community. The phrasing was legally cautious, as befitted the world's highest court, but its impact was seismic:

*"The Court considers that the facts and circumstances mentioned above are sufficient to conclude that at least some of the rights claimed by South Africa and for which it is seeking protection are plausible. This is the case with respect to the right of the Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide and related prohibited acts identified in Article III..."*

The Court ordered Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent acts of genocide, to prevent and punish direct and public incitement to genocide, to take immediate and effective measures to ensure the provision of basic

services and humanitarian aid, and to preserve evidence of potential violations.

It was a stunning, historic rebuke that marked the first time a Western-backed state had been formally accused of genocide at the world's highest court, and the first time the court had found such claims "plausible."

### **Law In Motion**

The ICJ's provisional ruling acted as a catalyst, triggering parallel legal processes across the international justice system and energising human rights organisations that had been compiling evidence for months.

To understand what followed requires distinguishing between the various institutions involved: the ICJ adjudicates disputes between states, while the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutes individuals for war crimes and crimes against humanity; meanwhile, organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch serve as independent documentarians whose findings inform both courts and public discourse.

The ICC, long paralysed over the question of Palestine due to political pressure, saw its Prosecutor, Karim Khan KC, come under immense public and professional pressure to act.

In February 2024, he announced the expansion of the court's ongoing investigation into the Situation in Palestine to include the events of 7 October and their aftermath, with a specific focus on starvation as a method of warfare, indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure, and the targeting of protected sites like hospitals and schools.

Other major human rights organisations contributed crucial evidence that filled out the picture of systematic violations.

Amnesty International documented over 300 direct attacks on schools and hospitals, many bearing the distinctive blast signatures of US-made JDAMs, suggesting deliberate targeting rather than accidental damage.

Human Rights Watch conducted forensic investigations that traced the use of white phosphorus in densely populated civilian neighbourhoods of Gaza City and Beit Lahia, complete with video evidence and munition identification that left little doubt about the nature of the weapons being deployed.

Oxfam published a devastating report titled "Engineered Famine," detailing what it called the "intentional and systematic obstruction" of food convoys by the Israeli military, correlating permit denials with rising malnutrition rates in a pattern that suggested deliberate starvation of the civilian population.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), usually restrained in its diplomatic language, described Gaza in an internal memo as "a textbook case of collective punishment, unfolding in real time."

Even typically cautious legal observers began speaking of "complicity cascades": the ripple effect by which weapons suppliers, financiers, and policymakers in Western nations became potential defendants in future cases for their role in enabling the atrocities.

This complicity was starkly outlined by Craig Mokhiber, the former UN human rights chief, who on 20 March

2025 condemned Israel's actions as genocide in the clearest terms yet from a senior UN official. He stated that Israeli officials acted with what he called "the sound of impunity... guaranteed by the government of the United States," and emphasised that under the Genocide Convention, every state has an "affirmative obligation to prevent genocide," a duty that Western nations were openly violating by enabling the killing.

*"Not only are countries like the United States and Germany failing in their duty to stop genocide – they are actually enabling it, in direct violation of international law,"* Mokhiber spoke with the authority of his decades of human rights experience.

He pointedly contrasted this Western failure with Yemen's actions, noting that the Houthi authorities were "fulfilling their legal duty to prevent genocide by disrupting Israel's ability to continue its mass killings" through their naval operations; a controversial but legally-significant interpretation that highlighted the breakdown of traditional enforcement mechanisms.

A final, definitive condemnation came from the UN's own Independent International Commission of Inquiry. In a stark final briefing on 29 October 2025, chaired by Navi Pillay, the commission presented its conclusion that: *"The State of Israel is responsible for the commission of four genocidal acts in Gaza with the specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza."* It also found that "the Israeli president, prime minister, and former defence minister have incited the commission of genocide."

Commissioner Chris Sidoti was unequivocal when asked if Hamas's crimes on 7 October justified the military

campaign: *"There is an absolute prohibition against genocide. You cannot plead self-defence."*

## **Western Complicity**

The legal reckoning quickly spread westward, transforming from a diplomatic irritation into a tangible legal threat for the Western governments that had enabled Israel's campaign.

In London, lawyers within the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) circulated classified memos warning in stark terms that continued weapons exports could render the UK "jointly complicit in genocidal acts." One such memo, leaked to The Guardian in April 2024, revealed that senior officials had raised the alarm as early as November 2023, but had been overruled by ministerial direction that prioritised the political relationship with Israel over legal obligations.

Sir Keir Starmer, widely perceived as Israel's staunch advocate within UK politics, initially appeared to grant Israel carte blanche in its response to the Hamas attacks. This position was crystallised during an LBC radio interview on 11 October 2023. When pressed by host Nick Ferrari on whether a total siege of Gaza – cutting off water and electricity – could be justified, Starmer unequivocally stated, "I think that Israel does have that right."

His remark was interpreted as a blanket endorsement of Israel's military campaign, including its intensified bombing and the unfolding siege. However, a swift and massive public backlash, driven by the widespread circulation of real-time images depicting the slaughter of civilians in Gaza, caused Starmer's credibility and popularity to nosedive.

Caught in the political firestorm, he and his office scrambled to contain the damage. They issued clarifications claiming his "right" referred only to a general principle of self-defence under international law, and he hastily emphasised the need for humanitarian aid and legal compliance: a clear retreat from his initial permissive stance as he attempted to regain control of a narrative shattered by the visible reality of the war's impact on civilians.

### **Lammy's Lies: Arms Exports, Parliamentary Deception**

This complicity went far beyond passive diplomatic support...

In May 2025, Foreign Secretary David Lammy found himself facing calls for international prosecution after new evidence revealed he may have lied to Parliament and actively facilitated Israeli war crimes in Gaza. An investigation by journalist Matt Kennard, published by Dropsite News, uncovered trade data showing that more than 8,630 munitions were sent from the UK to Israel between September 2024 and February 2025 *after* Lammy had told Parliament those exports had been suspended.

In September 2024, Lammy had stood before Parliament and announced that Britain had suspended 29 arms export licences to Israel. He assured lawmakers that remaining shipments were "defensive in nature" and that the government had taken a principled stand against potential violations of international humanitarian law.

Customs records from Israel, however, directly contradicted this claim. Among the exported items were critical parts for the F-35 fighter jet, the same aircraft being used to bomb hospitals, schools, and refugee camps across Gaza. The UK's

own legal advisers had warned there was a "clear risk" these aircraft would be used to violate international humanitarian law.

Lammy knew this. He had access to the intelligence reports. He understood what these parts would be used for, and he signed off on the exports anyway.

### **The F-35 Carve-Out**

Internal government documents revealed that Lammy, in coordination with Defence Secretary John Healey, had deliberately facilitated an exception to allow F-35 exports to continue, despite the clear legal advice. Court filings showed Labour had delayed suspending any exports for five weeks after it privately concluded that UK arms could be used in war crimes, while the record showed that during that five-week period, 1,716 Palestinians were killed in Gaza.

In one documented case referenced in Kennard's investigation, an F-35 airstrike on a designated "safe zone" killed 90 civilians in a single attack.

*"To keep exporting those parts anyway, knowing what they were doing with them – that's not oversight. That's aiding mass murder,"* said Ahmed Abofoul, a Gaza-born lawyer with the Palestinian human-rights group Al-Haq, who lost over 60 relatives in Israeli attacks. Abofoul described Lammy and Prime Minister Keir Starmer as "monstrous war criminals."

### **The Justification: Protecting American Business**

Why did the government carve out this exception? Court documents revealed the answer: to "maintain US confidence" in the UK defence sector, particularly its

collaboration with Lockheed Martin, the lead manufacturer of the F-35.

In other words, British arms exports to enable potential war crimes were prioritised to protect business relationships with American defence contractors, representing a profound subordination of international law to Anglo-American military and commercial interests. The message was clear: profit and alliance politics trumped Palestinian lives and legal obligations.

Legal experts pointed to several potential charges under the Rome Statute: aiding war crimes, failure to prevent genocide, material support for crimes against humanity and obstruction of justice through false declarations.

The full extent of the UK's involvement was further exposed at the Gaza Tribunal, a people's inquiry held in Westminster on September 5-7, 2025, which served as a powerful alternative to official investigations that the government had blocked. Over two days, witnesses delivered searing testimony that painted a picture of systematic British complicity.

Matt Kennard testified that RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus had become the "central international site for supporting and supplying Israel's genocide," with RAF surveillance flights providing 47 percent of all reconnaissance missions over Gaza – "more than double Israel itself" – and feeding real-time targeting data to Israeli forces that was used in operations causing mass civilian casualties.

Professor Nick Maynard, an Oxford cancer surgeon who had volunteered repeatedly in Gaza's hospitals, described what he witnessed as "daily war crimes," emotionally reliving

the trauma of treating children like Ali and Yara without painkillers after their family was killed in a bombing. *"I can still hear their screams,"* he testified, his voice breaking.

Dr Natalie Roberts of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) called the situation a "complete and utter humanitarian disaster" that was entirely man-made, noting that 12 of her MSF colleagues had been killed while clearly marked as medical personnel.

### **Inside Out**

But the most damning evidence came from inside the British state itself, where officials responsible for regulating arms exports began to expose the deliberate machinery of concealment that allowed the war to continue.

Mark Smith, a former Foreign Office diplomat and lead adviser on arms export licensing, revealed that he was "routinely asked to change" assessments in order to "make the situation look less bad", with sensitive conversations deliberately kept off the record to avoid creating a paper trail that could later be used in legal proceedings.

As a penholder on Middle East and North Africa arms sales, Smith was responsible for judging whether British weapons could lawfully be supplied under domestic and international law, yet what he encountered was a system designed not to test legality but to manage political risk. Reports documenting civilian deaths and destruction were repeatedly returned to him for rebalancing, evidence of harm was downplayed, and verbal instructions were substituted for written ones so that nothing could be disclosed under freedom of information or later scrutinised in court.

When he warned that the legal threshold for halting arms exports had been crossed, he was ignored. The same pattern had already occurred with Saudi Arabia during the war in Yemen, when officials acknowledged privately that the United Kingdom had exceeded its own legal test but continued exports anyway until a judicial review forced a suspension. Instead of reforming the system after losing in court, ministers quietly altered the law to make future challenges harder, allowing arms sales to resume under even weaker oversight. What Smith witnessed in relation to Israel, amid the destruction of Gaza, was even more severe.

That internal reality was confirmed by Fran Heathcote, president of the PCS union representing civil servants, who disclosed that government workers were being forced to choose between their jobs and complicity in genocide. Instead of addressing the legal risks they were raising, the government offered them “conversations with HR and counsellors”, a response Heathcote condemned as “a dereliction of duty” that placed civil servants in an impossible ethical position.

The legal meaning of that conduct was stated openly by Forz Khan, a veteran British barrister with more than thirty years of experience in criminal law, who told a Gaza tribunal that “it is highly likely that the Prime Minister of this country is guilty of genocide”, adding that the evidence overwhelmingly fulfilled the test for prosecution, with political protection being the sole barrier to accountability.

The pressure inside government became so intense that resignations followed. In August 2024, Smith himself stepped down after months of whistleblowing had been stonewalled, and in a letter that spread rapidly through

Whitehall he wrote that he could no longer, “in good conscience sign export licences for components that I know will be used in the annihilation of a people”. His resignation crystallised what many officials already knew, that a system advertised as robust and transparent had in practice become a mechanism for enabling atrocity while insulating ministers from legal exposure.

### **The Law Turns on Its Own**

British and American courts became new battlegrounds in the legal struggle. A coalition of NGOs filed for a judicial review of the government's arms export policy, arguing it violated the Genocide Convention and the UK's own Export Control Act. Similar lawsuits were filed in Canada, the Netherlands, and Germany, all based on the same powerful argument: under international law, states have a positive duty to prevent genocide, not to profit from it through arms sales.

In Washington, the State Department's Legal Adviser's Office produced a classified 30-page memo, later obtained by PBS Frontline, warning that “the factual predicates for a finding of genocide are sufficiently plausible that continued arms transfers pose a material legal risk to senior officials.” The document's leak created a firestorm, and congressional hearings grew acrimonious as legislators confronted the administration over its support for Israel.

When the US Senator Bernie Sanders for Vermont invoked the Leahy Law to demand a halt to offensive weapons shipments, his words echoed through a chamber that was half-empty but was being recorded for history.

For decades, the rule of law had been treated by Western powers as a moral accessory, a tool to be wielded selectively against adversaries while exempting themselves and their allies. Now, through the determined efforts of activists, lawyers, and whistle-blowers, it was returning as a tangible liability that threatened not just Israel but its enablers in Western capitals.

### **Turkey's Unprecedented Move**

The momentum generated by the ICJ ruling spread beyond The Hague. On 7 November 2025, Turkey issued arrest warrants for 37 senior Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yisrael Katz, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir, and Navy Commander David Saar Salama. The charges: genocide and crimes against humanity during Israel's war in Gaza.

The announcement from the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office marked one of the boldest applications of universal jurisdiction in recent decades. It followed a year-long investigation into alleged systematic attacks on civilians, hospitals, and aid convoys in the Gaza Strip. The Turkish prosecutor's findings detailed a pattern between October 2023 and October 2025 of Israeli political and military leaders engaging in "systematic acts of genocide and crimes against humanity."

The allegations focused on specific incidents: the 17 October 2023 bombing of Gaza's Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital, which killed more than 500 people; the March 2024 destruction of the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital; the blockade and deprivation of humanitarian aid throughout 2024 and

2025 and targeted attacks on medical facilities, schools and journalists.

The statement added that the accused "deliberately used starvation, deprivation, and collective punishment as methods of warfare," and that such acts constitute genocide under both Turkish and international law.

Under Turkey's Penal Code, crimes such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity are exempt from statutes of limitation and can be prosecuted even if committed abroad by non-Turkish citizens. Turkish courts claimed jurisdiction over these crimes under international treaties ratified by Turkey, including the Genocide Convention and the Geneva Conventions.

The country's bold move signalled its determination to pursue accountability where international institutions had faltered. It also underscored Ankara's long-standing support for the Palestinian cause and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's insistence that Israel's campaign in Gaza represented "the most brutal massacre of the 21st century."

Israel condemned the warrants as politically motivated, with Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar dismissing the move as "a publicity stunt" and accusing Ankara of weaponising international law for propaganda purposes. Israeli officials said the decision had no legal standing outside Turkey and vowed to protect their leaders from arrest abroad. Nonetheless, the warrants complicated international travel for the named officials.

Several Israeli media outlets reported that legal advisers had already warned officials against travelling to jurisdictions where the warrants could be enforced, especially to

countries maintaining extradition treaties or judicial cooperation with Turkey.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry welcomed Turkey's decision as "a victory for the principle of justice," urging other nations to follow suit. Human-rights groups called the move a breakthrough in the global effort to hold Israeli leaders accountable, while legal scholars noted that even symbolic actions carried weight, restricting mobility and increasing political pressure.

*"These warrants place a legal marker in the record of history," one international law expert said, "and that alone can influence future prosecutions."*

The Istanbul prosecutor confirmed that the warrants had been forwarded to international policing authorities, and Turkey was expected to request Interpol red notices. Whether Interpol acted remained uncertain, as such requests often depended on political consensus, but the symbolic weight was undeniable.

The warrants further strained Israel-Turkey relations, already tense since Ankara expelled the Israeli ambassador in May 2024 amid mass protests over the Gaza war. Diplomatically, the decision signalled to other governments, particularly in Europe and the Global South, that Turkey intended to assert leadership in the legal fight against impunity... If any country acted on these warrants, it could set a major precedent for the practical use of universal jurisdiction.

Turkey's issuance of the arrest warrants marked a historic moment in the evolving pursuit of accountability. While actual arrests might never occur, the legal and moral

weight of the decision could not be easily dismissed. For Palestinians, it represented long-delayed recognition. For Israel, it was a legal and diplomatic challenge, and for the international community, it was a reminder that the world's patience with impunity – even for powerful states – was wearing thin.

The Israeli officials named by Turkey, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, now face the possibility, however remote, of arrest for alleged genocide and crimes against humanity.

### **The Legal Activists Europe Could Not Ignore**

While states moved slowly, civil society moved fast. In the span of just ten days in November 2025, the Brussels-based Hind Rajab Foundation launched three major legal challenges; against a European Union financial institution, an Israeli extremist on EU soil and a former Israeli prime minister. Together, these actions marked one of the most comprehensive attempts yet by a civil society organisation to apply international law to alleged crimes committed in Gaza, as well as to the European structures accused of enabling them.

Founded in September 2024, the Hind Rajab Foundation has rapidly positioned itself as a central hub for universal-jurisdiction litigation. Its filings – in Luxembourg, Brussels, and Karlsruhe – represented a coordinated push to hold not only individual perpetrators accountable, but also the institutions and governments that underpinned Israeli military activity.

The most structurally significant case came on 4 November, when the European Investment Bank formally accepted an

HRF complaint accusing it of financing Israeli institutions implicated in violations of international law.

According to the foundation, more than €1 billion of EIB funding had flowed to Israeli banks and companies that appeared in the United Nations' 2020 database of corporate actors involved in settlement construction and land appropriation in the occupied West Bank. These included major financial institutions such as Bank Leumi and industrial conglomerates such as Electra Group.

By deeming the complaint "admissible" and opening a formal assessment, the EIB's internal Complaints Mechanism entered uncharted territory. It was the first time an EU institution must publicly evaluate whether its financing activities may have supported what HRF called "a system of apartheid and illegal colonisation." The foundation argued that such financing was not neutral development support, but rather a mechanism that "strengthens institutions directly involved in settlement expansion, forced evictions, land seizures and systematic violence against Palestinians."

The case could have sweeping implications. The EIB was the world's largest multilateral lender, and its funding practices often set standards for other European and international development banks. If its complaint mechanism found that the EIB violated its own human-rights policies or EU law, it could force changes in the institution's approach to Israel and potentially trigger similar reviews in other European bodies.

Just days before the EIB decision, on 31 October, HRF filed a criminal complaint in Germany against Elkana Federman, an Israeli national affiliated with the extremist

settler group Tsav 9 and the Kfir Brigade's Battalion 94. The complaint, filed with the Federal Public Prosecutor in Karlsruhe, accused Federman of war crimes and crimes against humanity under Germany's Code of Crimes Against International Law, one of the world's strongest universal-jurisdiction statutes.

HRF alleged that Federman participated in, and publicly glorified, the torture of Palestinian detainees at the Sde Teiman detention centre; used his dog as a tool of abuse, boasting in interviews that it "dealt with Palestinian prisoners", and took part in orchestrated blockades of humanitarian aid convoys, contributing to the starvation of civilians in Gaza.

Crucially, HRF said Federman was physically present in Germany, attending a public event in Berlin on October 30. Under universal-jurisdiction law, German authorities were legally permitted – and in some cases obliged – to arrest suspects on German soil if credible allegations of international crimes existed. The foundation called for Federman's immediate detention, citing a high risk of flight.

Whether Germany would act remained uncertain, but HRF's move followed a pattern: European prosecutors faced mounting pressure to enforce universal-jurisdiction obligations in cases related to the Gaza war.

The most politically explosive filing targeted Ehud Olmert, Israel's prime minister during Operation Cast Lead: the 2008–2009 military offensive in Gaza that killed more than 1,300 Palestinians and levelled entire neighbourhoods.

HRF urged German authorities to investigate Olmert for command responsibility, arguing that as Israel's head of

government he held ultimate authority over decisions that resulted in widespread civilian deaths, the destruction of residential districts, and the bombardment of schools, hospitals and UN facilities. Olmert was reportedly in Germany to attend the Haaretz Democracy Conference, prompting HRF to call for authorities to prevent his departure.

Taken together, the three cases illuminated HRF's multi-tiered strategy:

- Institutional accountability – forcing European bodies to confront their role in financing Israeli operations
- Mid-level perpetrator accountability – targeting individuals like Federman who were not shielded by political office
- High-level political accountability – challenging the impunity of senior Israeli leaders for past and present military campaigns

### **Europol Meeting Shakes the Lobby**

Then came a development that transformed HRF from aggressive litigator into institutional interlocutor...

On 22 October 2025, Europol – the EU's policing agency – invited HRF to speak at its annual conference at headquarters in The Hague. The invitation, disclosed by HRF on 19 November, drew fierce criticism from pro-Israel lobby networks, even as human-rights lawyers said it signalled a notable shift in how European institutions were preparing for potential war-crimes prosecutions arising from the Gaza genocide.

At Europol's headquarters, HRF's senior leadership – including General Director Dyab Abou Jahjah, Head of Litigation Natacha Bracq, Operational Director Karim Hassoun, and Board Member Haroon Raza – addressed national law-enforcement delegations from across Europe.

According to HRF, Europol invited the foundation to present its evidence-collection methodology and discuss potential mechanisms for sharing data relevant to international crimes. Bracq delivered a detailed presentation explaining how HRF compiled case files on alleged Israeli war crimes; material the group said was being prepared for European universal-jurisdiction units.

Abou Jahjah addressed delegates on the need for cooperation between civil society and law enforcement in "ending Israel's impunity." HRF said delegations from several EU states expressed "strong interest," with some reportedly holding bilateral discussions about sharing HRF's case files, especially information on individuals accused of war crimes who travelled to or held citizenship in EU member states.

If accurate, this placed HRF within the early stages of Europe's evolving system for investigating cross-border atrocity crimes – an area that had expanded rapidly over the past decade with cases relating to Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, and Ukraine. Within 48 hours of HRF's statement, a network of pro-Israel lobby organisations launched a coordinated backlash, accusing Europol of collaborating with what they described as a "radical," "biased" or even "terror-linked" NGO.

These groups had spent months attempting to undermine HRF's credibility as the organisation filed complaints

against Israeli political and military officials across multiple jurisdictions.

### **Behind the Name**

HRF's legal offensive was borne from the heartbreaking incident that inspired its creation: the killing of six-year-old Hind Rajab on 29 January 2024, one of the most documented civilian killings of the Gaza war.

Hind was fleeing the fighting with her uncle, aunt, and three cousins in Gaza City's Tel al-Hawa district when their car came under intense fire, investigators said from Israeli tanks. Six members of her family were killed instantly. Hind survived, trapped in the destroyed vehicle.

Her 15-year-old cousin, still alive, called the Palestine Red Crescent Society: *"They are shooting at us... The tank is right next to me."* The line fell silent when the cousin was killed, then a small, shaking voice picked up the phone.

For nearly three hours, Hind stayed on the line with PRCS dispatchers.

*"I'm so scared... Please come. Come take me. Will you come?"*

The PRCS coordinated with Gaza's health authorities and with the Israeli military through the COGAT liaison channel. They were granted clearance to send an ambulance. Two paramedics – Yusuf al-Zeino and Ahmed al-Madhoun – set out, but they never returned.

Forensic analyses reported that the tank fired around 335 bullets into the car that day.

The Hind Rajab Foundation was established to honour the child whose final hours were broadcast to the world in real time. HRF's mission was to document cases like Hind's with the forensic detail needed for prosecutions in European courts and – eventually – international tribunals. By November 2025, the foundation had filed more than 60 legal complaints across Europe in just over six months, a pace unmatched by any comparable organisation.

Civil-society organisations had long played a key role in documenting mass atrocities in Rwanda, Bosnia, Syria and beyond. But cooperation with Europol, even at an exploratory stage, signalled an unusual degree of institutional openness to examining the Gaza war within a European legal framework.

For pro-Israel lobby groups, this was precisely what they feared: that European law enforcement was preparing for a wave of universal-jurisdiction cases against Israeli military personnel and political officials. For human-rights advocates, it was overdue.

Whether HRF's escalating legal campaign would ultimately result in arrests, indictments or policy changes remained to be seen, but the foundation had already reshaped the conversation about accountability for the war in Gaza, and widened the scope of who might be implicated. The case that started with a little girl whispering into a phone in the dark might yet shape Europe's legal response to one of the defining atrocities of the twenty-first century.

### **Soldiers Become Defendants**

The architecture of impunity began to crack at the level of individual perpetrators as universal jurisdiction moved

from theory into practice. The case of Israeli soldier Moshe Avichzer in Morocco on 6 October 2024 marked a pivotal moment in this new legal landscape.

Avichzer was identified while on vacation in Marrakech after Moroccan lawyers recognised him and filed war-crimes charges under Morocco's Anti-Terrorism Law, citing compelling evidence drawn from his own social-media accounts, where he had allegedly boasted about his participation in atrocities in Gaza.

When Rabat's Court of Appeal agreed to hear the case, it categorised the charges under 'terrorism-related' crimes, immediately creating a diplomatic crisis for the Moroccan government. It had normalised relations with Israel in 2020 under the Abraham Accords: an agreement that deepened military, intelligence and trade ties in exchange for US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, even as public opinion inside Morocco remained overwhelmingly supportive of Palestine.

The ruling triggered mass demonstrations across the country. Protesters waved Palestinian flags, demanded Avichzer's prosecution, and called for the termination of Morocco's normalisation agreement with Israel. Weekly marches organised by the Moroccan Front for Supporting Palestine and Opposing Normalisation filled city centres, underscoring the depth of popular opposition.

The case placed the Moroccan state in a profound dilemma... allowing the trial to proceed risked serious diplomatic fallout with Israel and Washington and dropping it risked domestic legitimacy and a backlash from a mobilised public. For the first time, a North African judiciary confronted the

real possibility of applying universal jurisdiction to alleged Israeli war crimes.

If allowed to proceed, the case would mark the first prosecution of an Israeli soldier in North Africa and establish a precedent with regional implications, signalling that normalisation agreements signed by political elites could not insulate Israeli personnel from criminal accountability abroad. As one contemporary analysis observed, the case "could set a precedent for prosecuting military personnel for alleged war crimes, amplifying efforts by international human rights organisations to seek accountability" outside the traditional international court system.

The Moroccan state hesitated: the delay spoke volumes.

### **Europe's First Arrests**

The most dramatic demonstration of this new reality occurred on 21 July 2025, when two Israeli soldiers were arrested and interrogated at the Tomorrowland music festival in Belgium following complaints by the Hind Rajab Foundation and the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN).

Though released pending further investigation, the precedent was seismic: for the first time, Israeli military personnel had been detained on European soil under universal-jurisdiction principles after the suspects were seen waving the flag of the Givati Brigade, a unit extensively documented in the devastation of Gaza.

GLAN stated: *"This is not a matter of political discretion, it's a matter of legal duty."*

The HRF and GLAN described the suspects as being directly involved in:

- indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas, including homes and hospitals
- torture, including the use of human shields
- mass arbitrary detention and forced displacement of civilians
- systematic attacks on Gaza's life-sustaining infrastructure
- actions carried out "with the intent to destroy the population's capacity to survive."

### **Brazil, Portugal, Spain**

The universal-jurisdiction wave spread rapidly. In Brazil on 5 January 2025, a federal court ordered the investigation of an IDF soldier for involvement in mass home demolitions after HRF presented video footage, geolocation data, and photographs showing the soldier directly involved in planting explosives and overseeing neighbourhood destruction.

The soldier fled the country after reportedly receiving a warning from an Israeli diplomatic office, but the case marked "the first instance of a signatory state to the Rome Statute directly enforcing its provisions without deferring to the ICC." HRF's lead lawyer Maira Pinheiro said: "This is not a case of distant command. This individual actively contributed to the destruction of homes and livelihoods, clearly aligning with genocidal objectives."

In Portugal on 16 July 2025, HRF filed a complaint against Israeli sniper Dani Adonya Adegá, whose social-media post during a ceasefire boasted "4 rounds, 0 misses" alongside images of him holding a sniper rifle. The complaint alleged

direct involvement in targeted killings of civilians and the use of destroyed civilian buildings for military purposes.

In Spain, a judge opened a preliminary inquiry into Israeli officials for war crimes, in Belgium, a case was brought against a Belgian bank for financing arms companies supplying Israel. The once-distant doctrine of universal jurisdiction had become a practical, destabilising form of legal pressure.

### **People's Justice Meets Formal Law**

Parallel to these state prosecutions, the Global 195 coalition, launched on 19 March 2025 by the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP), created a coordinated legal architecture to file cases in domestic courts across dozens of jurisdictions.

ICJP Director Tayab Ali explained: *"For too long, those responsible for serious violations of international law have acted with impunity. Global 195 is a decisive step toward ensuring accountability."*

Rather than relying on a single international tribunal, the coalition's strategy was to overwhelm the system with simultaneous domestic cases, turning national courts into a global enforcement network.

The entire legal edifice rested upon an extraordinary evidentiary infrastructure, built in real time under fire by a coalition of forensic investigators, open-source researchers and grassroots documenters. Organisations like Forensic Architecture (FA) used sophisticated 3D modelling, satellite trajectory analysis, and audio forensics to reconstruct specific strikes with scientific precision.

Their landmark report on the October 2023 bombing of the Jabalia refugee camp – killing 50 people – matched the distinctive crater patterns to specific Israeli munitions and conclusively proved the military's official timeline was false. The report became a key exhibit submitted to the ICC, demonstrating how technical analysis could pierce official narratives.

Bellingcat and a global network of open-source investigators (OSINT) pioneered new methodologies for conflict documentation, tracing fragments of munitions found in rubble to specific US and German manufacturers through part numbers and distinctive markings. Their work created a detailed supply-chain map of complicity that connected Western factories to destruction in Gaza.

The work of the Hind Rajab Foundation epitomised this new era of forensic resistance. On 23 October 2025, HRF submitted a 120-page dossier to the ICC naming 24 Israeli soldiers and commanders for the killing of six-year-old Hind Rajab, her family, and two Red Crescent medics: the case that had become emblematic of the conflict's brutality.

The file included satellite imagery showing IDF tank positions, intercepted radio transmissions ordering fire on civilian vehicles, geolocated photographs and ballistic analyses of shell impacts, pinpointing responsibility up the chain of command to Colonel Benny Aaron of the 401st Armoured Brigade, down to Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Ella, Major Sean Glass (a US citizen and former Navy SEAL) and Sergeant Ite Shurikov. The evidence was so compelling that the IDF Censorship Division introduced new rules to hide the identities of commanders in future operations,

fearing international arrest: a remarkable admission of the effectiveness of these legal tactics.

HRF's first major ICC communication in October 2024 had named around 1,000 Israeli soldiers supported by 8,000 pieces of evidence, but the Hind Rajab case represented a more focused approach targeting specific incidents with overwhelming proof.

Inside Gaza itself, volunteer groups like the Gaza Evidence Repository (GER) worked under unimaginable conditions to geotag graves and document destruction before the evidence could be bulldozed or bombed into oblivion. These local activists risked their lives to ensure that even if the physical landscape was erased, the digital record would remain.

All this data fed into a distributed, decentralised system – a digital vault hosted on mirrored servers across 15 countries, designed to withstand censorship, cyber-attacks, and political pressure. By mid-2024, it held over 500 terabytes of video, audio, and metadata: the largest civilian-compiled war crimes archive in history.

*"Even if they bomb every building into dust, the record will stand. This is our Nuremberg transcript, written as the fires burned,"* said a Palestinian coder in exile, one of GER's architects.

## **Law as Resistance**

For Palestinian lawyers, many of whom had lost family members, homes, and colleagues in the assault, the courtroom became an extension of the struggle for survival; a battle fought with statutes, evidence, and legal procedure rather than bullets.

Inside the West Bank, where the Palestinian Authority's judiciary operated under the constant shadow of occupation, legal activists ran clandestine mobile documentation workshops, training youths to authenticate footage, preserve chain-of-custody for digital evidence and understand the evidentiary standards required by international courts.

In exile, diaspora lawyers coordinated complex evidence chains through encrypted channels, partnering with international firms to build cases that could withstand judicial scrutiny.

One Gazan jurist, now based in Ireland after her family was killed in the bombing of their home, described the work as: *"using the master's tools to dismantle his house, because they are the only tools left intact."*

Her group, Justice for Gaza, partnered with the Irish Bar Council to file a detailed amicus brief supporting South Africa's ICJ case, demonstrating how the Palestinian legal community was leveraging international partnerships to advance their cause. This legal resistance faced direct and escalating retaliation from the Israeli government, which recognised the threat it posed.

On 7 July 2025, the Israeli government sanctioned 50 individuals, placing HRF leaders like Dyab Abou Jahjah, Karim Hassoun, and Haroon Raza at the top of the list in a transparent attempt to cripple their work. This came after HRF's success in triggering investigations in Peru and elsewhere had demonstrated the effectiveness of their strategy.

The Israeli state had begun reallocating "millions of shekels" from its national budget to fund legal defences for those under investigation abroad – a remarkable admission of the financial impact of these cases.

Earlier, on 6 January 2025, Minister Amichai Chikli had posted a veiled threat to HRF's Abou Jahjah on social media, telling him to "watch your pager," a chilling reference to Israeli pager bombings in Lebanon that had killed around 42 people and injured over 3,000. Abou Jahjah responded by filing a criminal complaint in Belgium, where authorities refused to grant Chikli immunity, warning he could face arrest if he entered the country: a significant victory for the principle that even senior officials could be held accountable.

A landmark legal battle was also spearheaded from within the Jewish community by Omar Shatz, an Israeli lawyer based in France. As reported on 18 January 2025, Shatz, alongside his students from the Paris Institute of Political Sciences, submitted a 170-page dossier to the ICC accusing Benjamin Netanyahu and seven other senior figures of genocide.

His strategy hinged on the principle of "complementarity" under the Genocide Convention, arguing that the ICC could step in because Israeli courts had repeatedly refused to prosecute officials despite overwhelming evidence. The article stated: "This is not just a legal battle but a moral obligation," symbolising a growing movement within Israel and the diaspora challenging impunity from within Jewish tradition itself.

Shatz had warned in a 2014 case against Yoav Gallant that genocide would occur within a decade; his latest filing

argued that "Israeli courts have repeatedly refused to bring cases against their officials despite international findings suggesting plausible genocide allegations," activating the ICC's jurisdiction under the complementarity principle.

In Rafah, Umm Mohammed listened to the ICJ ruling on a neighbour's phone, the battery nearly dead. When the judge spoke of "provisional measures," she did not understand the legal terminology, but she understood that the highest court in the world had heard Gaza's cry... *"Finally,"* she whispered, *"someone is listening."* That night, Israeli bombs fell on Rafah, again. The court had spoken – but the killing continued.

Law students – a generation raised on the dystopian reality of drone wars and endless security statutes – found their vocation in outrage at the legal contradictions on display.

*"We are the Nuremberg generation of the broadcast,"* read a banner hung by students outside the Peace Palace in The Hague during the ICJ hearings. What had been a theoretical subject in lecture halls had become an existential imperative in their professional formation.

## **Panic in Jerusalem**

Inside Israel, the legal developments triggered waves of panic through the political and military establishment, which found itself increasingly isolated and facing unprecedented scrutiny. Its Foreign Ministry instructed ambassadors to launch a global lobbying campaign against the ICJ's jurisdiction, warning allies in stark terms that "the survival of Israel's legitimacy is at stake."

Ministers went on the offensive, publicly denouncing The Hague as "antisemitic" and claiming the ICJ was weaponising

international law against the Jewish state. State-funded think tanks produced papers claiming the ICJ was "infiltrated by anti-Zionists" and that the case represented the latest manifestation of ancient hatreds rather than a legitimate legal process.

As officials voiced their indignation, Gaza's morgues received dozens of bodies that Israel had held for months in detention. Forensic examiners reported missing organs, surgical incisions, and other signs of post-mortem tissue removal... Hearts, kidneys, livers and corneas had been extracted with precision.

Israel's organ shortage was well-documented: until 2008, insurers reimbursed citizens for transplants obtained abroad. Under international law, organ removal without consent constitutes a war crime - the allegations represented dehumanisation's endpoint, corpses harvested even in death.

This strategy of blanket denial began to collapse under the weight of leaks from within the Israeli system itself, as whistle-blowers and investigative journalists revealed the inner workings of a military legal apparatus that had systematically greenlit actions of questionable legality.

Israeli investigative journalists from +972 Magazine and Local Call, working with anonymous sources within the military, revealed that the military's legal advisers had pre-approved strikes on hospitals, aid convoys and schools designated as shelters using remarkably permissive "contextual" interpretations of international law that essentially rendered protections for civilians meaningless.

Internal targeting memos spoke chillingly of "acceptable civilian casualty thresholds" - that is, cold, numerical figures entered into algorithms as if human lives were mere variables in a military equation rather than protected persons under the Geneva Conventions.

Earlier, in March 2024, a whistle-blower from Israel's elite Unit 8200 intelligence corps had given anonymous testimony to Haaretz that revealed even more disturbing developments in military methodology. They described an AI-based targeting system, codenamed Lavender, which used machine-learning models to assign bombing priorities to tens of thousands of individuals in Gaza, with minimal human oversight.

The system, they claimed, automatically generated recommendations for destruction, treating Palestinian civilian lives as "collateral damage" in an industrial-scale process of targeting that bore haunting echoes of automated killing systems. The journalist who exposed this system, Yuval Abraham, had spent months cultivating sources within Israel's military and intelligence apparatus. *"Most sources do not approach me,"* Abraham explained. *"It is an active pursuit."*

He identified two categories of informants: whistle-blowers horrified by what they had witnessed, and "true believers" proud of their work and willing to describe it in detail. Abraham's investigation revealed three fundamental shifts that made this assault on Gaza far deadlier than any prior conflict.

First, collateral damage thresholds had exploded. Before October 2023, Israel maintained some constraints on how many civilians could be knowingly killed in a strike. After

7 October those constraints were abandoned. Soldiers told Abraham that Israel authorised up to 20 civilian deaths when targeting a suspected low-ranking Hamas member, and hundreds of civilian deaths when targeting senior leaders. These civilians could be men, women, children or infants.. the military made no distinction.

Second, Israel overwhelmingly targeted suspected militants inside their private homes, often surrounded by their families; not because militants used human shields, Abraham emphasised, but because hitting people at home was simply easier. *"If there are 40,000 suspected militants, then there are 40,000 houses to bomb,"* one intelligence source told him.

Israel also used an automated surveillance system called "Where's Daddy?" which alerted intelligence units whenever a target returned home, triggering immediate strikes.

Third, the Lavender AI system had scanned all 2.3 million people in Gaza and assigned each a statistical likelihood of being a militant. Anyone above an arbitrary threshold could be killed. The algorithm was a black box where human oversight was minimal and many flagged individuals were not militants. *"These three logics," Abraham said, "produced much of the killing we saw."*

He characterised the military mindset he encountered as the 'language of technocratic murder'.

*"You ignore the forest of genocide," Abraham explained. "You focus on one tree. As long as you tell yourself you are aiming at a militant, you can burn down an entire neighbourhood."* This procedural logic, he predicted, would form the core of Israel's legal defence at The Hague: not a denial of mass killing, but

a bureaucratic justification for it. For many legal scholars, the echoes of industrialised killing were unmistakable, raising profound questions about the future of warfare and accountability.

### **Western Leaders in the Dock**

The legal reckoning quickly spread beyond Israel itself, transforming from a diplomatic irritation into a direct legal threat to the Western governments that had enabled the assault. This internal crisis of legality soon spilled into public view...

In the UK, a coalition of NGOs - supported by submissions from major rights groups including: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Oxfam International - filed for a judicial review of the government's arms export policy, arguing that it violated the Genocide Convention and the UK's own Export Control Act.

Across the Atlantic, similar alarms were being raised... In Washington, the State Department's Legal Adviser's Office produced a classified 30-page memo, later obtained by PBS Frontline, warning that: "the factual predicates for a finding of genocide are sufficiently plausible that continued arms transfers pose a material legal risk to senior officials."

The document's leak created a firestorm and congressional hearings grew acrimonious as legislators confronted the administration over its support for Israel. When Senator Bernie Sanders invoked the Leahy Law to demand a halt to offensive weapons shipments, his words echoed through a chamber that was half-empty but being recorded for history.

For decades, the rule of law had been treated by Western powers as a moral accessory: a tool to be wielded selectively against adversaries while exempting themselves and their allies. Now, through the determined efforts of activists, lawyers, and whistle-blowers, it was returning as a tangible liability that threatened not just Israel but its enablers in Western capitals.

## UN Judgement

At the United Nations, the crisis prompted a moment of profound self-examination as the world's premier international organisation found itself largely powerless to stop the slaughter despite overwhelming evidence.

Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, presented her report titled *Anatomy of a Genocide* in March 2024, a methodical 125-page indictment that built on the work of countless human rights organisations.

Her conclusion was unequivocal: *"There are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating Israel's commission of genocide is met"* and described the response as *"the most documented failure of the international system since Rwanda."*

The UN Human Rights Council debated a comprehensive arms embargo, but as with so many UN initiatives, it was opposed by the United States and Germany, highlighting the structural limitations of the international system. Yet member states from the Global South began citing these reports as a precedent for unilateral sanctions, creating a new diplomatic reality outside traditional power structures.

Within the UN Secretariat, staff whispered of resignation and despair.. *"We are recording history's shame in real time,"* one senior official admitted to Le Monde, capturing the sense of powerlessness that permeated the organisation.

The bitter irony was that even as the UN's own schools were obliterated and its aid workers killed – over 180 UN staff died in the first six months – the institution's bureaucrats continued filing sterile situation reports that future prosecutors would inevitably treat as exhibits documenting the world's knowledge and inaction.

This systemic failure prompted Craig Mokhiber to resign in protest as director of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in October 2023. On 20 March 2025, he condemned the UN's inaction, stating that Israeli officials acted with what he called "the sound of impunity... guaranteed by the government of the United States."

Commissioner Chris Sidoti condemned the extraordinary personal attacks on UN personnel, particularly Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, after Israel's ambassador called her a "witch" on the UN floor, saying: "These attacks are not just an attack upon an individual, but upon the United Nations system itself."

### **The Global South Response**

The accumulating legal developments catalysed a significant geopolitical realignment as Global South nations moved to create alternative structures to address what they saw as the failure of traditional international institutions.

On 14 July 2025, over 25 countries convened in Bogotá, Colombia, for a historic Emergency Ministerial Conference

spearheaded by Colombia and South Africa as co-chairs of The Hague Group, an emerging coalition determined to take concrete action. The conference aimed explicitly to "move from condemnation to collective action" beyond the symbolic resolutions that had characterised much of the international response.

Francesca Albanese, who would deliver expert testimony despite US sanctions against her, called the emergence of The Hague Group *"the most significant political development of the last 20 months."*

The IAGS resolution, while carrying no direct legal force, added enormous weight to the ongoing cases at the ICJ and ICC, strengthening arguments for sanctions and arms embargoes under the Genocide Convention. It affirmed what Palestinians had long insisted: that the destruction of Gaza was not collateral damage or proportionality debates, but systematic annihilation.

A final, definitive condemnation came from the UN's own Independent International Commission of Inquiry. In a stark final briefing on 29 October 2025, chaired by Navi Pillay, the commission concluded: *"The State of Israel is responsible for the commission of four genocidal acts in Gaza with the specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza."* It also found that: *"the Israeli president, prime minister, and former defence minister have incited the commission of genocide."*

Together, these findings from the world's genocide experts and the UN's investigative body represented a historic convergence of scholarly and institutional recognition that would define the legal and moral framework of the conflict for generations.

## Resistance in the Halls of Power

By late 2024, the legal reckoning began to trigger concrete political consequences within Western governments themselves, as the implications of complicity became impossible to ignore. In the UK, the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee opened formal hearings into the "ethical oversight of arms exports," forcing ministers to testify under oath about their knowledge of how British weapons were being used.

Whistle-blowers from the Ministry of Defence gave anonymous testimony about pressure to fast-track export licences and falsify end-use certificates, revealing the mechanics of bureaucratic complicity. The UK government's desperation to suppress domestic dissent became evident when, on 25 June 2025, the Home Secretary moved to proscribe Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation: an extraordinary escalation against a non-violent direct action group.

The organisation, which specialised in occupying and shutting down Israeli arms factory Elbit Systems through civil disobedience, was targeted in a move that former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn called "*absurd and authoritarian.*"

The attempt, heavily lobbied for by pro-Israel groups, backfired spectacularly, galvanising public solidarity and raising £100,000 for a legal defence fund within days, led by renowned solicitor Gareth Peirce, who had previously defended the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six against state injustice.

*"To criminalise those who act to prevent war crimes is to turn justice on its head,"* stated an open letter signed by over 300 artists, writers and academics, including Ken Loach and Ahdaf Soueif. The group's co-founder, Huda Ammori, stated simply: *"We're being punished for exposing war crimes."*

The article noted that if proscribed, "support, membership, and even expressions of solidarity with the group" would become a criminal offence, placing non-violent activists in the same legal category as ISIS: a chilling indication of how far the government was willing to go to protect the arms trade.

In Canada, a coalition of civil servants published an open letter demanding a moratorium on all military sales to Israel, citing the "overwhelming risk of complicity in war crimes." The letter was signed by hundreds of current public servants who risked their careers to voice their ethical concerns, representing a significant bureaucratic rebellion. Lawmakers found themselves being judged not by their political rivals, but by the timeless standards of international law itself.

Before he resigned, Mark Smith summed up the reversal in a private briefing: "For the first time, the language of legality and morality is being used against us, not by us. We have lost the high ground."

The reckoning even reached the traditionally amoral corporate sphere, where financial risk calculations began incorporating legal exposure. Major insurance firms like Lloyd's of London began inserting 'genocide and crimes against humanity clauses' into contracts, refusing coverage for companies operating in conflict zones with pending ICJ actions. Investment banks hesitated to process bonds for the

Israeli government, fearing reputational damage and legal complications.

The intersection of ethics and economics was becoming legally quantifiable in risk assessment models, creating a new form of market-based accountability.

### **Memory as Verdict**

Legal historians observing the Gaza cases were quick to point out a fundamental difference between these proceedings and every major international tribunal that had preceded them.

The Nuremberg trials, the Tokyo tribunals, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR): all were fundamentally retrospective.

They were convened after the killing had stopped, their evidence gathered from mass graves and archived documents, their judgements delivered safely when the political will for accountability could be marshalled without interrupting ongoing violence. Gaza was different in almost every respect.

It was being investigated, argued, and adjudicated in real time, with lawyers presenting evidence of crimes that were still occurring, judges issuing rulings while the bombardment continued, and archivists documenting destruction as it happened. This extraordinary simultaneity created both immense hope and profound danger for the international legal order.

Hope, because the awareness and legal pressure itself could, in theory, deter further crimes and save lives in the present.

Danger, because if the entire system – ICJ, ICC, universal jurisdiction cases – failed to stop the atrocity despite this unprecedented scrutiny, it would expose international law as ineffective at restraining powerful states protected by the Security Council.

Professor Ralph Wilde of University College London captured this dilemma when he called the Gaza proceedings "a mirror held up to international law's soul." The outcome, he argued, would determine whether the post-1945 international order could still claim legitimate moral or legal authority, or whether it would be revealed as the legal fiction powerful states had always treated it as.

By the end of 2024, the phrase "the Gaza case" had entered the permanent vocabulary of global justice, taking its place alongside Nuremberg, the Balkans tribunals, and Rwanda. Law schools from Cape Town to Copenhagen began teaching it as a contemporary case study, and media outlets referred to it as "the conscience of The Hague."

On 23 October 2025, the ICJ issued a historic advisory opinion that explicitly ruled Israel's siege and obstruction of humanitarian aid illegal, identifying it as the use of starvation as a method of warfare: a war crime under international law. The court found by a 10-1 margin that Israel had breached the Geneva Conventions and that "security concerns cannot be invoked to impose collective deprivation."

Meanwhile, the ICC's arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant had tangible consequences... The Israeli prime minister was forced to avoid European airspace when flying to the United States, planning routes around ICC member

states, travelling "not as a statesman but as a fugitive from justice," as one European diplomat bluntly observed.

In December, as the first anniversary of the assault passed, the ICJ ordered Israel to submit its first monthly compliance report, a bureaucratic formality that also functioned as a historical ledger of violations. Each filing, each missed deadline, each breach became another footnote in an ongoing real-time indictment. The trials themselves would take years, perhaps decades, but the moral verdict was being delivered daily in the court of global public opinion. The rubble of Gaza had become the archive of the twenty-first century's first major genocide case.

### **Final Evidence: Sde Teiman**

The final, damning evidence of this reckoning came on 30 October 2025, when the focus shifted decisively from the battlefield to the prison cell, revealing the systematic brutality of the occupation at its most intimate.

As Israel faced genocide charges on the world stage, it opened a criminal investigation – not into the IDF reservists who had raped a blindfolded Palestinian detainee at the Sde Teiman camp – but into the whistle-blowers who had leaked the surveillance footage of the assault.

The footage, recorded continuously for 15 minutes by the military's own cameras, showed reservists assaulting a handcuffed, blindfolded detainee, causing injuries so severe they included broken ribs, a punctured lung, and a torn rectum requiring hospitalisation. During a Knesset debate on the scandal, Likud MK Hanoch Milwidsky had explicitly defended such acts, stating that if the detainee was "Nukhba,

everything is legitimate to do! Everything!" – a shocking public endorsement of torture from a parliamentarian.

The same week, Israel formally banned the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from visiting detainees, removing the last independent witnesses from a system in which over 70 Palestinians had already died in custody since 7 October 2023. An Israeli legal scholar told independent media: "The system tolerates rape on camera. Transparency is the crime."

### **UN Findings: Torture as State Policy**

At the end of November 2025, the UN Committee Against Torture delivered what may prove one of the most severe indictments of an allied state in decades.

After a comprehensive review covering the period since the Gaza war began, the ten-member committee of independent experts concluded that Israel was operating a "de facto state policy of organised and widespread torture."

The findings detailed evidence of beatings, electrocution, waterboarding, dog attacks, sexual violence and enforced stress positions, alongside conditions so physically destructive that permanently-fitted restraints had reportedly led to amputations. Detainees described being forced to mimic animals, urinated on, denied medical care and prevented from seeing families for months.

The scale and consistency of abuse – compounded by the absence of prosecutions – indicated not isolated misconduct but a structural system that normalised torture. A key area of concern was Israel's extensive use of administrative detention, that is incarceration without charge or trial, under

its unlawful combatants law. As of late September 2025: 3,474 Palestinians were held in administrative detention.

The UN report highlighted not only adults, but a "high proportion of children" held on security grounds; sometimes below the legal age of criminal responsibility, which Israel sets at twelve.

Security-classified children were kept in solitary confinement, denied education and often prevented from seeing their families. The committee urged Israel to end solitary confinement for minors altogether, calling current practice a violation of international law.

In a later assessment covering the entire period from the start of the Gaza war through August 2025, the United Nations concluded that at least 75 Palestinian detainees had died in Israeli custody: an "abnormally high" toll that applied only to Palestinians and to no other group of prisoners.

Despite this spike in deaths, not a single Israeli official had been held accountable and Israel's government insisted conditions were lawful and safe, and representatives from the foreign ministry, justice ministry and prison service briefed the UN to argue oversight mechanisms functioned adequately.

Yet during the two-year period reviewed, Israel's interrogation watchdog pursued no torture-related prosecutions despite extensive allegations. The committee identified only one conviction – a seven-month sentence for a soldier who had violently beaten bound prisoners – and noted the punishment "does not reflect the severity of the offence."

The UN findings coincided with a separate incident that encapsulated the pattern. Video emerged showing two Palestinians – Youssef Asasa and Mahmoud Abdallah – crawling from a building in Jenin, hands raised, lifting their shirts to show they were unarmed.

Israeli border police detained them briefly... a bearded officer kicked them, signalled toward the building and seconds later, both men were shot and killed at near-point-blank range. Three officers were questioned and released within 24 hours, instructed only not to discuss the case publicly. Their justification – that they felt endangered and the detainees resisted – was not visible on video. For human-rights lawyers, the moment had become emblematic: detention, then death, followed by institutional protection.

The UN report suggested such incidents were not aberrations but the logical consequence of a system without accountability.

Israel had ratified the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT) in 1991, legally obligating it to prevent and prosecute torture. The CAT review concluded that for Palestinians: whether in interrogation rooms, prisons or under military occupation, this obligation was routinely violated and urged Israel to end administrative detention without charge, prohibit solitary confinement of children, guarantee medical access and family communication, investigate deaths in custody, and prosecute interrogators and commanders responsible for abuse.

No such commitments had been announced. For decades, UN bodies and rights groups had documented ill-treatment of Palestinians but what set this report apart was scale,

forensic detail and the explicit identification of torture as state policy. The findings had potential implications for international law, ICC proceedings and the future of Israel's military alliances.

Inside prisons, the situation remained largely sealed off... voices heard only through testimony smuggled out or spoken by survivors upon release. To them, this UN report represented something rare: recognition, but whether that would ultimately become accountability remained the unresolved and urgent question.

### **Britain as a Case Study**

The legal proceedings unfolding in The Hague did not occur in a diplomatic vacuum.

Every filing at the ICJ, every evidence presentation before the ICC, every expert legal opinion finding credible risk of genocide reverberated through the domestic politics of the states that had enabled Israel's assault.

In Washington, the Biden administration dismissed the proceedings as politically motivated and accelerated weapons shipments. In Berlin, officials invoked historical guilt to justify present-day complicity, but in London, the response was more fractured.

The British government maintained its support for Israel while its own internal legal advice warned of breaching international law. Cabinet ministers defended arms exports while their civil servants documented clear risks. This contradiction – between official policy and internal acknowledgement of illegality – created space for civil society to force the question into public view.

What emerged in Britain was not a straightforward governmental reckoning, but a more complex confrontation between state power and popular conscience. The pressure came from unexpected quarters: hunger strikers in Victorian prisons, doctors testifying before Parliament, independent journalists documenting what state media would not show. The United Kingdom became a case study in how complicity, when exposed, fractures not only governments but entire societies.

The legal battles at The Hague had opened a second front: one fought not in courtrooms, but in the streets, universities, and hearts of Western democracies themselves.

## **Reflection**

The legal reckoning unfolding around Gaza was never only about Israel or Palestine, it was simultaneously a trial for the soul of international law itself.

Could humanity's fragile rules outlast humanity's endless excuses? Could a system built by empires ever hold those empires to account? These were the profound questions being tested in real time through the meticulous work of lawyers, archivists, and activists.

The rubble of Gaza had become the archive of the twenty-first century's first major genocide case. The law, however slow and imperfect, had established itself as its chosen scribe; methodically recording, categorising and preserving the evidence for whatever justice might eventually be possible.

In the final analysis, the most formidable power of the law may not be its ability to punish – which is always constrained

by politics – but its capacity to remember. Justice, even when delayed or denied, preserves memory against the erosion of time and the deliberate rewriting of history. Every document filed in The Hague, every affidavit sworn in exile, every photograph uploaded by a witness moments before a communications blackout transformed personal grief into historical testimony that would outlive the perpetrators.

History may one day record the Gaza proceedings as the fleeting moment where legality and morality briefly converged – not perfectly, not completely, but visibly and powerfully – against the grim reality of raw, unaccountable power... and when that historical archive is finally unsealed for future generations, it will name not only those who bombed and ordered the bombing, but those who looked away, those who rationalised, those who profited, and those who enabled through their silence or complicity.

It will detail the complicity of the comfortable alongside the cruelty of the powerful in the same evidentiary record. The law, slow and procedural, infuriatingly patient with technicalities and delays, has one enduring, formidable strength that transcends its immediate failures: It remembers.

In the end, memory is the one force that can outlast even the most powerful empires, waiting patiently for history's judgement to catch up with power's impunity.

## CHAPTER 7

### *The War Comes Home*

*As Israel waged war on Gaza, a parallel war erupted far from the ruins of Rafah and Khan Younis.*

It unfolded not along border fences or tunnel networks, but inside the societies that armed Israel, financed its military, and shielded it diplomatically. What had long been presented as a distant conflict – managed through policy statements, humanitarian euphemisms, and ritualised expressions of concern – suddenly crossed borders.

It entered parliaments and courts, universities and workplaces, police stations and prisons: the division between foreign policy and domestic life collapsed. The war did not simply provoke disagreement, it destabilised the moral and political foundations of Western governance itself.

For decades, Western states had relied on distance – geographic, emotional, and informational – to contain the political cost of Israel’s wars. Gaza was meant to remain elsewhere: a security problem to be managed, a humanitarian crisis to be lamented, a tragedy to be regretted without consequence. When violence escalated, governments spoke of Israel’s “right to defend itself,” issued calls for restraint, and trusted that outrage would dissipate as it always had... In 2023 and 2024, that model failed.

By the spring of 2024, Gaza was no longer a remote catastrophe filtered through press briefings and official statements. Images circulated directly, relentlessly and without mediation. Starving children clawing at empty aid sacks, bombed hospitals with patients bleeding on floors and parents holding body parts in plastic bags because there was nothing left to bury intact. These scenes travelled faster than censorship could contain them; they appeared on phones during commutes, on laptops in offices, on classroom screens, at kitchen tables. They intruded into ordinary life and the moral dissonance could no longer be managed.

Citizens were being asked to reconcile democratic self-image with the visible reality of mass civilian destruction carried out with their taxes, their weapons, and their governments' political cover: the contradiction was no longer abstract, it was daily, visual and personal. The war had come home, arriving not as an academic debate about international law, but as a crisis of conscience.

Governments attempted to absorb it with familiar language – security, complexity, historical trauma – but those phrases began to sound hollow when set against the scale of devastation unfolding in real time. The gap between official rhetoric and observable reality widened into something unbridgeable and for many, the contradiction proved unbearable.

### **Israel Fractures**

Yael, a software engineer from Tel Aviv whose grandparents survived Auschwitz, described months of sleeplessness before reaching a decision she never imagined she would face.

Packing boxes in her apartment ahead of a move to Berlin, she said: “They raised me on ‘never again’. They meant never again for anyone. What we’re doing in Gaza – this is not what they survived for.”

At Ben Gurion Airport, she was one of thousands leaving that month. Some were young professionals quietly securing visas abroad, others were families with children, unsure whether they would return. All carried the same unspoken recognition: the future they had been promised – a state that reconciled security with morality – no longer existed in the form they had been taught to believe. This was not simply emigration. It was moral evacuation.

For a generation raised on the idea that Israel embodied both Jewish survival and liberal values, Gaza forced a reckoning. What remained was not just fear of instability, but the recognition that the state had crossed a threshold from which there was no easy return. The rupture was not confined to Israel; it radiated outward, destabilising the political and moral foundations of the Western alliance itself.

### **Aaron Bushnell**

On 26 February 2024, the crisis reached a moment of horrifying clarity in Washington DC. Aaron Bushnell, a 25-year-old US Air Force cyber-defence specialist, walked to the gates of the Israeli embassy wearing his military uniform, livestreamed his final words, and set himself on fire. “I will no longer be complicit in genocide,” he stated, as flames engulfed him.

Bushnell’s death shocked the world, but it did not emerge from nowhere. It was the most extreme articulation of a

sentiment spreading rapidly within Western societies: that participation in Israel's war – whether direct or indirect – had crossed a moral threshold. His act forced into public view what governments had tried desperately to suppress: the psychological toll of enforced complicity on those charged with sustaining the machinery of war.

Bushnell was not an outside activist; he was part of the military system that armed, defended, and enabled Israel's campaign. His final words were not symbolic, they were structural.

Within days, officials sought to frame his death as an isolated tragedy, a mental-health crisis detached from politics, but that framing failed. His words, spoken clearly before his death, circulated globally and resonated precisely because they articulated what many were struggling to name. The United Nations would soon describe Gaza's starvation as a "man-made famine." Bushnell had reached his conclusion earlier, without institutional language or diplomatic caution. What international bodies would later formalise, his final act had already declared.

What Gaza produced was not merely outrage, it produced dislocation: a tearing apart of the frameworks people used to understand themselves and their governments. For decades, Western citizens had been told that their states stood for human rights, legality, and restraint, even when engaging in violence abroad. Gaza destroyed that fiction in real time.

The myth of benevolent power could not survive high-definition proof. This was the rupture that everything else followed.

Before protests, before repression, before parliamentary collapse, there was this: millions of people recognising that what they were seeing could not be reconciled with what they had been taught to believe. The war had come home: first to conscience.

## **Mass Dissent**

In London, the war's domestic consequences were already unfolding on a mass scale. Week after week, demonstrators filled Whitehall, returning with a persistence that defied political fatigue, weather, and police containment. By the spring of 2024, protests had taken place for more than twenty consecutive weeks – an extraordinary duration in modern British political life.

The marches followed familiar routes, but their tone hardened as the death toll mounted. Protesters carried enlarged photographs of Gaza's dead children, holding them deliberately beside the crests of the British state: the gates of Downing Street, the walls of Parliament, the statues of former imperial figures. The juxtaposition was intentional and accusatory. "You did this," they chanted, voices echoing through the corridors of power.

Police sealed approaches to government buildings, erecting metal barriers and deploying mounted units. Downing Street became a fortified enclave, yet the crowds returned regardless, standing for hours as names were read aloud – men, women, children – one by one. The list lengthened each week. The ritual became both memorial and indictment.

What distinguished the Gaza protests from earlier moments of mass mobilisation was not their size alone, but their

duration. This was not an eruption followed by dissipation, it was a ritualised return, sustained week after week in defiance of fatigue, policing, and political dismissal.

By early 2024, the marches had acquired a rhythm. Saturdays belonged to Gaza. Protesters travelled in from across the country, often on the same trains, gathering at familiar assembly points before moving through central London. Routes varied as police attempted to contain numbers, but the destination remained constant: the symbolic core of British power.

Whitehall became a recurring stage. Parliament Square, Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park: each was revisited, reclaimed, and repurposed... what had once been civic space became moral ground.

Attendance fluctuated with weather and media attention, but the core remained. Families returned with children wrapped in keffiyehs, elderly demonstrators leaned on canes and veterans of anti-apartheid and Iraq War protests marched alongside teenagers attending their first demonstration. Doctors marched in scrubs, teachers carried handmade placards. The demographic breadth undermined official attempts to characterise the movement as marginal or extremist.

As weeks turned into months, protest acquired texture. Chants evolved. Banners accumulated wear. New faces learned the rhythms from old hands. Volunteer legal observers formed recognisable teams. First-aid tents appeared. Food and water were distributed. The movement adapted organically, developing the infrastructure of endurance.

One of the most powerful rituals emerged almost unintentionally when names of the dead were repeatedly read aloud. Sometimes it was children, sometimes entire families. The reading took hours while crowds stood in silence, broken only by occasional sobs or whispered prayers. Police lines shifted uncomfortably around an atmosphere that was neither festive nor confrontational, but it was accusatory in its restraint. This persistence posed a problem for the state.

British policing doctrine is calibrated to deal with disruption, not duration. Large demonstrations are expected to peak and pass, but when they don't, pressure builds to resolve the anomaly. The Gaza protests refused resolution.

Initially, the police adopted a facilitative posture. Officers escorted marches and redirected traffic. As weeks passed, the tone hardened... Conditions were imposed limiting routes, numbers, and duration while the protesters themselves were funnelled into narrower spaces. Mounted units appeared more frequently, while facial recognition, video and audio surveillance intensified.

By mid-2024, arrests increased noticeably. Individuals were detained for minor infractions like stepping outside designated areas, failing to follow directions quickly enough, displaying placards deemed provocative. In one such case, an elderly woman who had written "Resistance is not terrorism" on her placard was mobbed by officers next to the US Embassy and bundled into the nearby lobby of a residential tower block, which was then quickly surrounded by hundreds of demonstrators demanding they let her go. Legal observers noted a shift from crowd management to

deterrence. The justification was consistency, the effect was attrition.

Despite this, the protests continued. Each attempt at suppression generated new resolve and arrested protesters simply returned the following month. Legal funds swelled and solidarity networks expanded. The persistence extended far beyond London...

Regional cities organised their own weekly demonstrations. In Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Bristol, Cardiff, and Glasgow, protesters gathered reliably, even when numbers were smaller. The repetition itself became the message: this was not a moment of outrage but a sustained refusal.

Universities mirrored the streets. Teach-ins, sit-ins and encampments appeared on campuses across Britain. Students organised discussions on international law, media bias, and Britain's military role. Administrations warned against disruption and students stayed anyway.

Workplaces were not immune either. Trade unions passed motions condemning the war and Britain's involvement. Some unions refused to handle Israeli arms shipments, while others faced internal pressure from members demanding action beyond statements.

Faith groups joined openly. Mosques, churches, and synagogues hosted vigils and discussions. Jewish anti-Zionist organisations marched visibly at the head of demonstrations, carrying banners reading "Not In Our Name." Their presence complicated media narratives and unsettled political talking points that equated opposition to Israel with antisemitism. The state's response grew increasingly inconsistent...

On some weekends, protests were allowed to proceed with minimal interference. On others, police imposed sweeping restrictions, citing intelligence that was never publicly substantiated. Routes were changed at the last minute, assembly points were closed and protesters were 'kettled' for hours without explanation.

This unpredictability served a purpose: it exhausted organisers and discouraged casual participants, yet it also exposed the arbitrary nature of enforcement, reinforcing the perception that the law was being bent to political ends.

Media coverage struggled to keep pace with the persistence. Early protests received extensive attention, but as the weeks passed, coverage thinned. Reports focused on disruption rather than demands, arrests rather than arguments. The absence of novelty made sustained protest harder to narrate within conventional news cycles, but the protests did not need coverage to endure, they had become self-sustaining.

Participants spoke of a growing sense of obligation. Once you had marched ten times, stopping felt like abandonment. Gaza did not pause, so neither could they. The protests also functioned as informal counter-publics. Information circulated that rarely appeared in mainstream reporting: eyewitness accounts from Gaza, legal analyses of siege tactics, testimony from aid workers. Speakers addressed crowds not as spectators but as participants in a moral struggle.

Access to alternative narratives undermined the state's informational monopoly. It produced its own experts, its own evidence, its own record and it made official denials harder to sustain. As repression increased, so did adaptation... Smaller, decentralised actions proliferated

while banner drops, sit-ins, workplace disruptions and targeted protests replaced mass marches when restrictions tightened. The movement learned to move laterally and the cumulative effect was profound.

By late 2024, it was no longer possible to describe opposition to the war as episodic or emotional; it had become a sustained feature of public life. The state could ignore it rhetorically, but it could not make it disappear. In this sense, the protests did not fail to influence policy because they were ineffective, they failed because the political system was structured to absorb dissent without yielding to it, yet even that absorption came at a cost.

Each weekend that protesters returned, the contradiction sharpened. Britain presented itself as a democracy committed to human rights, while repeatedly policing, restricting, and criminalising those who demanded consistency. The streets became an archive of that contradiction: what the protests revealed was not simply dissent, but the limits of a political system designed to wait it out.

### **Direct Action**

Public outrage did not remain symbolic for long. In April 2024, activists from Palestine Action blockaded an Instro Precision factory in Sandwich, Kent. The site, owned by Israeli defence firm Elbit Systems, manufactured components used in Israel's drones and missile systems.

Protesters arrived before dawn, locking themselves to entrances and machinery while others scaled the perimeter fence and spray-painted the building with the words KILLER TECH and UK COMPLICIT... The production of

weapons inside, that were being used to kill children in Gaza, was halted for thirty-six hours in an action that was surgical and precise.

It transformed Britain's role in the war from diplomatic abstraction into physical reality, exposing the infrastructure underpinning complicity. Elbit Systems had long insisted that its British subsidiaries operated independently of Israeli military operations, but blockade challenged that fiction directly. Complicity, the activists argued, was not an opinion, it was a supply chain.

Across Europe, similar scenes unfolded with increasing frequency. In Berlin, mass demonstrations defied newly imposed bans on Palestinian flags. Protesters marched knowing they risked arrest simply for carrying symbols of solidarity. In Amsterdam, dock workers refused to unload Israeli arms shipments, invoking a long tradition of labour resistance to war. In Dublin, vast crowds surrounded the Dáil in solidarity with South Africa's genocide case at the International Court of Justice. In Madrid, students occupied the University of Complutense, hanging banners from balconies that read: 'Our Silence Is Their Weapon'.

These protests were not centrally coordinated; they did not rely on a single organisation or ideological leadership. They were decentralised, continuous, and unpredictable: a global refusal that governments could neither lead nor control.

Together, they represented something unprecedented: a sustained, transnational rejection of official policy that cut across traditional political divisions. Conservatives marched alongside socialists and faith groups stood beside secular activists. Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities protested together. The familiar mechanisms of political

containment – party loyalty, media framing, appeals to national interest – began to fail.

## **The American Campus Uprising**

The rupture spread beyond the streets and into the institutions that shape Western intellectual and moral authority.

By mid-2024, more than 350 American campuses had seen occupations and mass walkouts. Students erected tent cities, organised daily assemblies, and demanded divestment from Israeli-linked arms firms, surveillance companies, and financial institutions underwriting the war. University administrations responded with injunctions, disciplinary hearings, and police intervention.

At Columbia University, riot police were deployed to clear encampments. At UCLA, counter-protest violence erupted under the watch of campus security. At universities across the country, students were arrested en masse, often dragged across quads and forced to the ground. Images circulated globally, shattering the illusion that liberal democracies could suppress dissent quietly or without spectacle. In all, across over sixty US college campuses, more than 3,100 protesters – including many students – were arrested during pro-Palestinian and Gaza solidarity protests.

The parallels with Vietnam-era campus repression were explicit and widely noted... once again, universities were being used as laboratories for testing how far dissent could be suppressed in the name of national interest. And yet, each crackdown produced the opposite of its intended effect. Arrests multiplied the movement's visibility, court cases transformed students into symbols and faculty resignations

followed, as academics publicly rejected what they described as the policing of thought and the criminalisation of moral opposition.

The boundary between foreign policy and domestic legitimacy dissolved completely. Gaza was no longer external. It was present in lecture halls, senate chambers, and police blotters. Governments found themselves defending not merely an ally's conduct abroad, but their own use of force against citizens whose only offence was refusal. The moral logic that justified repression overseas was being imported wholesale into domestic governance.

That logic rested on a single premise: dissent itself constituted a threat.

### **The Oxford Union Vote**

The rupture reached the institutions that reproduce elite consensus.

On 1 December 2024, the UK's Oxford Union passed a motion declaring Israel an apartheid state responsible for genocide by an overwhelming margin. The debate was not a procedural exercise, it became a generational confrontation with inherited narratives.

The decisive moment came during a speech by Palestinian author Susan Abulhawa, who traced the historical logic of dispossession from 1948 to Gaza's destruction. She spoke not in abstractions but in human terms, detailing the violence inflicted on Palestinian families across generations and her address was not a plea but an indictment.

The hall erupted in sustained applause. The vote that followed reflected a broader shift: a willingness among

younger elites to name what older political classes still refused to acknowledge... political systems built on decades of managed consensus began to strain.

### **Parliamentary Collapse**

The strain erupted openly in British Parliament when on 13 January 2025, MPs from across the political spectrum confronted ministers over arms exports and Israel policy in unusually blunt terms.

Other MPs accused ministers of moral abdication and the selective application of human-rights standards, condemning abuses by adversaries while excusing them in allies. The tone was confrontational, the patience exhausted and the government's position grew increasingly untenable.

Questions were raised repeatedly about why Israel's then ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely – a vocal advocate of settlement expansion – remained in post despite repeated violations cited by the United Nations. Time and again, she continued to be interviewed on mainstream British news channels where she stated emphatically: "Israel is not bombing civilians" and the IDF "never targets civilians" ... she had in 2020 even described the Nakba as "an Arab lie".

Ministers refused to consider expulsion, but their evasions only widened the gulf between executive power and parliamentary scrutiny. At Prime Minister's Questions on 13 November 2024, Independent MP Ayoub Khan challenged Sir Keir Starmer directly on the definition of genocide under international law. "Genocide", Khan noted, "was determined not by numbers but by intent". Starmer replied that he was "well aware of the definition," and that this was precisely why he had not used the term. The exchange captured the

governing class's dilemma in miniature: awareness without acknowledgment, knowledge without naming.

By May 2025, the pressure reached a breaking point. During an extraordinary Commons debate, the Minister for the Middle East Hamish Falconer warned that Israel's announced plans for territorial occupation and mass displacement would be unacceptable under international law. SNP leader Stephen Flynn described the policy as "tantamount to ethnic cleansing."

Then Conservative MP Mark Pritchard – long regarded as a reliable defender of Israel – rose to speak...

*"I have been in this House for 20 years, and for many years I have supported Israel – pretty much at all costs, quite frankly – but today I say that I got it wrong. I condemn Israel for what it is doing to the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. Of course, Israeli and Jewish people should have the right to live in peace, but so do the Palestinian people. I have said it before, and I will say it again: the life of a Palestinian child is as precious as the life of a Jewish child."*

What had once been unsayable was now spoken aloud, on the parliamentary record. What followed was not a single moment of courage, but a prolonged institutional struggle to absorb that truth without acting on it. What unfolded in the House of Commons over the following months was not a single rupture, but a grinding, procedural unravelling of Britain's long-standing Israel consensus.

The confrontation did not take the form of a dramatic vote or an immediate policy reversal. Instead, it manifested as repetition: the same questions asked week after week, the same evasions offered in reply, the same legal thresholds

acknowledged but never crossed. This repetition was itself revealing. It exposed a political system attempting to absorb moral shock without allowing it to translate into consequence.

Parliamentary scrutiny intensified as casualty figures mounted. MPs returned repeatedly to the issue of arms exports, pressing ministers on whether licences remained compatible with Britain's obligations under international law. The government's responses followed a familiar pattern: assurances that assessments were "ongoing," that no clear breach had been established, and that Israel's intentions remained defensive.

These formulations were carefully constructed. They avoided direct engagement with evidence while preserving the appearance of diligence. When challenged on whether the government accepted the authority of the International Court of Justice, ministers insisted that Britain respected international institutions. When asked whether provisional measures ordered by the Court should trigger a reassessment of military support, they declined to answer directly. Respect, it appeared, did not entail restraint.

MPs who attempted to force clarity were met with procedural resistance. Urgent questions were downgraded, motions were delayed or scheduled at times unlikely to attract media attention and requests for detailed briefings were redirected to written responses that arrived weeks later, stripped of specificity... The effect was cumulative: what initially appeared as caution began to resemble obstruction.

Liberal Democrat MP Layla Moran returned to the floor repeatedly, citing reports from Israeli and international media describing the Netzarim Corridor as a designated "kill

zone,” where civilians were shot on sight. Each time, she asked whether the government had assessed these reports in relation to its own legal obligations and each time, the response circled back to the same refrain: the government could not comment on operational details and had no evidence of wrongdoing sufficient to alter policy.

Other MPs followed... Questions were raised about the targeting of hospitals, the obstruction of aid convoys, and the use of starvation as a method of warfare. Ministers acknowledged humanitarian concern while declining to connect concern to action. As one backbench MP remarked privately, the government’s position appeared to be that legality existed as a concept, not as a constraint.

The tension escalated during committee hearings, where officials were questioned outside the theatre of the Commons chamber. Here, the language was more revealing: civil servants acknowledged that intelligence sharing with Israel was “routine” and “long-standing” but when pressed on safeguards, they spoke in generalities and when asked who bore responsibility if shared intelligence was used in unlawful strikes, answers became evasive. The ambiguity was strategic; by dispersing responsibility across departments and allies, no single actor could be held accountable.

By early 2025, dissent crossed party lines more openly. More Conservative MPs who had previously defended Israel without qualification began to recalibrate their language. Statements emphasising humanitarian concern hardened into explicit warnings about legal exposure while references to “unacceptable conduct” appeared in speeches where unconditional support had once been assumed.

Mark Pritchard's intervention marked a symbolic breaking point, but it was not an isolated conversion. It reflected weeks of internal pressure, constituent correspondence, and accumulating evidence that could no longer be reconciled with established talking points, yet even as rhetoric shifted, policy remained static.

Votes that might have forced action were avoided. Amendments were defeated or withdrawn and the government relied on its majority and procedural control to contain dissent within acceptable boundaries: the result was a Parliament speaking more loudly while doing very little... parliament spoke, but it did not act.

This dissonance did not go unnoticed. Outside Westminster, protesters timed demonstrations to coincide with debates, chanting as MPs entered and exited the chamber. Inside, MPs reported being confronted by constituents demanding to know why expressions of concern had not translated into concrete measures; the legitimacy gap widened.

What Parliament demonstrated during this period was not merely division, but incapacity. The system could articulate moral discomfort but could not convert it into restraint. It could recognise legal risk while continuing to incur it and it could debate genocide while continuing to arm a state accused of committing it.

This paralysis was not accidental, it was the product of a political culture in which alliance loyalty outweighed accountability, and where the costs of action were perceived as greater than the costs of complicity. In that sense, the Commons did not fail loudly, it failed procedurally, through delay, diffusion, and deferral ... in doing so, it mirrored the broader Western response to Gaza itself.

The pillars of Britain's Israel policy – maintained across governments and generations – were beginning to crack under the combined weight of evidence, law, and conscience. The rupture visible in Britain was not an anomaly, it was part of a broader breakdown unfolding across the Western world.

In France, MPs walked out of parliamentary sessions rather than sit through speeches defending Israel's assault. In Germany, officials invoked historic responsibility to justify unconditional support, only to face mass demonstrations accusing the state of weaponising Holocaust memory to silence opposition.

In Dublin, the language coming from a European parliament grew steadily more explicit as the scale of Gaza's destruction became impossible to deny. In May 2025, Ireland's Tánaiste and Foreign Minister addressed the Dáil with a bluntness rarely heard in Western capitals.

“What is happening goes against our humanity,” he told the chamber. “It goes against the strongly held values of the people of Ireland.” He condemned the siege and the obstruction of aid, warning that only “an immediate end to hostilities and a full, unimpeded resumption of humanitarian aid delivery can prevent a further descent into that grim reality for Gazans.”

Days later, the Irish parliament went further. In a formal motion, deputies declared that they “strongly condemn the continuing Israeli military operations in Gaza” and that they “abhor Israel's clear plans to not only persist but go further, to starve, to displace, to kill, to conquer.” The language was not diplomatic, nor was it hedged. The Dáil described what

it was witnessing in a single, devastating phrase: “evil beyond words.”

That judgment did not emerge in isolation. Months earlier, Ireland’s parliament had already adopted a non-binding motion stating that “genocide is being perpetrated before our eyes by Israel in Gaza.” For a Western legislature to use the word genocide in an official resolution was extraordinary. It meant that inside one of Europe’s oldest democracies, Gaza was no longer being framed as a tragic war, but as a crime unfolding in real time.

Confronted with sustained opposition, Western governments reached instinctively for the instruments of control. Emergency powers were normalised, definitions of extremism were widened with legal language stretched to criminalise association, expression, and even proximity.

The rhetorical shift was swift and unmistakable: Protest became “intimidation,” journalism was reframed as “information warfare,” and solidarity was recast as “support” for terrorism. Each redefinition lowered the threshold for state intervention. As dissent persisted and legitimacy eroded, the state shifted from managing fallout to containing it.

Nowhere was this transformation clearer than in Britain.

### **State Repression**

The alignment between foreign policy and domestic repression became increasingly explicit. These measures did not emerge as a series of overreactions, but as a coherent governing response to a crisis of legitimacy.

In late 2024, Britain's Crown Prosecution Service charged Tony Greenstein, a seventy-one-year-old Jewish anti-Zionist activist and writer, under the Terrorism Act for a social-media post expressing support for Palestinian resistance. The charge carried a potential fourteen-year prison sentence. What followed showed that this was not a symbolic gesture but the opening move in a far more aggressive campaign.

Greenstein was arrested in a dawn raid by counter-terrorism police, who seized his computers, phone and digital archives. When he applied for their return, the police told the court they were being retained because they would provide "a highly relevant insight into his mind". He was not accused of planning violence or providing material support; his alleged offence was political expression. As Greenstein himself put it, "You might think I had been preparing a bomb for the Israeli embassy. In fact my crime was disagreeing with government policy."

As his case moved toward Crown Court in early 2026 under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act, Greenstein warned that he no longer knew what he was legally permitted to write or say about Gaza in his capacity as a journalist. "For the first time in my thirty-six-year career," he wrote, "I am no longer sure what by law I can say about an issue of major international importance." Other reporters and commentators critical of Israel, he said, were already facing similar forms of intimidation: the law was being repurposed to turn analysis of a foreign war into a form of domestic extremism.

The symbolism was unmistakable... if a Jewish critic of Zionism could be prosecuted as a terrorism suspect for speech alone, no one was immune. The message was not

limited to Palestine activists, it extended to journalists, academics and anyone whose words might be construed as sympathy for an occupied people resisting a military power.

The crackdown accelerated in the summer of 2025. The UK government moved to proscribe Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation, placing it in the same legal category as ISIS with a justification that relied on a deliberately expansive interpretation of terrorism legislation.

In court, government lawyers acknowledged that the proscription was “draconian, and deliberately so.”

Support for the group, membership, or even the display of its logo became punishable by up to fourteen years in prison. The implications were immediate and chilling: by the end of September 2025, official UK government statistics showed that 1,630 of the 1,886 terrorism-related arrests in Britain were linked to Palestine Action, meaning that almost nine out of every ten terrorism arrests in the country were connected to support for a single non-violent protest movement.

By the end of the year, human rights organisations and civil society monitoring groups estimated that more than 2,700 people had been arrested for expressing support for Palestine Action, including blind people, disabled people and protesters in their eighties, many of them detained simply for holding placards, the most common of which read: ‘I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action.’

What had once been a counter-terrorism framework aimed at violent networks was now being used to police political speech on an unprecedented scale. Those detained included clergy, academics, students, pensioners and campaigners

with no history of violence with many charged for holding signs pleading for the slaughter of civilians in Gaza to stop, outside government buildings.

Legal observers warned that the decision effectively criminalised protest itself. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the proscription as a: “dangerous abuse of counter-terrorism powers.”

Behind the scenes, the political nature of the decision became clearer still. It later emerged that the Home Office had determined Palestine Action met the legal threshold for proscription months before the protest cited as justification. The ban had not been reactive, it had been premeditated, awaiting a politically useful trigger.

Financial repression followed swiftly... banks froze the accounts of grassroots Palestine solidarity groups without warning or explanation and fundraising platforms suspended pages. Payments intended for humanitarian aid were delayed or blocked entirely and organisations that had operated lawfully for years found themselves suddenly unable to pay rent, staff, or legal fees. “This is financial censorship,” one campaigner said, “They are preventing aid from reaching Gaza by strangling the organisations that support it”. Campaigners called it ‘financial asphyxiation’.

The state’s coercive apparatus began to mirror the war it defended... As the Metropolitan Police was bundling old people into vans and charging them for terrorism, the force acquired a fleet of SandCat armoured vehicles manufactured by the Israeli defence company Plasan and marketed as “battle-tested” in Gaza. They were designed for urban warfare: armoured hulls, gun ports,

and riot-suppression configurations: critics dubbed them “genocide-tested.”

The symbolism was impossible to miss... British police were now deploying Israeli military hardware refined in Gaza’s ruins against Gaza’s supporters in London streets. Training materials emphasised crowd control, containment, and rapid dispersal; tactics increasingly deployed against peaceful demonstrators; what had been foreign war was becoming domestic governance.

Across Europe and North America, similar measures proliferated. Palestinian flags were banned from public spaces and social media posts were criminalised. Anti-Zionism was increasingly conflated with antisemitism by official decree while universities revised codes of conduct to restrict political expression. Cultural institutions cancelled exhibitions, performances, and lectures in anticipation of controversy... each measure revealed the same underlying truth. Free speech in the West was conditional.

What made the moment uniquely destabilising was not repression alone, but its visibility. The contradiction between proclaimed democratic values and lived reality became impossible to conceal. Governments that had spent decades lecturing the world on human rights now struggled to explain why peaceful protesters were being beaten, arrested, and surveilled for opposing mass civilian slaughter. Media outlets that championed free expression abroad remained conspicuously silent when it was curtailed at home.

The war had not only come home, it had begun to reshape the rules of governance. This tightening at home coincided

with a deepening of Britain's material and operational involvement in the war itself.

### **Britain's Hidden Hand**

While ministers publicly insisted that Britain was urging restraint, de-escalation and respect for international law, British military infrastructure was being woven directly into Israel's war effort.

From RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, Royal Air Force surveillance aircraft flew hundreds of reconnaissance missions over Gaza throughout the campaign; flights that did not pause during declared ceasefires. Their purpose, the Ministry of Defence maintained, was narrowly defined: intelligence gathering in support of "hostage rescue" and situational awareness, but that explanation quickly unravelled under scrutiny.

Open-source flight-tracking data revealed that RAF intelligence platforms repeatedly orbited Gaza during periods of intense Israeli bombardment. On at least one occasion, a British surveillance aircraft was tracked landing at Israel's Nevatim airbase: the operational hub of the Israeli Air Force's F-35 squadrons conducting bombing raids across the Strip. The Ministry of Defence declined to explain why a British intelligence asset had landed at the centre of Israel's air campaign, or what information may have been exchanged there with requests for clarification met with delays, non-answers, or blanket invocations of national security.

The timing of British reconnaissance missions repeatedly coincided with mass-casualty events in Gaza. When asked whether intelligence shared by the UK could have been used for targeting, ministers refused to answer directly. Instead,

they reiterated that Britain operated “within the law” – a formulation that avoided addressing whether the law itself was being violated.

Under international law, the provision of intelligence that materially assists military operations can establish direct responsibility for the consequences of those operations. Britain was no longer merely supplying weapons licences, diplomatic cover, or rhetorical support, it was embedded in the operational chain of a war already under scrutiny by the ICJ.

RAF transport aircraft also made near-daily flights to Israel... The government refused to disclose the nature of their cargo, citing security exemptions and Freedom of Information requests were rejected or indefinitely delayed. Officials declined to confirm whether the planes were carrying weapons, spare parts or other military equipment essential to sustaining Israel’s campaign.

At the same time, Israeli military refuelling tankers landed repeatedly at RAF Brize Norton, the same base that would later be targeted by Palestine Action activists protesting Britain’s military role. The government ultimately cited this operation as evidence of the group’s alleged threat, while declining to acknowledge the activity being protested.

Under international law, genocide is not something to be merely condemned but something that must be actively prevented. The Genocide Convention requires states to use all reasonably available means to stop it, including cutting arms, money and political support and pursuing legal accountability. Because those duties bind governments, citizens are legally protected when they use protest, boycott, exposure and civil resistance to block their own state’s

complicity. This is not a political view but the core logic of the law itself: when mass extermination is underway, people power becomes a lawful instrument of prevention.

The pattern was unmistakable. Britain was sustaining Israel's war effort logistically and operationally while publicly performing concern and restraint, even as it criminalised those who tried to stop what was being done in their name.

### **The Missing Fourth Estate**

The media response was near-total silence... Despite the scale and significance of Britain's involvement, the BBC published only a single article on the surveillance flights over more than a year. There were no sustained investigations, no editorial campaigns, no televised debates examining the legal implications of intelligence sharing in a war under active international adjudication. Commercial broadcasters followed the same path: the absence was conspicuous.

Britain was conducting hundreds of military missions in support of a foreign assault that had killed tens of thousands of civilians, using public funds, without meaningful parliamentary debate or sustained media scrutiny. The silence functioned as a form of insulation; protecting ministers from accountability by keeping the public uninformed.

This omission was not accidental. To report the flights fully would have collapsed the carefully maintained distinction between "support" and participation, forcing a reckoning with Britain's potential legal exposure under international humanitarian law, so silence became insulation.

As the celebrated British political journalist Peter Osborne, author of *Complicit: Britain's Role in the Destruction of Gaza*, has argued, Britain's role in Palestine did not begin with the current war. British complicity, exercised not only through diplomacy and arms but through the management of information, runs from the 1917 Balfour Declaration through the Mandate period to the present day. It is a continuous system of enabling dispossession while protecting those in power from consequence. What has changed is not policy but visibility.

From the start, Britain's leading newspapers played a central role in this process, amplified by their extraordinary reach. Titles such as *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph* circulated not only across Britain but throughout the empire, read by officials, settlers and elites from Cairo to Delhi. Their framing of Palestine as a story of progress and development, with Zionist settlement presented as modernisation and Palestinian resistance as disorder, became the lens through which an imperial public understood events. The machinery of British rule, including emergency laws, land transfers, mass arrests and executions, rarely appeared as the main story. Readers saw instability, not the colonial engineering behind it.

The same framing shaped coverage of the 1948 catastrophe. As more than 700,000 Palestinians were expelled and hundreds of villages destroyed, papers such as *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Herald* treated the event as a tragic conflict between communities. Britain's role in arming and training Zionist forces, disarming Palestinians, structuring land ownership through law and withdrawing in a way that enabled mass displacement was written out. The violence was presented as history, not as policy.

That pattern reappeared during the 1956 Suez crisis. Britain secretly colluded with Israel and France to attack Egypt after Nasser nationalised the canal, using Israel as a forward strike force for imperial aims. Yet newspapers such as the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express* and *The Times*, which then enjoyed circulations in the millions far exceeding those of today's press, largely accepted the government's cover story of peacekeeping and restraint. Israel was shown acting defensively while Britain's orchestration of the war faded from view.

In earlier eras this system could survive. With mass readerships at home and loyal distribution networks across the colonies, a small number of powerful newsrooms could shape what entire populations believed. Distance, delay and editorial control filtered imperial violence before it reached the public. In Gaza it unfolded in real time. Images from hospitals, phones in the rubble, satellite data and even Israeli soldiers' own posts spread globally before official narratives could stabilise. The state's ability to manage what was seen began to collapse; this is the through-line Osborne is pointing to. The story was never that Britain stopped supporting dispossession, it was that, for the first time the public could no longer be kept from seeing it.

The mainstream media's collective silence in the present conflict was often defended as caution. Editors invoked impartiality, legal risk, and the need to avoid inflaming tensions. In practice, these justifications functioned as filters, shaping not only how stories were framed, but which stories were deemed publishable at all; the result was not overt censorship, but systematic omission.

The proscription of Palestine Action was reported largely as a public-order measure, with minimal examination of its implications for free expression and protest. Arrests were covered episodically, stripped of context, framed as isolated incidents rather than manifestations of a broader shift in governance. Legal complexity became a pretext for avoidance, with editors citing the difficulty of explaining terrorism legislation or international humanitarian law. The effect was to exclude precisely the information necessary for democratic accountability.

Silence was also produced through framing. Coverage that did appear frequently emphasised disruption, inconvenience, and disorder. Protesters were reduced to numbers, slogans, or traffic delays. Their arguments – and the evidence underpinning them – were marginalised.

At the same time, official statements were reproduced with minimal interrogation while claims of restraint, legality, and humanitarian concern were reported as positions rather than propositions requiring verification. The asymmetry was consistent: power spoke, dissent was described.

Journalists working within mainstream outlets described informal constraints. Gaza-related stories were subjected to heightened editorial scrutiny, with accusatory language often softened while context was trimmed, if it was presented in the first place. Legal departments played an increasingly prominent role in editorial decisions. The result was not a single red line, but a narrowing corridor of acceptable discourse.

This narrowing was rarely acknowledged openly but manifested instead as fatigue. Editors claimed audiences were “over it.” Producers worried about repetition and

novelty became a gatekeeping criterion, even as the underlying reality remained unchanged. Yet the very persistence of Gaza – its refusal to recede – made silence harder to sustain.

Independent media filled some of the gap, but their reach was limited. Social media circulated images and testimony, but without the institutional amplification that mainstream outlets provide. The information ecosystem fractured, producing parallel realities rather than shared understanding.

A society cannot debate what it is not shown. It cannot hold power to account for actions it is not invited to examine. Silence does not merely obscure reality; it shapes it.

By mid-2025, the gap between what many citizens knew and what the media acknowledged had become a source of deep mistrust. Audiences turned away not because they were disengaged, but because they recognised omission. The war had come home not only to streets and prisons, but to the credibility of the institutions that claimed to inform the public, resulting in not merely controversy, but a crisis of legitimacy.

### **Policing the Consequences**

What had unfolded in the prosecutions, proscription orders, financial freezes and mass arrests was not a series of disconnected excesses, but the emergence of a governing logic designed to contain a crisis of legitimacy without conceding power, in which the purpose was not simply to suppress protest but to manage the political fallout of a war that could no longer be defended on its own terms.

Public demonstrations were met with heavier policing and expanded surveillance powers, with arrests increasingly justified under public-order and counter-terrorism legislation originally intended for organised crime and political violence, while the threshold for intervention steadily fell as Gaza solidarity itself was reclassified as a security risk, and activists reported being stopped at airports, questioned about their political views and warned that continued involvement could affect their employment or their right to travel, in what lawyers described as a climate of intimidation designed not merely to secure convictions but to exhaust and deter.

The legal architecture underpinning this shift was deliberately elastic, with terms such as “support,” “association,” and “encouragement” stretched to encompass speech, symbolism and proximity, not as a defect of drafting but as a feature of design, since the state did not need to prosecute everyone in order to impose discipline, only to make examples, allowing uncertainty itself to do much of the work.

What made the domestic response to Gaza especially destabilising was not repression alone but the way it was administered, because enforcement operated less through dramatic trials than through procedure, ambiguity and delay, presenting itself not as punishment but as neutral process, a distinction that allowed the state to claim fidelity to the rule of law even as the scope of what could be sanctioned expanded far beyond anything previously tolerated.

In practice, repression unfolded across multiple legal layers simultaneously, with public-order legislation governing

where protests could occur, how long they could last and what forms of expression were permitted, while terrorism law hovered in the background to heighten risk and uncertainty and financial regulation supplied a quieter but equally powerful lever by restricting the flow of resources to organisations deemed problematic, each layer reinforcing the others and producing a web of compliance rather than a single point of control.

The Crown Prosecution Service played a central role in this system, because rather than pursuing rapid convictions prosecutors relied on delay, postponing charging decisions, adjourning bail hearings and imposing conditions that restricted movement, association and speech for months at a time, so that the punishment lay not in sentence but in process, a reality defence lawyers described as a system calibrated to exhaust, in which repeated court appearances, mounting legal costs and prolonged uncertainty destabilised livelihoods and isolated defendants from their support networks, ensuring that even when cases were eventually dropped the damage had already been done.

The elasticity of legal definitions proved decisive, since displaying a symbol, sharing a post or attending a meeting, actions once understood as political expression, could now be treated as evidence, blurring the boundary between advocacy and criminality until ambiguity itself began to function as deterrence, with people withdrawing not because they believed themselves guilty but because the risk had become incalculable.

The cumulative effect was to narrow the field of permissible action as organisers grew cautious, events were cancelled, statements softened or withheld and

internal tensions intensified while groups argued over how far they could go without triggering enforcement, with the chill extending into professional life as teachers were warned against discussing Gaza in classrooms, university administrators issued guidance urging staff to avoid “inflammatory language” and journalists described heightened legal scrutiny of Gaza-related reporting, with lawyers increasingly shaping editorial decisions that had once been matters of journalistic judgment, all without any need for explicit censorship because the law’s ambiguity did the work.

These measures operated unevenly, since well-resourced institutions could navigate the terrain with legal teams and insurance while independent journalists, students and grassroots activists could not, leaving enforcement to fall most heavily on those least able to absorb it and allowing the system to reproduce inequality while continuing to claim neutrality.

Officials continued to insist that Britain remained a free society governed by the rule of law, which was formally true insofar as courts remained open, appeals were possible and rights still existed on paper, but substantively the space for dissent had narrowed as the distance between legality and legitimacy widened, leaving actions lawful in the narrow sense while corroding the democratic principles they claimed to protect so that law became not a shield against power but a means of exercising it.

This transformation required no authoritarian declaration, emerging instead incrementally through precedent, discretion and administrative inertia, as each decision could be defended in isolation even while taken together they

amounted to a fundamental shift in how dissent was governed.

The war's domestic logic was now embedded in statute, procedure and practice, leaving not the absence of freedom but its conditionality, as process ceased to function as deterrence and gave way to confinement.

## **Behind Bars**

By the autumn of 2025, the consequences of Britain's Gaza policy had reached one of the state's most controlled and least visible institutions. Here, the distinction between accusation and punishment collapsed entirely.

In November, six Palestine Action activists held on remand at HMP Pentonville began a hunger strike. None had been convicted of any crime; they were being held under conditions that, according to their lawyers, bore little relation to the legal presumption of innocence. Their demands were specific and limited: bail hearings without indefinite delay, an end to prolonged isolation, access to legal correspondence without interference, and the reversal of the organisation's proscription. The hunger strike was not framed as martyrdom, it was a procedural protest against a system that had ceased to distinguish between accusation and punishment.

Within days, the strike began to spread. Prisoners in other facilities signalled their intention to join in solidarity. Messages emerged through lawyers and family visits describing conditions that blurred the line between detention and reprisal. Remand prisoners reported being locked in their cells for extended periods, denied access to communal areas, and subjected to constant monitoring.

The strikers described confiscation of religious items, interference with legal mail, and verbal harassment by staff. Requests for independent medical oversight were delayed or ignored. Supporters outside warned publicly that the state appeared willing to let prisoners' health deteriorate rather than concede political ground.

One supporter attending daily vigils outside the prison said: "They're being punished for what they believe, not for what they've been convicted of, because they haven't been convicted of anything."

On 15 November 2025, hundreds gathered outside HMP Pentonville in solidarity. The demonstration was peaceful and tightly organised. Protesters carried placards demanding bail for the prisoners and an end to what they described as politically motivated detention. Police erected barriers and deployed officers in significant numbers, monitoring the crowd closely.

Among those present was independent journalist David Lear, who had been filming Gaza-related protests and solidarity actions across Britain. During a confrontation initiated by a counter-protester, Lear collapsed. Emergency services were called but he was pronounced dead shortly afterwards.

No major British news outlet reported his death. Not the BBC or The Guardian, not Sky News and not ITV. A journalist had died while documenting Gaza solidarity in Britain ... and the media erased him. Those present at the protest described the silence as surreal. One attendee later said: "If this had happened anywhere else in the world, they'd be calling it repression. Because it happened here, they pretended it didn't happen at all."

The absence of coverage was not incidental. To acknowledge Lear's death would have required acknowledging the conditions that produced it: the criminalisation of protest, the escalation of policing, and the extension of Gaza's moral crisis into Britain's penal system. It would have forced questions about why a journalist covering peaceful protest had died in the shadow of a maximum-security response, and why that fact alone was deemed unreportable.

The hunger strike at Pentonville continued. Prisoners refused food while supporters kept vigil outside the gates and families waited anxiously for word from their lawyers. Medical staff conducted routine checks, but campaigners warned that oversight remained insufficient and opaque. As several Palestine Action hunger strikers were hospitalised and their health deteriorated, the media response remained muted. The only moment to break through came when Greta Thunberg was carried away by police for holding a sign reading, "I support Palestine Action prisoners. I oppose genocide."

Inside the media ecosystem, silence persisted and in that sense, silence functioned as policy. By omitting certain stories, media institutions insulated political power from scrutiny. They reduced the reputational cost of repression and they limited the feedback loop between public outrage and political consequence. This was not a conspiracy, it was a convergence of incentives: legal risk aversion, access journalism, institutional inertia, and an internalised sense of where boundaries lay.

The prison, long a symbol of Victorian punishment and modern overcrowding, became an unlikely but fitting endpoint for Gaza's domestic journey. What began as an

assault thousands of miles away had reshaped Britain's relationship with dissent, legality, and truth. The war had followed its supporters home, into the cells and corridors of the British penal system.

### **The State Consolidates**

By mid-2025, the political response to Gaza's domestic fallout had hardened into something recognisable and systematic. What began as reactive policing and ad hoc prosecutions evolved into a coherent posture: dissent was no longer an inconvenience to be managed, but a threat to be neutralised.

In Britain, ministers continued to insist that protest rights were being respected and that enforcement actions were proportionate. In practice, the boundary between lawful expression and criminal liability grew increasingly indistinct.

Public-order legislation was applied expansively and arrests were made pre-emptively. Protest conditions were tightened to the point of functional bans while demonstrations that had taken place weekly for months without incident were suddenly reclassified as security risks, justified by vague references to public safety and national cohesion.

Lawyers representing protesters reported a marked shift in prosecutorial tone. Charges were framed broadly, bail conditions were restrictive and delays were multiplied: the process itself became punitive.

The Terrorism Act, originally drafted to address organised political violence, was repurposed to regulate speech and

association. Definitions of “support” and “encouragement” were interpreted elastically, creating legal exposure not only for activists but for journalists, academics, and ordinary citizens engaging in public debate. The chilling effect was immediate.

Community organisations cancelled meetings and venues withdrew bookings. Universities quietly advised staff to avoid controversial topics. Journalists reported increased editorial scrutiny of Gaza-related coverage, with language softened, stories delayed, or dropped entirely. What was emerging was not a single act of censorship, but an ecosystem of constraint: the policing of speech was mirrored by the policing of information.

As Britain’s military role in Gaza became harder to deny, official communication grew more opaque. Requests for information about surveillance flights, intelligence sharing, and arms transfers were met with blanket refusals. Parliamentary questions were deflected, oversight mechanisms stalled.

The Ministry of Defence repeated the same formulation when pressed: Britain was acting “within the law.” What that law permitted, and who interpreted it, remained conspicuously undefined.

The gap between rhetoric and reality widened further as international legal scrutiny intensified. While South Africa’s case proceeded at the International Court of Justice, British ministers declined to comment substantively, citing the need to respect judicial independence; even as they continued to provide material and operational support to one of the parties under investigation. This posture revealed

a deeper contradiction: the rule of law was invoked as a shield against accountability, not as a guide to action.

Inside the media, the narrowing of permissible discourse became increasingly visible. Editors insisted that coverage remained balanced and impartial, but in practice, reporting focused on diplomatic statements and abstract process while the material consequences of British involvement were marginalised. The result was a form of omission journalism: facts left unexamined, connections unexplored, responsibility diffused. For audiences paying attention, the pattern was unmistakable; the more evidence accumulated, the less was said. This silence was not merely a failure of courage, it functioned as policy.

By limiting what could be discussed openly, the state reduced the space for democratic challenge. By framing dissent as extremism, it justified repression and by obscuring its own role, it avoided legal exposure. The war's domestic logic had completed its transformation. What had begun as foreign policy alignment had become internal discipline. The consequences were unevenly distributed; those with institutional protection navigated the narrowing space cautiously and those without it – activists, students, precarious workers, independent journalists – bore the full weight of enforcement.

Careers stalled, bank accounts were frozen, travel was restricted and families were drawn into legal battles that drained time, money, and energy. None of this required mass convictions; the system functioned through pressure, uncertainty, and exhaustion. Yet even as the state consolidated control, resistance did not disappear: it adapted.

Protests became smaller, more decentralised, harder to police. Legal challenges multiplied but international solidarity networks strengthened. The very measures intended to suppress dissent confirmed, for many, the justice of the cause. The war had come home and it was reshaping the relationship between citizen and state.

### **The Reckoning**

By the middle of 2025, the war in Gaza was no longer something Western governments could plausibly describe as external. It had embedded itself in domestic life; in law, policing, media practice and political language. It had reshaped the relationship between citizen and state, exposing how quickly liberal norms could be suspended when power felt itself under threat.

What Western societies confronted was not only the devastation of Gaza, but the consequences of having enabled it. The crisis was no longer confined to foreign policy, it had metastasised into a crisis of legitimacy at home.

For decades, Western power had rested on a carefully maintained moral architecture: the claim that violence abroad could be reconciled with freedom, legality, and democratic accountability at home. Gaza shattered that claim. The contradiction between professed values and observable reality became impossible to manage once evidence circulated without mediation. The myth of benevolent power collapsed under the weight of high-definition proof.

Governments that had once spoken confidently about human rights and international norms now struggled to explain why peaceful protesters were being arrested, why

journalists were being erased and why intelligence aircraft were circling a besieged enclave while ministers spoke of restraint. The language of values remained, but it floated free of action.

The war had come home not in bombs, but in conscience. It arrived quietly at first: in arguments at dinner tables, in friendships strained or broken, in careers quietly derailed. It arrived in lecture halls and courtrooms, in union meetings and boardrooms, in police interview rooms and prison cells. It arrived as a growing refusal – sometimes whispered, sometimes shouted – to accept the hierarchy of human worth that had long underpinned Western power.

What Gaza exposed was not only the brutality of a military campaign, but the fragility of the systems that sustained it. The claim that liberal democracies could support unlimited violence abroad while preserving freedom and legality at home proved untenable, while each attempt to suppress dissent merely confirmed the charge of complicity.

In Britain, the sequence was unmistakable... First came denial. Then obfuscation. Then repression. Each stage was justified as temporary, exceptional, regrettable and each was subsequently normalised. What began as rhetorical alignment hardened into operational participation. What began as protest policing evolved into counter-terrorism and what began as silence became policy: the boundaries eroded one by one.

The language of security displaced the language of rights. Dissent was reframed as threat, solidarity was reclassified as extremism and journalism became a liability... law became an instrument rather than a constraint. Security displaced rights, loyalty displaced law and silence displaced truth.

And still, new and more horrific pictures from Gaza continued to circulate daily. “We have run out of words,” became a mantra among aid organisations operating in Gaza, partly borne from the incredulity of what they were witnessing, coupled with a sense of sorrow and failure that nothing they could do or say was succeeding in stopping it.

But no proscription order could erase the plight of people whom everyone from the most parochial villager to the most well-travelled jetsetter was empathising with as they digested, day after day and night after night, the pictures, the testimonies and the pleas for help. No media blackout could make Western audiences unsee them. No amount of rhetorical caution could reconcile claims of moral leadership with the visible reality of mass civilian destruction. The evidence endured, and with it the questions their governments refused to answer grew louder and more insistent. This was the reckoning Western leaders had sought to avoid.

They had wagered that outrage would fade, that attention would drift, that memory would dull, but instead, the opposite occurred. The longer the war continued, the more deeply its consequences embedded themselves in domestic life. Each arrest sharpened the contradiction and each act of censorship amplified suspicion: each silence spoke louder than denial.

What it left behind was a question that could no longer be deferred: not simply what was happening in Gaza, but what Western societies had become by enabling it. For some, the answer was resignation. For others, defiance. For many, it was a profound loss of faith in institutions that no longer appeared capable of moral self-correction.

The streets told the story, the prisons told the story, the silences told the story... Gaza was not only a place; it was a test and the West was failing it – openly, visibly and in full view of the world - the war had come home and it was not leaving.

As institutions closed ranks and language hardened into ritual, remembrance moved elsewhere. It surfaced not in courtrooms or parliaments, but in public spaces where record-keeping was taken up by ordinary people unwilling to let loss pass without inscription. These acts did not interrupt the war: they resisted its second objective, which was forgetting.

### **Wall of Tears**

At the end of January 2026, a long sand-coloured wall appeared on a quiet street in Brooklyn, New York, bearing the names of the dead not as symbols or slogans but as a chronological record of loss. Stretching fifty feet along a chain-link fence, the mural listed 18,457 Palestinian children killed in Gaza between October 2023 and July 2025, each name placed in the order in which the child was reported to have died.

From a distance, the wall resembled an abstract artwork, its uniform colouring and dense patterning drawing in passers-by who did not yet know what they were seeing. Only on closer inspection did the repetition resolve into names written in Arabic and English, thousands of them arranged without pause or ornament. Scattered among the text were photographs and brief accounts of individual children, images taken from birthdays, school graduations and family gatherings, ordinary moments preserved from lives that would not extend beyond them.

The mural was made from waterproof, UV-coated vinyl designed to endure weather and time, a durability denied to those it commemorated. Even so, it was already incomplete on the day it appeared. The list reflected only what could be verified months earlier, while the killing continued. By early 2026, the number of Palestinian children believed to have been killed in Gaza was thought to exceed twenty thousand, with countless others still buried beneath rubble or listed as missing, their absence from the record a consequence of obliteration rather than uncertainty.

The installation coincided with the second anniversary of the killing of six-year-old Hind Rajab by Israeli military forces. Her recorded voice, already widely circulated, continued to cut through abstraction and euphemism, grounding civilian death in lived experience rather than statistics. Despite the soldiers involved having been publicly identified, no Israeli military personnel have been charged in connection with her killing.

That same week in Barcelona, Hind's mother, Wesam Hamada, stood before a crowd during a memorial marking the anniversary of her daughter's death. She held a drawing of Hind by the artist Mar Gregorio, a simple image that briefly returned the child to the realm of play and imagination rather than case files and counts. The Associated Press photograph capturing the moment was distributed globally, correctly captioned but passed through the global media system without being published even once.

Barcelona itself became the site of one of the largest public memorials to a single child killed in Gaza. Several hundred people gathered on a city beach and unfurled a fifty-five-metre-long portrait of Hind Rajab beside a vast

Palestinian flag and a message calling for the freedom of Gaza's children. As the image was raised, Hamada addressed the crowd directly, saying that the children of Gaza did not ask for pity, only for the right to live, to sleep without fear, to play without bombs and to grow up.

Between the Brooklyn mural and the Barcelona shoreline, the children of Gaza were named, pictured and spoken for in public, their absence briefly made visible far from the ruins where they died. These acts of remembrance did not alter the balance of power, nor did they interrupt the machinery that produced the deaths they recorded. What they offered instead was a refusal to allow loss on this scale to pass without inscription, without witnesses and without the burden of being remembered.

These records did not end the war, but they established something the war depended upon destroying, which was permanence. Names, dates, faces and voices placed beyond euphemism ensured that what followed would not be judged solely by claims of necessity or security, but by what had been seen, recorded and carried forward into history.

## VISUAL RECORD



***After World War II, large numbers of Eastern European Jews arrived in Palestine.***

*Many changed their Polish, Ukrainian and Russian surnames to Hebrew names and formed armed militias, establishing roadblocks, fortified compounds and paramilitary control over commercial and residential districts during the final years of the British Mandate.*



***The country of Palestine from 1948 to the present day.***

*As Jewish immigrants arrived from Europe after the Second World War, Palestinian land was seized through organised violence until a new “State of Israel” replaced Palestine on maps, with United States backing. Palestinians who survived were driven into the sealed-off Gaza Strip or the militarised West Bank, where they remain under Israeli military rule, facing displacement, siege or exile.*



***The Palestinian village of Lifta still stands today.***

*It is one of the few remaining villages not bulldozed after 1948. Thousands of others were destroyed, their residents expelled, and their names erased from maps as towns and villages were renamed under Israeli rule.*



***Palestinian towns and villages were emptied in 1948 through military assault.***

*In Jaffa alone, Zionist militias fired more than 20 tonnes of mortars into civilian areas, forcing families to flee or die – part of what Palestinians remember as the Nakba, or catastrophe.*



***For nearly two years beginning in March 2018, Palestinians trapped under Israel's blockade of Gaza held largely peaceful mass demonstrations along the border fence.***

*Known as the Great March of Return, the protests were civilian and aimed at drawing international attention to the siege and to refugees' right to return. Israeli forces responded with tear gas and live ammunition fired into the crowds by snipers. The UN documented the killing and wounding of thousands of protesters, including children as well as journalists and medics.*



**TOTAL CASUALTIES** 30 March - 31 October till 12:00 PM

Palestinian deaths

**228\***



Israeli deaths

**1**

Total Palestinian injuries

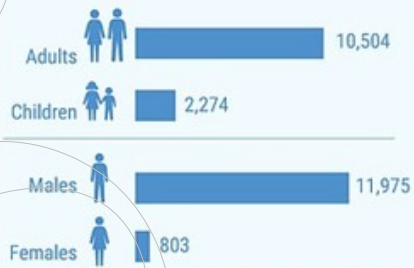
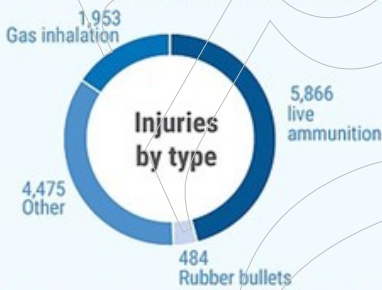
**24,362**

Hospitalized injuries **12,778**  
Field treated injuries **11,584**

Israeli injuries

**40**

**TOTAL PALESTINIAN HOSPITALIZED INJURIES**



\*This figure includes 171 Palestinians killed during the «Great March of Return» demonstrations and other activities and 57 killed in other circumstances.



***On 7 October 2023, Palestinians in Gaza breached the Israeli border fence.***

*This crossing at Khan Younis marked the first time in decades that besieged residents were able to reach lands from which their families had been expelled in 1948.*



***Palestinians celebrate atop a destroyed Israeli tank on the Gaza border, 7 October 2023.***



***Palestinian fighters transport captured Israeli prisoners of war into Gaza.***

*The captives – taken from military outposts, settlements, and the Nova music festival, including this individual from Kibbutz Kfar Azza – were seized to be exchanged for the thousands of Palestinians held indefinitely in Israeli prisons without charge.*



***Palestinians ride an Israeli military jeep through Gaza on 7 October after Israeli border positions were overrun by the Ezz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.***



***Israel replied with immediate, unrelenting airstrikes across the entire Gaza strip.***

*Without knowing where the approximately 250 Israeli captives were being held, Israeli forces bombed densely populated neighbourhoods, killing civilians alongside their own nationals. Here, Palestinians rescue ten-year-old Mahmoud al-Ghol from the rubble of his home in Rafah.*



***A woman carries a child through the Sheikh Radwan district of Gaza City after an Israeli airstrike.***

*During the opening months of the assault, no part of Gaza was designated safe. Israel dropped explosive tonnage equivalent to multiple Hiroshima-scale nuclear bombs on a territory one-quarter the size of London, trapping 2.3 million people inside.*



***Some Palestinians initially attempted to flee through Rafah.***

*That border area has since been razed and militarily occupied by Israel, in violation of the 1979 Egypt–Israel peace framework governing the Sinai frontier.*



***A Palestinian boy sleeps inside his shattered home in the North East city of Beit Hanoun.***

*Children were among the first to suffer from the systematic destruction of Gaza's housing and civilian infrastructure.*



***Israeli civilians watch the bombardment of Gaza from Sderot (Najd al-Asqalān).***

*Settlers and social-media users posted celebratory footage of the destruction, frequently repeating the phrase: “There are no innocents in Gaza.”*



***The Shujaiya neighbourhood of Gaza City as seen from an Israeli military position.***

*Hospitals, schools, bakeries, water systems, ambulances, and aid convoys were repeatedly struck, crippling Gaza's ability to sustain civilian life.*



***Israeli soldiers documented their actions on social media.***

*The volume of visual evidence contributed to the International Court of Justice's January 2024 ruling that Israel was plausibly committing genocide against the Palestinian people.*



***Children wait for food in Khan Younis.***

*Humanitarian agencies warned that even if aid were restored, widespread childhood malnutrition would permanently damage an entire generation.*

**FOOD HAS BECOME  
A WEAPON.**



**GAZA'S  
CHILDREN  
ARE  
STARVING.**

*Food ran out after Israel blocked aid trucks from entering Gaza in October 2023, early 2024 and March 2025*

*In a rare public sign of tension with Israel, US President Joe Biden warned: "This is not who we are. We do not starve children."*



***Despite aid waiting at the Egyptian border, Israel refused to allow it in.***

*Several countries resorted to airdrops, which sometimes killed civilians when crates landed on crowds. This image shows a US Air Force drop over Gaza.*



***The ruins of the Pasha Palace in Gaza City.***

*Built in 1260, the complex and museum of 20,000 artefacts were destroyed by Israeli airstrikes in 2023–24. UNESCO reports over 145 cultural heritage sites in Gaza were damaged or destroyed.*



***Palestinians flee Israeli airstrikes in Beit Lahiya.***

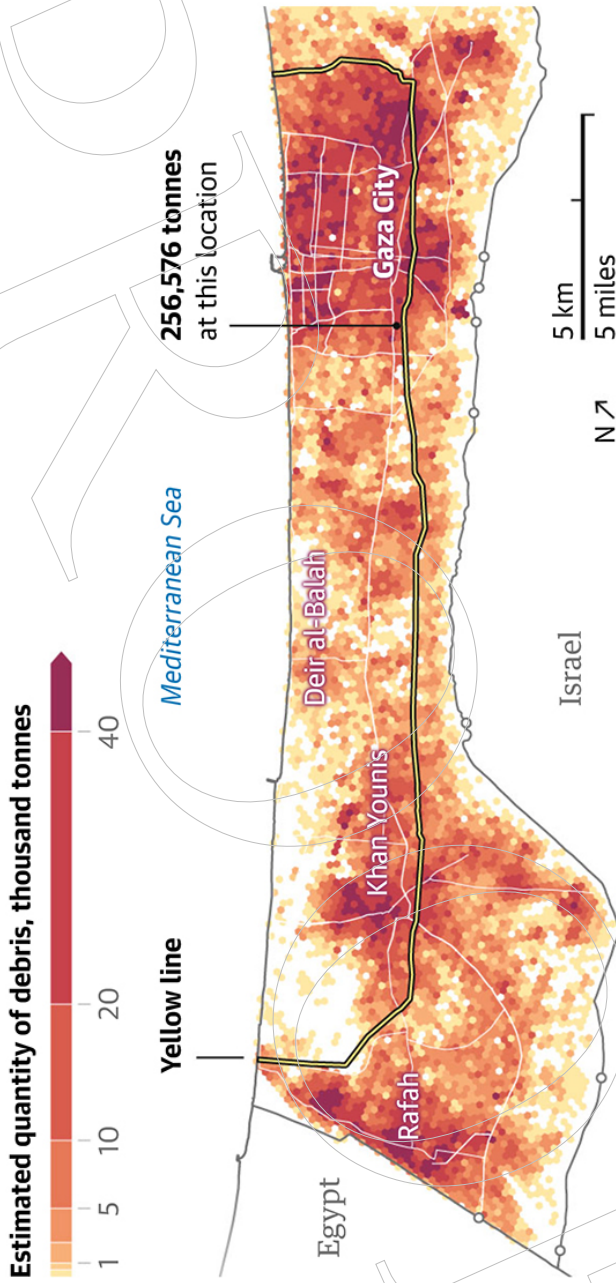
*Shelling, 2,000-lb bunker-buster bombs, quadcopter drones and artillery forced families into constant displacement.*



***Israel moved to destroy remaining structures.***

*Israeli officials and ministers publicly called for Gaza to be emptied of Palestinians, while offering other countries financial incentives to accept them.*

# Widespread destruction across the Gaza Strip has generated more than 61m tonnes of debris



Guardian graphic. Source: UN environmental programme. Note: assessment based on satellite imagery collected on 8 July 2025. Each hex is a little more than 5.4 hectares



***A family attempts to survive together in Jabalia camp with no food, water or shelter.***

*Parents wrote their names on their children's limbs in case Israeli explosives tore their bodies apart. Tent camps were struck overnight by incendiary drones and airstrikes.*



***Thousands of Palestinians were taken from Gaza to Israel.***

*Men, women and children were transported to military prisons, stripped, denied legal access and subjected to torture. By 2026, Israeli prison authorities confirmed nearly 100 deaths in custody.*



***Leaked CCTV footage from Sde Teiman prison, July 2024.***

*Broadcast by Israeli media, this video showed Israeli soldiers gang-raping a Palestinian detainee from Gaza, leaving him with a ruptured bowel, lung damage and broken ribs. In a Knesset debate, Likud MK Hanoch Milwidsky declared: "Everything is legitimate to do! Everything! If he is a Nukhba."*



**Israel has killed  
a classroom full of  
children**

**EVERY  
SINGLE  
DAY**

since October 7, 2023

Source: Sam Rose, UNRWA Director of  
Affairs in Gaza, to BBC Radio 4

***By late 2025, over 18,000 Palestinian children were dead.***

***They were killed by bombs, burned alive, shot by snipers and drones  
or perished from disease and starvation.***



***A journalist holds the camera of Mariam Dagga.***

*The Palestinian photojournalist was killed in an Israeli strike on Khan Younis. On August 25, 2025, Israeli attacks on Nasser Hospital killed at least 20 people, including five journalists mourned by Reuters, the Associated Press and Al Jazeera. The UN reports over 250 journalists killed by Israel in Gaza between 2023 and 2026. Independent foreign media access to Gaza remains banned by Israel.*



***An Israeli soldier wears a “Greater Israel” patch.***

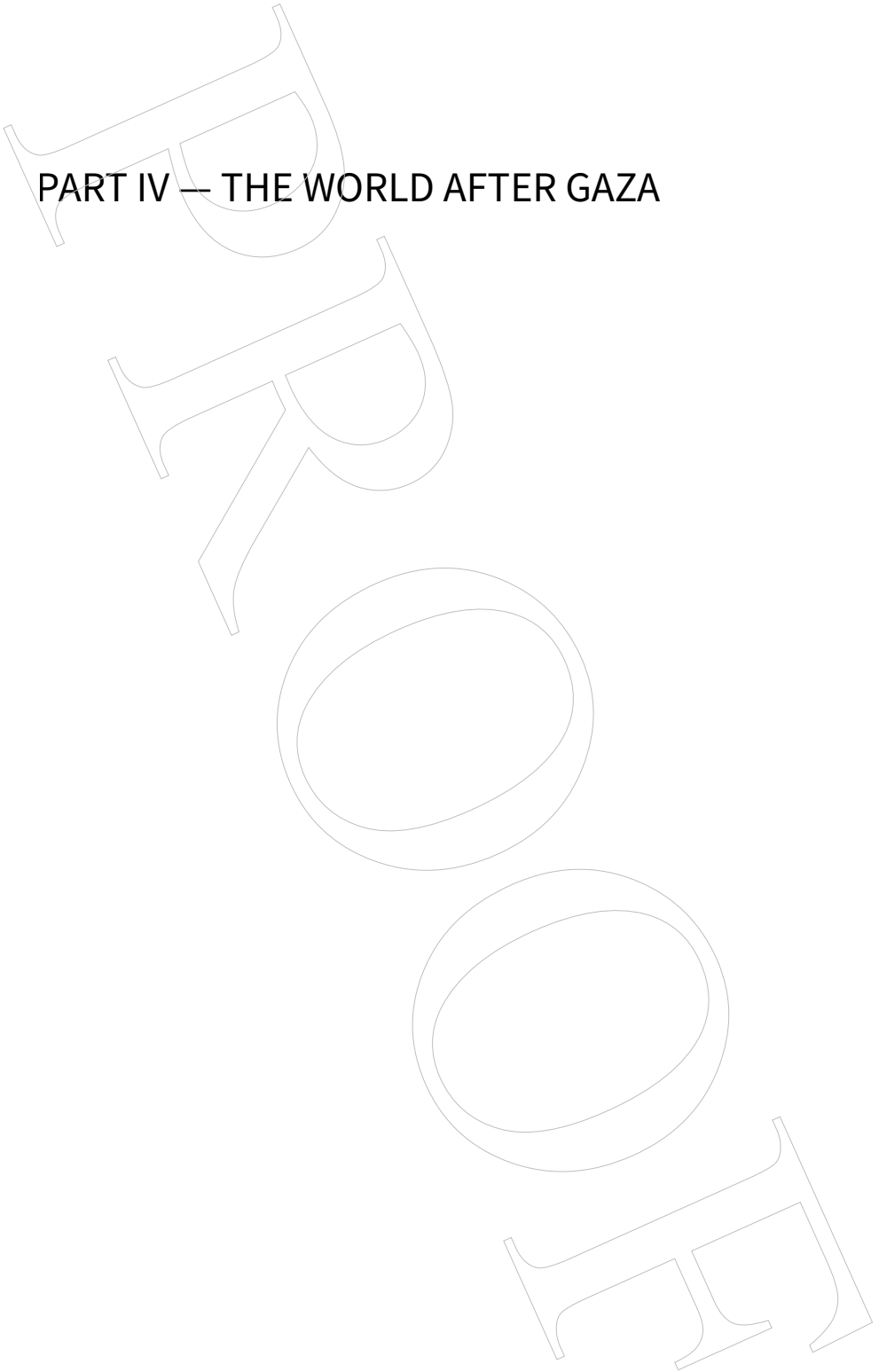
*The insignia depicts the future annexation of all Palestinian land, along with parts of Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan.*



***In August 2025, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly endorsed this vision.***

*He stated he “absolutely” felt connected to a Greater Israel, prompting widespread condemnation from over thirty Arab and Muslim countries.*

PART IV — THE WORLD AFTER GAZA



## CHAPTER 8

### *The New Global Alignment*

*Gaza did not change the world, it revealed it.*

What collapsed in the wake of Gaza was not merely a ceasefire process, a diplomatic consensus, or the credibility of a handful of Western leaders. What collapsed was a civilisational narrative: the claim that Western power flowed from moral authority, that international law functioned as a neutral arbiter rather than an instrument of force and that violence committed by allied states was inherently different from violence committed by adversaries. Gaza stripped that narrative bare.

For decades after the Cold War, the Western-led order sustained itself less through formal coercion than through linguistic dominance. Terms such as "rules-based international order," "self-defence," "terrorism" and "humanitarian intervention" formed a vocabulary that naturalised power while obscuring its asymmetries. Gaza shattered this spell: the destruction was too total, the evidence too immediate and the contradictions too naked to be managed by language alone.

In the glass towers of midtown Manhattan, diplomats continued to file into the United Nations as they had for generations. The ritual remained intact: speeches delivered, resolutions drafted, vetoes threatened; yet by late 2023,

something fundamental had shifted ... delegations no longer deferred reflexively to Western procedural objections. The choreography of deference that had long sustained American and European primacy began to break down and the old order discovered it could no longer set the agenda by force of habit.

By mid-2025, the world that emerged from the ruins of Gaza was irreversibly different from the one that had first watched it burn. The genocide did not merely devastate a people and their land, it discredited an entire civilisation's claim to moral leadership. Images of bombed universities, starving infants and Israeli ministers invoking biblical vengeance amid mountains of rubble became the dark mirror in which the West confronted its own decay.

For the first time since the triumphant end of the Cold War, Western hegemony faced not a rival superpower but a sustained moral revolt; inside the United Nations, across the Global South and within Western societies themselves. The simplistic binary of "democracy versus dictatorship," deployed for decades to sort allies from enemies, collapsed beneath the documented reality of Gaza. What the war revealed was not a clash of civilisations, but a collapse of conscience within those who claimed to lead the free world.

The decisive rupture did not occur only in Gaza; it arrived when Israel's long-cultivated image of military invulnerability – reinforced for decades by Western media framing – finally fractured under direct challenge. In June 2025, Israel launched a sweeping aerial assault on Iran, striking nuclear facilities, military installations and senior command figures in what Israeli officials described as a demonstration of overwhelming deterrence. What followed

instead was the most consequential exposure of Israeli vulnerability in its modern history.

Iran's response, calibrated rather than impulsive, shattered the mythology that had sustained Israel's regional dominance. Ballistic missiles penetrated Israeli air defences and struck high-value military, intelligence and economic targets in and around Tel Aviv. Independent footage showed fires in central business districts, damage to strategic installations, and civilians sheltering underground for hours at a time. Yet Western coverage rushed to contain the moment. Headlines emphasised interception rates, downplayed impact and framed the strikes as largely symbolic, even as Israeli authorities imposed flight bans, restricted filming and struggled to project control.

The significance of the exchange was not tactical but epistemic. For the first time, Israel could no longer fully manage the story of its own security and the same techniques used to dismiss Palestinian testimony – selective visibility, controlled language, narrative minimisation – were now deployed to obscure damage at home. The effect was the opposite of reassurance. Allies saw a state unable to acknowledge its own exposure; adversaries saw deterrence weakened; publics saw a widening gap between lived reality and official narrative. Gaza had already stripped Israel of moral authority but the confrontation with Iran stripped it of strategic myth. Together, they accelerated a realignment in which credibility – not firepower – became the defining currency of power.

### **The Revolt of the Margins**

The age in which legitimacy flowed exclusively from Washington, London or Brussels ended quietly, without

declaration. At the United Nations, the shift was visible not in speeches but in voting patterns. When the United States vetoed successive ceasefire resolutions in October, November, and December 2023, the General Assembly responded with an unprecedented rebuke.

One hundred and fifty-three states formally demanded an immediate end to the bombardment; only ten opposed. Never before had the isolation of the West been rendered so stark. The moral geography of the planet inverted in real time and while the Global South stood united; the traditional centres of power stood exposed.

On 20 November 2024, the pattern repeated with devastating clarity: a draft resolution calling for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire – prepared by the ten elected members of the Security Council after weeks of negotiation and compromise – was brought to a vote. Diplomats described the text as the "bare minimum," rooted in the most elementary principles of humanitarian law. Fourteen of the fifteen members voted in favour; the United States vetoed it.

The silence that followed was heavy, almost accusatory. Then the Palestinian representative to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, rose to speak. His address would become one of the most searing indictments of American complicity ever delivered in that chamber: "What more can Israel do for this Council to act?" he asked, his voice measured but strained by accumulated grief. "Are Palestinian lives not worth saving, or does Israel have a licence to kill?"

Mansour described a Gaza pushed beyond survivability. Famine loomed across the strip. Two million people were displaced, hunted even when sheltering in tents.

Universities, hospitals, water systems, and agricultural land had been systematically destroyed and by that point, more than 44,000 Palestinians had been officially documented as killed. The true toll, he warned, would only emerge when bodies were retrieved from mass graves beneath the rubble.

"The world should not grow accustomed to the death of Palestinians. They should not grow accustomed to seeing Palestinian children starving, to seeing mothers carrying their children from one place to another forcibly displaced. They should not get accustomed to seeing journalists killed, humanitarians killed, and Palestinians detained, abducted, and tortured."

Then came the question that stripped away decades of diplomatic euphemism... "Is there a UN Charter for Israel that is different from the Charter you all have? Is there an international law for them and another for us? Do they have the right to kill, and the only right we have is to die?"

Algeria's ambassador, Amar Bendjama, spoke next, expressing profound regret: his delegation had worked tirelessly alongside the other elected members to craft a resolution that could command consensus, but even that minimal effort had been crushed by American power. China's ambassador, Fu Cong, observed grimly that each time the United States exercised its veto to shield Israel, the number of people killed in Gaza rose. France's representative, despite his government's own role in arming Israel, expressed regret over the veto and acknowledged that the resolution had explicitly required the release of hostages... what followed was not a military revolt, but an ethical one.

What made Gaza uniquely destabilising to the international system was not simply the scale of destruction, but the clarity with which it exposed the mechanics of impunity. Previous Western wars – Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya – had relied on temporal distance, information control, and linguistic laundering to blunt moral reckoning. Civilian deaths were rendered abstract through statistics, atrocities were reframed as mistakes and accountability was deferred indefinitely.

Gaza collapsed those buffers... The siege unfolded in real time, on handheld screens, without plausible deniability. Israel did not merely kill civilians; it documented the killing itself. Ministers spoke openly of erasure, soldiers posted videos and senior officials framed starvation as strategy. The cumulative effect was not outrage alone, but recognition: international law was not failing accidentally, it was functioning selectively.

This was why the repeated US vetoes carried such systemic weight: the veto had long been understood as a political instrument but in Gaza, it became a moral declaration. The Security Council was not paralysed; it was actively overridden and for states that had spent decades being lectured on compliance, restraint, and norms, the lesson was unmistakable; law did not restrain power... power decided when law applied.

For decades, one of the quiet financial arteries of Israel's war machine ran through diamonds. Israeli economists and industry insiders estimate that the diamond sector contributes roughly one billion dollars a year to the Israeli Defence Forces through taxes, export revenues and corporate sponsorships. When a diamond is sold abroad,

part of that money flows back into Israel's military budget. Some companies make the connection explicit. The head of Steinmetz Diamond Group publicly adopted an IDF brigade, supplying it with equipment paid for by diamond profits, but the Gaza war has begun to destroy the very industry that helped finance it.

Since October 2023, international buyers have reduced travel to Israel. Trade fairs in Ramat Gan have been cancelled. International Diamond Week was called off. Luxury consumers increasingly associate Israeli supply chains with the images coming out of Gaza, and younger buyers are more likely to boycott.

In 2024, polished diamond exports fell 35.7 percent, rough diamond exports fell 24.1 percent, and polished imports fell 32.9 percent. In July alone, exports dropped 50 percent year on year. Israeli banks withdrew financing and diamond credit collapsed to just \$58 million, the lowest level on record.

At the same time, US trade policy turned hostile. Diamonds from the European Union entered duty free, while Israeli stones faced a fifteen percent tariff. Israeli polished diamond exports to the US fell 36 percent and the president of the Israel Diamond Exchange warned of an extinction level crisis.

Meanwhile lab grown diamonds reached near parity with natural stones in the US market, offering larger stones at lower prices without the moral or environmental cost of mining. The generation most likely to buy engagement rings is also the generation most exposed to Gaza and most inclined to boycott Israel. The result was a feedback loop: the

war that diamonds helped pay for is now killing the industry that funded it.

The rupture was epistemic as much as political. Gaza did not introduce new injustices; it rendered existing ones undeniable. The "rules-based international order" could no longer plausibly claim universality once its central guarantor used procedural mechanisms to shield mass killing from consequence

### **Law Against Impunity**

As power abandoned legality, others attempted to reclaim it... In December 2023, South Africa had filed a case against Israel at the ICJ under the 1948 Genocide Convention. It was an extraordinary act: a Global South state invoking the gravest crime in international law against a state armed, funded, and diplomatically protected by the West. Where empire chose impunity, South Africa chose the courtroom.

The hearings, held in January 2024, exposed a stark contrast between legal rigour and political evasion. Pretoria's seventy-four-page submission was forensic, citing Israel's own official statements – describing Palestinians as "human animals" and Gaza as "a city of beasts" – as evidence of genocidal intent. The legal team documented patterns of conduct: siege, starvation, forced displacement, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and the targeting of journalists and medical workers.

When the Court ruled that a plausible case of genocide existed and ordered Israel to take provisional measures to prevent further violations, the political shockwave was global. For the first time, Israel's conduct was placed under formal judicial scrutiny at the highest level of international

law... Dozens of states announced their support: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chile, Namibia, Turkey and others formally intervened or endorsed the case. By mid-2025, more than thirty nations had joined supplementary filings at The Hague. Western media outlets mocked the proceedings as symbolic or politically motivated, but global audiences ignored the mockery: the empire's vocabulary had expired.

South Africa's authority in this moment was inseparable from its own history. President Cyril Ramaphosa was unequivocal; at the October 2024 BRICS summit in Kazan, he stated plainly: "The violence in Gaza will only end when justice is restored. We call on the international community to intervene urgently." His government described Israeli actions as potentially genocidal even as Western capitals clung to euphemisms about "disproportionate force" and "humanitarian concerns."

The symbolism was unmistakable. The convention drafted in the ashes of the European Holocaust was now being applied to a state that claimed to act in its perpetual memory. For much of the Global South, the case represented something larger than a legal proceeding, it marked the restoration of moral agency after a century of subjugation.

The significance of South Africa's intervention lay not only in its legal merit, but in its symbolic inversion of historical roles. For decades, international law had functioned as a disciplinary tool wielded downward: against weaker states, post-colonial governments and non-aligned actors. The Genocide Convention, born from European catastrophe, had rarely been applied to European-aligned power but Gaza reversed that flow... a state forged through anti-apartheid struggle invoked the highest crime

in international law against a state that claimed moral exemption through historical trauma. The act itself was a rebuke to the architecture of selective justice, it demonstrated that legality could still be mobilised horizontally rather than imposed vertically.

Equally destabilising was the Court's language. By affirming the plausibility of genocide, the ICJ punctured a taboo that Western diplomacy had guarded for decades. Once plausibility was established, continued arms transfers, diplomatic cover and financial facilitation acquired new legal gravity. Complicity was no longer speculative, it became arguable.

This altered behaviour even among states unwilling to confront Israel directly. Diplomatic language shifted, internal legal reviews multiplied and export licences were quietly reassessed. The case did not halt the genocide, but it fractured the assumption that impunity was cost-free.

The courtroom became a secondary battlefield; not because it wielded force, but because it named reality in a system increasingly allergic to truth.

### **BRICS and the Emergence of a Counter-Axis**

As Western legitimacy eroded, a new diplomatic alignment began to act with deliberation rather than deference.

By 2024, the BRICS bloc – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – had evolved beyond its origins as an economic forum. On Gaza, it articulated a collective position that stood in sharp contrast to the Atlantic consensus: immediate ceasefire, humanitarian access and political resolution rather than military dominance.

China played a central role in shaping this posture. President Xi Jinping repeatedly framed the crisis as one demanding de-escalation and collective responsibility. On 23 October 2024, he called for "an immediate ceasefire and an end to the killing," urging sustained diplomatic engagement rather than escalation. Beijing pressed the United Nations to facilitate talks and contain regional spillover.

At the BRICS summit in Kazan, Xi went further, proposing the establishment of a humanitarian corridor into Gaza to ensure aid delivery. The proposal was not rhetorical, it was underpinned by China's logistical capacity and its relatively neutral standing in the region – assets Western powers no longer possessed.

Other BRICS leaders echoed this sense of urgency. Vladimir Putin warned that the conflict risked cascading into a regional catastrophe. "The degree of confrontation between Israel and Iran has sharply increased," he said, cautioning that events were approaching "a chain reaction" that could push the Middle East toward full-scale war. "The Middle East cannot afford another conflagration," Putin warned, while Narendra Modi called on all parties to show "maximum restraint" and reinforced India's position with concrete humanitarian assistance, dispatching medical and food aid to Gaza.

Taken together, these interventions signalled a shift in global alignment. While Western capitals closed ranks around Israel, BRICS articulated an alternative framework rooted in law, restraint, and multipolar diplomacy: it was not a declaration of rivalry, it was a declaration of presence.

What distinguished this moment from earlier gestures of non-alignment was not cohesion, but confidence. The

Global South no longer framed its positions defensively, nor did it seek Western validation. Statements issued by BRICS, the African Union, ASEAN and CELAC were not appeals; they were assertions.

This shift reflected a deeper recalibration: for much of the post-Cold War period, divergence from Western positions had been treated as deviation requiring justification, but Gaza inverted that logic... Silence, abstention, and complicity now demanded explanation, while moral burden migrated.

Importantly, this was not driven by ideological convergence. China, India, Brazil, and South Africa held divergent political systems and competing interests; what unified them was not doctrine, but exposure. Each had internalised the lesson that alignment with Western power no longer guaranteed legitimacy, protection, or reciprocity. Gaza revealed that the costs of compliance could outweigh the costs of dissent... For the first time in decades, the monopoly on global legitimacy was breaking.

### **The Contradictions Within**

Yet the emerging global alignment was not clean or virtuous, it was jagged, contradictory and shot through with self-interest. The collapse of Western moral authority did not automatically produce a world governed by justice. What distinguished the moment was not purity, but exposure. Old claims to exceptionalism no longer held while new claims to leadership were tested not by rhetoric, but by conduct. Turkey embodied this contradiction with particular clarity...

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan positioned himself as one of Israel's most vocal critics. He publicly compared Benjamin Netanyahu to Hitler, described Israeli actions as 'genocide' and presented Turkey as a moral leader of the Muslim world. Turkish state media amplified images from Gaza, while Erdoğan accused Western governments of complicity and cowardice; yet behind the rhetoric, Turkey's economic relationship with Israel continued largely uninterrupted.

Investigative journalists revealed that companies linked to Erdoğan's own family remained deeply involved in trade with Israel even as the war escalated... Ahmet Burak Erdoğan, the president's eldest son, co-owned MB Denizcilik, a shipping company whose vessels docked regularly at Israeli ports. When journalist Metin Cihan published documentation of these shipments, the Erdoğan family did not dispute the facts, they filed a defamation lawsuit aimed at silencing the reporting.

In May 2024, Turkey announced a formal suspension of trade with Israel. The declaration was welcomed by pro-Palestinian audiences and framed as a decisive moral break. Yet trade statistics told a different story: Turkish exports to Israel in 2024 still totalled approximately \$2.86 billion. At the same time, exports to Palestinian territories surged by more than 400 percent. Analysts suspected that many of these goods were being relabelled and transhipped to Israel, allowing Ankara to maintain commerce while preserving plausible deniability.

The contradiction revealed the limits of performative opposition. Erdoğan's rhetoric served domestic and regional audiences, reinforcing his image as a defender of

Muslim causes, while economic realities remained largely unchanged. Turkey's position illustrated a broader pattern within the new alignment: states could no longer afford overt alignment with Israel's pariah status, but many still sought to profit quietly from what critics now call a genocide economy.

### **The Enablers**

Egypt's role exposed an even starker collapse... Publicly, Cairo maintained the Rafah crossing as tightly-controlled, citing security concerns and insisting that responsibility for Gaza lay with Israel as the occupying power. Egyptian authorities repeatedly denied Israel's May 2025 violation of the Philadelphi Corridor agreement, despite satellite imagery and on-the-ground reporting confirming Israeli military control along the border. Gaza remained sealed and aid trickled in at a fraction of what was required while Palestinians died waiting.

Privately, Egypt signed the largest export deal in Israeli history. In June 2025, Cairo and Tel Aviv finalised a \$35 billion natural gas agreement with NewMed Energy, covering the export of 130 billion cubic metres of gas from Israel's Leviathan reservoir through 2040. The deal replaced a 2019 agreement worth roughly \$15 billion and was concluded just weeks after Israel's occupation of Rafah. As recently as December, the Egyptian government was still trying to justify the partnership, saying that Cairo's natural gas deal with Israel is a "purely commercial" arrangement and that there are no "political dimensions" to the deal.

The mechanics of the arrangement revealed a sophisticated form of complicity. Israeli gas would flow through Egypt's liquefied natural gas terminals at Idku and Damietta before

being re-exported to Europe as Egyptian LNG. The process effectively launders Israeli gas, allowing European states to claim distance from Israel's war economy while benefiting from its resources: critics dubbed the practice "gas-washing."

As Europe scrambled to reduce reliance on Russian energy, Egypt positioned itself as a regional hub. Gaza, meanwhile, survived on less than four hours of electricity per day. The siege tightened, hospitals shut down, water systems collapsed. Israeli economist Shir Hever described the arrangement as economic occupation layered atop military occupation. "Palestinians are denied access to their own waters and natural resources," he said, "while Israel signs billion-dollar contracts with the same governments that claim to support the Palestinian cause."

The Leviathan field itself lay in contested Mediterranean waters. Israel had blocked development of Gaza's own offshore Gaza Marine field for more than two decades, despite international law under the Hague Regulations and Fourth Geneva Convention prohibiting occupying powers from exploiting natural resources in occupied territories. That law remained unenforced; commerce prevailed.

Egypt profited as a regional middleman while maintaining the siege that made life unliveable for Gaza's 2.3 million residents.

### **The Unholy Trinity**

In a particularly stark hypocrisy, Azerbaijan – a Muslim-majority nation – became one of Israel's most vital enablers.

Over sixty percent of Israel's oil was supplied by Azerbaijan, with more than one million tons of crude shipped in 2024 alone: a 28 percent increase over the previous year. The Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline served as the conduit, delivering oil from the Caspian Sea to Israeli refineries, producing the jet fuel used in air raids over Gaza and the diesel powering bulldozers flattening Palestinian homes.

In exchange for oil, Azerbaijan received billions of dollars' worth of Israeli weapons: drones, radar systems and missile technology. Between 2016 and 2020, Israel accounted for nearly seventy percent of Azerbaijan's major arms imports... analysts described it as an "unholy trinity of oil, arms and intelligence."

Despite its Islamic identity – nearly ninety percent of Azerbaijan's population is Muslim – the country showed no public outrage over Israel's destruction of Gaza. Government control kept dissent muted. When the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation convened to denounce the war, Azerbaijan's foreign minister issued a carefully-crafted statement but stopped short of naming Israel or calling for sanctions. As one analyst observed: "What does it mean for a Muslim nation to fuel the bombs that kill fellow Muslims? In Gaza, the answer is written in blood and dust."

### **Normalisation Under Strain**

Morocco faced a different, but equally revealing reckoning.

The 2020 Abraham Accords had formalised Moroccan normalisation with Israel in exchange for US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. The agreement deepened military, intelligence and trade ties, while

public opinion inside Morocco remained overwhelmingly supportive of Palestine.

Yet the tension between state policy and public sentiment proved impossible to contain. Weekly marches organised by the Moroccan Front for Supporting Palestine and Opposing Normalisation filled city centres. Protesters waved Palestinian flags and called for the termination of normalisation agreements with Israel. The gap between elite diplomacy and popular feeling widened into a chasm that no amount of official reassurance could bridge.

### **Pattern of Betrayal**

Even within Israel's traditional alliances, the pattern of strategic betrayal stretched back decades.

A 2003 investigation revealed that during the 1982 Falklands War, Israel had covertly armed Argentina despite being a declared ally of the West. Declassified British Foreign Office cables confirmed Israel provided or upgraded A-4 Skyhawk jets, Nesher/Dagger aircraft, air-to-air missiles and electronic warfare systems. These weapons, routed through Peru and Panama using front companies, were used in combat sorties that killed dozens of British servicemen.

A November 1984 memo from C. W. Long, head of the Near East and North Africa department at the Foreign Office, stated bluntly: "Israel was one of the few countries to supply Argentina with arms during the Falklands conflict and has continued to do so." Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe personally asked Israel to halt sales, but Long concluded: "I do not believe the Israelis are to be moved on this issue."

The incident, though decades old, resurfaced in 2025 as a reminder of Israel's long-standing willingness to betray even close allies when profits beckoned; a pattern now visible in Serbia, Azerbaijan, and beyond.

Serbia's \$1.64 billion arms deal with Israel in August 2025 illustrated the persistence of this pattern. Despite being an EU candidate state, Serbia signed its largest arms purchase in modern history with Elbit Systems – buying Hermes 900 drones, long-range precision rockets and electronic warfare systems, all Gaza-tested. Deals that not only bankrolled a state accused of genocide but also threatened to destabilise the Balkans by triggering a regional arms race.

### **Geography of Complicity**

Cyprus revealed how geography adapted to moral collapse.

As Israel's regional position deteriorated and its population absorbed the shock of sustained conflict and Iranian retaliation, thousands of Israeli nationals relocated to the Mediterranean island. The migration occurred in waves: during the COVID-19 pandemic, during Netanyahu's judicial overhaul crisis in 2023 and most dramatically during the Gaza war and subsequent regional escalation.

By mid-2025, approximately 15,000 Israeli nationals resided in Cyprus, more than double the figure recorded in 2018... property purchases surged. In Limassol, 1,154 Israeli property purchases were recorded, in Paphos, 1,291 transactions, in Larnaca, 1,406 purchases. In total, nearly 4,000 Israeli-associated properties were acquired across southern Cyprus between 2021 and 2025.

Chabad Cyprus - the Jewish community organisation and network of Chabad-Lubavitch centers on the island of Cyprus that serves the local Jewish population and visitors - reported that over 12,000 Israeli Jews passed through their centres in just ten days during the Iran crisis. "Many of them had no plans to return," said the Chief Rabbi of Cyprus, Zeev Raskin.

Cyprus's main opposition party, AKEL, warned that the phenomenon was not ordinary migration but the construction of a "backyard" – a satellite enclave of Israeli influence beyond missile range yet close enough to matter. Party spokesperson Stefanos Stefanou cautioned that Israeli buyers were acquiring strategic land parcels and economic assets, building gated enclaves, schools, and religious institutions at speed: "At some point, we'll discover our own land doesn't belong to us. These are not holiday homes. These are settlements in all but name."

The pattern was familiar: rapid acquisition, rising prices, local displacement and the emergence of parallel infrastructure. Security concerns compounded economic anxiety: a Haaretz exposé confirmed that Israeli intelligence agencies were active on the island, using Cyprus for "safehouse operations" and logistical staging.

Cyprus thus became an inadvertent extension of the war: a site of refuge for Israeli elites, a platform for Western military support, and a flashpoint in the evolving rivalry between Israel and Turkey. Turkish forces maintained tens of thousands of troops in occupied northern Cyprus. Israel entrenched itself economically and covertly in the south.

Geopolitical analyst Elina Xenopontos warned that the island risked becoming "bait between two powerful states."

"Israel wants to antagonise Turkey through Cyprus," she told journalist Demetri Lascaris, "but it will be the Cypriots who pay the price. Turning the island into a forward operating base for another state risks devastation."

For Cypriots, the danger was existential. Neutrality was eroding. So was sovereignty.

### **China, Gaza and the Abstention**

The emergence of a counter-axis did not mean coherence without contradiction. The most revealing fracture came not from Washington or Brussels, but from Beijing.

On 17 November 2025, as the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2803 endorsing a US-backed framework for Gaza's transitional governance, China and Russia abstained. The resolution passed. Washington secured its outcome not through consensus, but through silence. For many observers, China's abstention was perplexing. By that stage of the war, public opinion inside China had shifted decisively against Israel. Gaza had become a moral and political lightning rod across Chinese social media, reshaping popular perceptions of Zionism, Western hypocrisy, and the credibility of international law itself.

Stomach-churning images that could not be unseen from Gaza circulated widely despite censorship efforts, accompanied by commentary that increasingly drew historical parallels between Israel's actions and the atrocities of imperial Japan and Nazi Germany.

China's historical relationship with the Palestinian struggle lent further weight to the shift. During the Mao era, Beijing had openly supported Palestinian guerrilla movements and

framed their cause as part of a global anti-imperialist struggle. Among the five permanent members of the Security Council, China had long been the most consistently sympathetic to Palestinian liberation. That posture softened during the era of economic reform and global integration, as ideology gave way to strategic caution and market pragmatism, yet Gaza reignited dormant solidarities.

When Hamas launched the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, Israel demanded unconditional global condemnation. The United States and European capitals complied, but China did not. Instead, Beijing issued carefully worded statements condemning harm to civilians "by all parties," refusing to endorse Israel's framing of 7 October as the singular origin of violence. Chinese diplomats grew increasingly blunt. The consul general in Osaka posted a comparison of Nazi and Israeli flags, remarking that the difference lay not in conduct but in patronage: "Germany treated the United States as an enemy – Israel treats it as an ATM."

Yet China did not veto... In Chinese diplomatic culture, a veto is not merely an objection; it is a declaration of intent. Beijing reserves it for moments when it is prepared to follow through materially. Chinese leaders may have concluded that a veto would not alter facts on the ground, that Washington and Tel Aviv would ignore it regardless, and that invoking international law without the capacity to enforce it would ultimately weaken China's credibility rather than strengthen it.

If so, the abstention revealed something unsettling. Gaza may not only have shattered faith in Western-led institutions; it may have eroded confidence in international law itself. The UN system, designed to restrain power

through norms, appeared incapable of restraining anything. Gaza was not simply a humanitarian catastrophe; it was a fracture point in the legitimacy of the post-1945 order.

### **The Fragmentation of the West**

While the Global South consolidated, the Western bloc fractured.

Across Europe, foreign ministers clashed bitterly behind closed doors. Ireland, Spain, Norway, and Slovenia formally recognised the State of Palestine. Germany, France, and the United Kingdom initially clung to Washington's increasingly untenable position, insisting on procedural caution even as Gaza collapsed.

A moment of profound rupture came in June 2025, when a leaked US diplomatic cable revealed Washington's alarm over a UN conference intended to revive international consensus around a two-state solution... Sent by the State Department on 10 June, the cable warned that countries attending the New York summit could face "diplomatic consequences" for supporting what it described as "anti-Israel actions."

The language was revealing. "Unilaterally recognising a Palestinian state would effectively render Oct. 7 'Palestinian Independence Day,'" the cable declared, equating Hamas's attack with an act of nationhood. A European diplomat described the pressure campaign bluntly as "bullying, and of a stupid type."

The conference, co-hosted by France and Saudi Arabia, became a turning point. President Emmanuel Macron publicly suggested that France might use the moment to

recognise Palestine. For a G7 power and permanent member of the Security Council, the signal was extraordinary. Recognition amid Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza and accelerating settler violence in the West Bank would represent a direct repudiation of the US–Israel axis.

The dominoes followed. France pledged recognition on 18 July 2025. The United Kingdom and Canada followed on 30 July, though hedged with conditions. Australia announced recognition on 14 August. Belgium confirmed its decision in early September, and Portugal formally joined on 20 September, days before the General Assembly convened.

Ireland's Foreign Minister Thomas Byrne dismissed existing humanitarian arrangements as "insufficient," citing continued "slaughter" and restrictions on food and water. Under sustained grassroots pressure, Dublin advanced legislation banning goods from Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the Golan Heights, albeit in diluted form. Yet contradictions persisted. Even as Ireland moved legislatively, its central bank continued facilitating the sale of Israeli bonds, which Israeli officials openly acknowledged were helping finance the war.

A coalition of nine EU states – Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden – formally urged a reassessment of trade with Israeli settlements, citing the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on their illegality... Germany stood apart.

Journalist David Cronin identified Berlin as the central obstacle to meaningful EU action. "Germany is the biggest barrier. It is actively enabling the genocide." Germany's doctrine of *Staatsräson* – the declared obligation to protect Israel as a matter of state identity overrode all other

considerations, including international law. Arms sales continued and diplomatic cover remained absolute.

In July 2025, the European External Action Service compiled an internal report documenting thirty-eight violations of international humanitarian law by Israel in Gaza. The report concluded that Israel had "likely breached Article 2" of the EU–Israel Association Agreement, which makes respect for human rights an essential condition of partnership. It was, as one senior EU official described anonymously, "an airtight case."

Yet EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas declined to pursue any of the ten proposed enforcement measures; she publicly shook hands with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, who celebrated the outcome on X as "a diplomatic feat."

Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, condemned the decision as a "cruel and unlawful betrayal" of both international law and Europe's professed values. Behind the failure, Cronin argued, stood not only Germany's arms policy but its influence within EU institutions, including officials whom critics accused of using their offices to shield Israeli policy and smear Palestine solidarity activism.

As states scrambled to recover legitimacy, recognition itself became the next battlefield.

### **Western "Recognition" as Colonial Diktat**

Even as Western governments announced their recognition of Palestinian statehood, critical voices questioned whether these declarations represented progress or deception.

The Electronic Intifada's Ali Abunimah dissected Australia's statement, delivered on 21 September 2025. While it opened by recognising "the independent and sovereign state of Palestine," it immediately redefined recognition as an aspiration rather than a right.

"This is not recognition of Palestinian self-determination. It is recognition of Israel's right to define Palestinian sovereignty," he commented, wryly. International law grants the right of self-determination to peoples, not states. "Israel has no right to exist, nor does any other state," he added... "Peoples have a right to self-determination."

By reducing Palestinian claims to aspirations, Western governments stripped Palestinians of their core legal standing: the right of return, restitution, and genuine independence. More troubling were the conditions attached. Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared that Hamas could have no role in a future Palestinian state, that the state must be disarmed, and that recognition itself was conditional on Israeli hostages being released.

"Here's the prime minister of Australia telling the people of the supposedly independent and sovereign state of Palestine who is and isn't allowed to rule them. So who gave him the right to do that?" asked Abunimah. The United Kingdom, Canada, France, and others imposed similar conditions... Abunimah described this as colonial diktat dressed up as diplomacy.

"If you're recognising an independent state, you don't get to say who its leaders are, you don't get to say which political parties are legal or illegal, you don't get to say what its constitution must be. That's what colonial rulers do."

Recognition without sovereignty was not liberation but containment.

The Palestinian Authority played a complicit role. Despite polls showing more than four-fifths of Palestinians wanted Mahmoud Abbas to resign, Western governments continued presenting him as their chosen interlocutor. In return, Abbas – who had previously referred to Hamas members with the harsh Arabic epithet of ‘sons of dogs’ - reassured donors that Hamas would be excluded and that the PA was prepared to assume control of Gaza.

As critics have described it, the PA functioned in what some called a Palestinian Zionist role: an extension of the occupation, a structure designed during Oslo to police Palestinians on Israel’s behalf, now repackaged as statehood.

In London, the Palestinian mission was renamed an "embassy of the state of Palestine." Labour politicians attended, smiling for photographs. Abunimah dismissed it with a Palestinian proverb: a man finds one horseshoe and declares himself nearly a horseman. "They want to take a concentration camp and put a sign on it that says State of Palestine... We should condemn these fake recognitions and condemn the continued use of the two-state fantasy to distract from the genocide that all these countries are helping Israel to perpetrate," he concluded.

By recognising a state while denying a people their right to self-determination, Western capitals preserved Israeli dominance while claiming moral credit. It was the Oslo logic extended to its endpoint: autonomy without freedom.

For Palestinians, the arrangement offered no protection from bombs or hunger; the contrast with South Africa's

legal challenge was instructive. Where Western recognition deferred justice, the ICJ case confronted it and where diplomacy managed appearances, law named crimes. Legitimacy no longer flowed from recognition by powerful states, it flowed from ethical coherence.

### **The Economics of Conscience**

As diplomatic credibility eroded, economic pressure followed... Consumer boycotts, pension-fund divestments and university withdrawals transformed ethics into a measurable financial variable. Investment analysts on Wall Street and in the City of London coined a new term: the reputational risk premium... ethical exposure became something to hedge against.

By July 2025, more than \$120 billion had been withdrawn from investment funds linked to defence industries complicit in Gaza's destruction. Elbit Systems, Raytheon, BAE and General Dynamics saw their valuations dip as institutions reassessed their exposure. Even the most conservative investors began to hedge against this new form of moral exposure. The language of high finance adapted reluctantly to the language of conscience: the buzzword of sustainability was now joined by the harder, sharper demand for accountability.

For the first time, ethics and economics were visibly connected in the global marketplace.

### **The Brain Drain**

The collapse was not confined to commodities: Israel's most important economic pillar, its technology sector, was beginning to hollow out in earnest.

In December 2025, the Israel Advanced Technology Industries Association reported that fifty three percent of multinational tech firms had seen a sharp increase in employee requests to relocate abroad. These were not only junior staff but senior executives and their families, people with deep roots who no longer believed the country was stable or safe.

Tech accounts for roughly twenty percent of Israel's GDP, fifteen percent of jobs and more than half of exports. Multinationals including Microsoft, Intel, Nvidia, Amazon, Meta and Apple operate major research centres inside the country, but the war has shown them they can move work elsewhere.

Some firms that shifted operations overseas during disruptions found those alternatives efficient enough to become permanent. If that trend continues, Israel's identity as Silicon Wadi will erode. Capital flight is one thing, human flight is another... Gaza is now costing Israel not only legitimacy but its future.

### **The Redistribution of Hypocrisy**

What Gaza produced was not consensus but awareness.

This awareness did not belong to any single state, ideology, or bloc; it was plural, contested, and often contradictory. China remained silent on its own abuses. Russia prosecuted its war in Ukraine, Iran repressed domestic dissent. Hypocrisy did not disappear, it was redistributed, yet the monopoly on hypocrisy ended.

The Global South no longer asked politely for inclusion: it demanded parity. The African Union, ASEAN and CELAC

issued joint statements calling for a radical restructuring of the UN Security Council and the abolition of veto power. Proposals circulated for new international tribunals independent of Western influence.

The new alignment was not utopian. It was fragile, fragmented, and riddled with contradictions, but crucially, even the franchise on hypocrisy had shifted: it was no longer a flaw monopolised by the West.

Western capitals confronted a reality they had long denied: power without belief is brittle. The aura of inevitability surrounding Western dominance dissolved. The architecture of the post-1945 order – built on the assumption that a handful of states would define legitimacy for all others – was buckling under the weight of its own contradictions. The world had not yet arrived at a new system, but the old one could no longer command obedience.

The reconfiguration of power after Gaza did not wait for the dead to be buried. Even as entire districts lay flattened and bodies remained beneath collapsed homes and pulverised streets, plans for what would replace them were already circulating. These proposals were framed as reconstruction and peace, but they followed a familiar imperial logic in which destruction precedes redevelopment and the original population is treated as an obstacle rather than a stakeholder.

### **The Riviera Built on the Dead**

There is a particular obscenity reserved for empires in decline, the moment when mass death is rebranded as opportunity.

Speaking at the end of January 2026, as Gaza still lay in ruins and tens of thousands of bodies remained buried beneath collapsed homes and pulverised streets, Jeremy Corbyn articulated with rare moral clarity what many Western governments refused to acknowledge. Corbyn, a long-standing British parliamentarian, former leader of the Labour Party and veteran anti-war campaigner, was also one of the organisers of the Gaza Tribunal, convened to examine evidence of Israeli war crimes and violations of international law. His words carried the authority not only of political experience but of direct engagement with testimony from Gaza itself.

While Western political and financial elites spoke of reconstruction, investment and renewal, Corbyn focused on what those plans were actually built upon. “The bodies of Palestinians are in the rubble and under the ground of where they want this Riviera to be built. This is macabre and disgusting beyond belief on a global scale.”

The proposal circulating under Donald Trump’s so-called Board of Peace was framed as a stabilising initiative and a pathway toward prosperity and order. Corbyn dismissed it entirely, arguing that no such board had legitimacy because Palestinians themselves were excluded from it. Two million people were being denied any say over the future of their own land while external actors assembled what he described as a collection of power brokers intent on carving up what remained of Gaza.

In Corbyn's assessment: “It’s a rogues’ gallery put together to carve up what remains of Gaza.”

Luxury towers, beachfront resorts and a Mediterranean Riviera were discussed as though Gaza were empty, as

though it were not a densely populated society that had been systematically reduced to rubble by sustained bombardment. Corbyn emphasised that this destruction did not occur in isolation but with weapons supplied by the United States and political support from Britain, France and other Western powers. In that context, he argued, the only legitimate agenda should have been the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces, the rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance and the right of Palestinians to determine their own future.

By early 2026, entire districts of Gaza City had been erased, with residential blocks flattened in patterns that suggested preparation rather than military necessity. The removal of people preceded the arrival of capital. What was described as reconstruction increasingly resembled replacement.

Corbyn warned that the Riviera vision depended on something both illegal under international law and deeply familiar in colonial history, namely the forced displacement of a civilian population. “It would be impossible to rebuild Gaza with the Palestinian people there in the way Donald Trump wants. What we’re likely to see is an attempt at forced removal, with people pushed out of parts of Gaza, followed by re-development and the introduction of settlers or international elites.

Israel’s long-standing objective of driving Palestinians south through Rafah and into Egypt’s Sinai had been openly discussed for years. Egypt’s refusal to accept such a transfer had so far blocked it, but the strategy remained intact, clear the land and then reimagine it for others.

By this stage, tens of thousands of deaths had been formally identified, with many more bodies still buried beneath

the rubble. This reality did not slow the redevelopment narrative: it accelerated it. Corbyn rejected the suggestion that describing Gaza as the site of a genocide was rhetorical excess, noting that the International Court of Justice itself had recognised the plausibility of that charge.

No figure better illustrated continuity between past and present than Tony Blair. The former prime minister who helped sell the destruction of Iraq re-emerged once again as adviser, mediator and fixer. Since leaving office in 2007, Blair had accumulated vast personal wealth through consultancy and financial advisory work while maintaining a persistent presence in Middle East peace initiatives.

Corbyn's assessment was unsparing. "I've no record of anything useful he ever did as Middle East envoy. If he thinks he can play a role in rebuilding Gaza, the best role he can play is to keep well out of it."

Blair's reappearance mattered because it confirmed a pattern. Iraq was destroyed under the banner of liberation. Gaza now faced redevelopment under the banner of peace. The logic was unchanged, only the catastrophe was new.

An alternative vision for Gaza already existed, articulated by Palestinian architects, planners and surviving local authorities who described rebuilding grounded in dignity rather than profit, including sustainable housing, farmland, public infrastructure and full access to the coast for all Palestinians living in Gaza.

"This proposal by Trump is the very opposite of all of that," Corbyn said. "The Palestinian people and they alone, should decide the future of Gaza."

Self-determination disrupts markets, survivors complicate redevelopment and memory interferes with branding... for the Riviera to proceed, forgetting must come first.

What was presented as renewal revealed itself as continuity, the same hierarchies reproduced through different language. Gaza's destruction was not merely tolerated by the emerging global order, but actively incorporated into it, transformed from crime scene into opportunity through the familiar alchemy of power, capital and silence.

## CHAPTER 9

### *The West's Reckoning*

*The geopolitical re-alignment exposed by Gaza did not remain confined to diplomacy, law or trade.*

As Western governments lost moral authority abroad, they faced a different kind of reckoning at home... The same images that shattered the legitimacy of international institutions also ignited mass dissent across Western societies, and with it, a crisis for political systems built on the claim that they governed by consent. What followed was not only protest, but repression: a coordinated attempt to contain the moral shock of Gaza by narrowing who was allowed to speak, what could be said and whose suffering counted.

#### **The Rupture Within**

If the new alignment exposed hypocrisy abroad, it provoked crisis at home.

The sustained pro-Palestinian mobilisations documented in the preceding chapter – the campus encampments, the weekly marches, the mass arrests – were not isolated from the geopolitical shifts unfolding internationally. They were their domestic expression. Western governments found themselves squeezed between diplomatic isolation abroad and popular revolt at home.

Germany represented the most extreme case. Invoking historical guilt, German officials framed criticism of Israel as antisemitism, collapsing distinction between Jewish identity and state policy. Demonstrations were banned, Palestinian flags were confiscated and police violently dispersed protests, even as images of Israel's indiscriminate bombing of civilians in Gaza filled German screens.

Civil society responded: in October and November 2023, authorities in Berlin imposed sweeping bans on pro-Palestinian demonstrations, yet tens of thousands still marched, with police violently deploying mass kettling, arrests and protest prohibitions across the city. At the same time, anti-Zionist organisations such as Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East publicly challenged the state's narrative from within, rejecting the claim that unconditional support for Israel was a moral obligation derived from Holocaust remembrance. When Holocaust memory was invoked to justify protest bans, speech restrictions and the silencing of Jewish dissent, its claim to universality collapsed: Germany's postwar moral identity no longer functioned as a safeguard against injustice, but as a mechanism of selective enforcement, exposed under public, legal and international scrutiny.

Across Western Europe, similar patterns emerged. Governments spoke the language of human rights while criminalising protest: in France, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin ordered blanket bans on pro-Palestinian demonstrations in October 2023, later partially overturned by courts but enforced aggressively by police. Media outlets narrowed the bounds of permissible debate. In France, journalists at public broadcaster France Télévisions reported internal directives warning against language deemed

“political” or “one-sided” on Gaza, while contributors and commentators were removed or sidelined following social-media posts critical of Israel’s actions. In Italy, freelance journalist Gabriele Nunziati was dropped by his agency after questioning EU officials on Israel’s responsibility for Gaza’s destruction, a case cited by press-freedom groups as emblematic of political pressure on coverage. Meanwhile, social media platforms including Meta restricted Palestinian content under sustained lobbying and government pressure. The space for dissent shrank even as public outrage grew.

This convergence of censorship, repression, and narrative control marked a turning point. What was emerging was not confusion, but a pattern: the same systems that shielded violence abroad were now being turned inward; Gaza exposed not only Western hypocrisy abroad but democratic fragility at home.

What alarmed Western governments was not merely the scale of protest, but its durability. Unlike episodic mobilisations around Iraq or Afghanistan, the Gaza movement sustained momentum despite repression, vilification, and legal threat: it was decentralised, transnational and largely immune to co-optation. This durability reflected structural conditions. The generation mobilised by Gaza had grown up amid permanent crisis: financial collapse, climate breakdown, pandemic mismanagement and endless war. Institutional trust was already eroded... Gaza did not radicalise them; it confirmed their scepticism.

Attempts to suppress the movement produced inverse effects. Each arrest, ban or censorship decision reinforced

the perception that liberal institutions functioned conditionally; that rights existed until they conflicted with power. Universities, media organisations and political parties found themselves on the wrong side of a moral rupture they could neither control nor narrate away.

### **The Crisis of Legitimacy**

The crackdown extended beyond protest. Independent journalists who documented Israeli war crimes or Western complicity faced harassment, legal threats and professional exile while news outlets blurred reporting with advocacy for state policy. Algorithms suppressed images and testimony deemed “sensitive”, while platforms justified restrictions as “moderation” while responding to coordinated lobbying campaigns.

The weaponisation of antisemitism accusations became a central tool. Criticism of Israeli policy was reframed as racial hatred and Palestinian voices were delegitimised. Jewish dissenters were marginalised or erased. The result was not protection against racism, but the corrosion of public discourse.

This strategy carried costs... by conflating Israel with Jewish identity, Western governments and institutions undermined genuine efforts to combat antisemitism. They transformed a real historical trauma into a political shield, eroding its moral force. For younger generations, the tactic backfired spectacularly: Gaza became their political awakening and their trust in institutions collapsed.

Universities that claimed to foster critical inquiry silenced students. Media organisations that professed objectivity adopted state narratives. Governments that preached

democracy criminalised dissent and the gap between rhetoric and reality widened into a chasm.

Even within Israel's remaining allies, private conversations shifted. Foreign ministry officials spoke quietly of "reassessment" and "fatigue" while editorial boards hedged their language and euphemism replaced conviction: this is the final stage of narrative collapse.

The consequences of this collapse were no longer confined to language, beyond intimidation and prosecution lay a more final form of silencing. By the end of 2025, Palestinian journalists had been killed at a rate unmatched in modern conflict. Organisations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders confirmed that Gaza had become the deadliest war zone for the press in modern history. Reporters were struck while wearing press vests... while filming... while sheltering with their families: entire newsrooms were erased.

Wael al-Dahdouh, Gaza bureau chief for Al Jazeera, continued reporting after losing his wife, son, daughter and grandson in an Israeli strike. "This is not personal," he said on air after learning of their deaths, "this is the reality of every family in Gaza." Months later, Wael himself was wounded in another strike while covering the war.

Another journalist, Hossam Shabat, described the calculus faced by reporters shortly before he was killed: "We know we are targets. We keep filming because if we stop, Gaza disappears." This was not collateral loss, it was the removal of witnesses. International media organisations issued statements of concern while continuing to rely on the footage and testimony of those being killed.

The contradiction became grotesque: Palestinian journalists were treated as essential sources and expendable bodies at the same time. Documentation was tolerated only so long as it did not survive. The killing of journalists was not incidental to the war, it was central to controlling how the war would be remembered.

The global realignment described in the previous chapter was not only geopolitical; it was moral. As the world's centre of gravity shifted – away from Atlantic consensus and toward a more fragmented, multipolar order – the war on Gaza exposed something more destabilising than the erosion of Western influence abroad: the collapse of Western credibility at home.

The same governments that had framed themselves as guardians of international law now found their authority unravelling under the weight of their own actions. Gaza did not merely accelerate a new global alignment; it forced liberal democracies to confront the dissonance between the values they proclaimed and the violence they enabled. What followed was not a sudden awakening, but a reckoning; slow, cumulative and increasingly impossible to contain.

Gaza did not only destroy lives in Palestine: it detonated a credibility crisis inside the liberal democracies that armed, financed and diplomatically protected the campaign as the evidence mounted. The war forced Western governments and institutions to confront the widening gap between their stated commitments to human rights and their actual conduct; a crisis of legitimacy that spread from foreign ministries to courtrooms, newsrooms, boardrooms, churches, campuses and dinner tables. If Gaza broke the

West's moral authority, it also stripped away the exceptional status of the state the West had built, funded and defended.

The collapse was not merely political or diplomatic, it was existential: a public unmasking of how power protects itself when confronted with atrocity that can no longer be plausibly denied. This reckoning was not one event; it unfolded as a sequence: exposure, inventory and then consequence.

First, leaks, images, resignations and official paper trails made ignorance impossible. Then came the inventory of mechanisms: the lobbies, legal evasions, supply chains, media gatekeeping, intelligence rationalisations and tech infrastructure that translated "support" into logistics. Then finally came consequence: a cultural and legal shift that altered what could be said in public, what could be defended in court and what could be justified to younger generations without losing legitimacy.

### **The Fracture Inside American Conservatism**

By the summer of 2025, something had gone badly wrong inside the information architecture that Israel had spent decades building across the American right. The collapse did not begin with Gaza, nor even with October 7, but with a series of investigative reports published by Max Blumenthal at The Grayzone, which exposed a hidden struggle between Israel's political network in Washington and one of its most important American assets: Charlie Kirk.

For more than a decade, Kirk had been groomed by a constellation of pro-Israel billionaires, donors and political operatives who saw in him a uniquely valuable conduit into the conservative grassroots. He was not Jewish, which made

him especially useful as a messenger. He spoke the language of Christian nationalism and America First populism, yet he had been raised inside a funding ecosystem that was deeply integrated with Israel's political objectives. Turning Point USA, the organisation he built, became one of the most powerful mobilising engines in the MAGA movement, shaping the worldview of millions of young conservatives who would go on to enter politics, the military, media and activist networks.

By the time Donald Trump returned to office, Kirk was no longer simply a commentator, he was widely viewed inside Republican power circles as a future senator and possibly a future president. His influence was not theoretical: he could move crowds, shift narratives and place pressure directly on the White House, all of which made him indispensable to Israeli strategy at precisely the moment when Israel needed the American right to absorb and defend an increasingly indefensible war. Then Gaza happened...

As images of mass civilian destruction circulated across social media, Israel's traditional talking points began to fail even among conservative audiences that had once accepted them reflexively. At Turning Point's summer summit in July 2025, that shift erupted into the open when pro-Palestinian and anti-war arguments were voiced on stage and cheered by thousands of young activists. The taboo against criticising Israel inside Conservative Incorporated was broken in public. Within weeks, a private rescue operation was launched.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not need to personally write cheques; what he needed was something more sophisticated. According to Blumenthal's reporting,

he moved to assemble a consortium of friendly American billionaires and political financiers who would pour money into Kirk's operation in exchange for restoring message discipline. The objective was not simply to support Kirk financially but to reassert Israeli control over one of the most important megaphones in American conservatism.

A secret influencer summit was convened by hedge fund billionaire Bill Ackman, bringing together donors, media figures and Israeli-aligned operatives. Its purpose was to stabilise what they saw as a dangerous fracture inside the right-wing information ecosystem, one that threatened Israel's ability to mobilise American youth behind its next war, particularly the looming confrontation with Iran. Charlie Kirk meant to be brought back into line; instead, he pulled away.

A private letter that Kirk wrote to Netanyahu in May 2025, later released to the public, revealed a man who was no longer comfortable playing the role assigned to him. Rather than reaffirming loyalty, Kirk complained about being treated as a subcontracted propagandist for Israel, forced to carry messages that were politically toxic inside the America First movement he had helped build. He warned that it made conservative activists look foolish to be seen as mouthpieces for a foreign state and he explicitly rejected the push for war with Iran, arguing that Israel should make its own case to the American public rather than paying US influencers to do it on its behalf.

The existence and contents of the letter, along with the secret donor meetings and the withdrawal of key financial backers, were first reported by Blumenthal in a series of investigations at The Grayzone, drawing on donor records,

leaked correspondence and interviews with figures inside the conservative political ecosystem.

Within weeks, the consequences became visible. One of Kirk's most important benefactors, ultra-Zionist billionaire Robert Schillman, quietly withdrew his financial support. At the same time, far-right activist Laura Loomer, herself backed by pro-Israel donors, launched a sustained public attack on Kirk. By June, he was lobbying inside the Trump White House against Israeli efforts to pull the United States into a war with Iran, a move that cut directly across Netanyahu's strategic objectives.

In July, the rupture became impossible to hide: at the Turning Point summit in Florida, Tucker Carlson denounced Bill Ackman on stage, Dave Smith debated the Gaza war before a live audience, and Charlie Kirk found himself under fire from two of Israel's most reliable American media enforcers, Mark Levin and Ben Shapiro. Days later, Kirk went on Megyn Kelly's show and complained that Americans were being denied the freedom to criticise Israel even as Israelis themselves did so openly, referring pointedly to unnamed stakeholders and funders.

Between them, Kirk, Tucker Carlson, Ben Shapiro, Mark Levin, Megyn Kelly and the other personalities orbiting the Turning Point ecosystem reached well over one hundred million followers and viewers across YouTube, podcasts, X, TikTok and broadcast television, giving this loosely connected network more influence over the political consciousness of American conservatives than any single newspaper, cable network or political party machine in the country.

On September 10, 2025, at midday, Charlie Kirk, the thirty-one-year-old founder of Turning Point USA and one of the most influential organisers in American conservatism, was shot in the neck by a single bullet while answering audience questions during a public event at Utah Valley University. He collapsed in view of the crowd and was later pronounced dead at a nearby hospital. Law enforcement described the incident as a targeted political assassination.

There is no evidence that Israel played any role in his killing, but the political shockwaves that followed were revealing. Netanyahu took the extraordinary step of publicly denying any Israeli involvement... twice. Ben Shapiro issued similar denials. It was an unprecedented spectacle, a foreign leader and his media allies rushing to distance themselves from a narrative that had not yet even fully solidified.

The reason was simple: the myth of Charlie Kirk as Israel's loyal gentile champion had collapsed. The letter he wrote, the donors who abandoned him and the attacks that came just as he opposed a war with Iran all pointed to a deeper truth. Kirk had become a liability to the very forces that had built him.

What died with Charlie Kirk was not just a man but a model of political control. For decades, Israel and its American networks had relied on a managed ecosystem of conservative influencers, donors and media platforms to ensure that US foreign policy remained locked in place regardless of public opinion. Gaza broke that system. Kirk was merely the most visible casualty of its failure. In the new information war, even Israel's most carefully cultivated assets were no longer guaranteed to obey.

## Exposure

In Washington, the rupture was not only visible in polling or protest but inside the bureaucracy itself.

In October 2023, Josh Paul – the State Department’s director of congressional and public affairs in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, the office that handles major arms transfers – resigned, according to his public statement and subsequent interviews, saying he could no longer be part of an approach he characterised as “blind support” for Israel’s war.

He was followed by other officials who said the same conflict between role and conscience had become intolerable: Annelle Sheline, a Foreign Service officer in the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, resigned in March 2024; veteran diplomat Hala Rharrit resigned in April 2024; Lily Greenberg Call, a political appointee at the U.S. Department of the Interior, resigned in May 2024; and Harrison Mann, a U.S. military intelligence officer, said he quit citing “moral injury.” By February 2, 2024, this internal dissent had crossed borders.

More than 800 civil servants across the United States and Europe issued an open statement warning that their governments’ policies were weakening their nations’ “moral standing” and risked contributing to violations of international law. Organisers said many signatories withheld their names for fear of reprisal; an anonymity that itself testified to the climate of constraint.

In Britain, a rare public resignation added names and legal language to what had often been expressed privately. In August 2024, Mark Smith, a senior official in the UK

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office working on arms-export policy, resigned and wrote that he could no longer do his job “in the knowledge that this department may be complicit in war crimes,” after raising concerns internally without effect... The Foreign Office’s own internal crisis later became public.

In June 2025, The Guardian reported that more than 300 FCDO staff who had written internal letters warning of complicity were told that, if they profoundly disagreed with policy, they should consider resignation as their “ultimate recourse.”

Across EU institutions, dissent became organised and sustained. EU staff first circulated a protest letter in October 2023 – reported to have gathered hundreds of signatures – accusing the Commission leadership of abandoning the Union’s own values.

On May 24, 2024, The Guardian reported that 211 EU staff members signed a letter to the EU’s top leadership citing “continued apathy” to Palestinians’ plight and warning that Europe risked normalising a world in which force, not law, determines security.

By May 2025, the same movement said its signatories numbered in the thousands, accusing EU institutions of “little to no meaningful action” on Gaza and repeating demands for arms-export restraint, suspension of preferential agreements and full support for international justice. In August 2025, Le Monde reported a further open letter signed by roughly 1,650 European civil servants – many in diplomatic and humanitarian departments – urging immediate action to open access for aid and warning that “silence equals complicity”.

Even where individual resignations were rarer than collective protest, some European officials did quit. In the Netherlands, Angélique Eijpe, a Dutch foreign-service official, said she resigned in November 2023 over the Dutch government's Gaza policy and later helped convene civil-service dissent.

By August 2025, the rupture reached cabinet level in The Hague: the Dutch foreign minister, Caspar Veldkamp, resigned after failing to win coalition backing for proposed sanctions on Israel, saying he could not “implement policy” or “chart the course” he deemed necessary. The episode showed how Gaza was not only a moral crisis but a stability test for Western governments themselves. In Germany, civil servants also pressed publicly.

On April 7, 2024, German government workers were reported to have demanded an “immediate” end to arms deliveries to Israel, citing human-rights concerns; an eruption of dissent in a state where post-Holocaust doctrine had long been used to discipline debate.

By late 2025, the war had accomplished what no domestic protest, election, or financial scandal could: it stripped Western governments of their cherished self-image. States that had sermonised for decades about the rule of law and universal rights found those words turned back upon them like mirrors. The West had long cast itself as civilisation's moral compass; Gaza revealed the machinery of impunity beneath the rhetoric.

Technology ensured the reckoning could not be quarantined. Gaza was described by many observers as the “world's first livestreamed genocide”: a daily flow of images, testimony and geolocated evidence that made the

complicity of Western powers feel personal to millions. The question ceased to be whether the public knew, it became whether Western institutions would act as though knowledge carried obligations.

In congressional hearings, senior officials responsible for authorising weapons transfers faced questions for which there were no defensible answers. The evidence was no longer speculative, it was documented in internal memoranda and investigative reporting.

ProPublica reported, based on internal USAID memoranda, that USAID had informed Secretary of State Antony Blinken that Israel was “deliberately blocking deliveries of food and medicine to Gaza,” and that State Department officials urged steps under US law that were not taken. The pattern that emerged was familiar: private acknowledgement, public equivocation, continued shipments. Hollow requests and rhetorical “lines” became their own kind of confession.

President Joe Biden declared a “red line” on Rafah in early 2024: a signal, finally, that there was a limit to what Washington would tolerate, but the warning dissolved almost immediately. When Israel pressed ahead regardless, the goalposts moved: the operation did not yet cross the line; discussions were ongoing; the US remained “concerned.” Meanwhile, Rafah - once the last refuge for families repeatedly displaced - was razed into an open sandpit, a wasteland scraped flat by bulldozers and bombs.

The credibility crisis deepened because the administration did not only fail to restrain Israel; it amplified unverified atrocity claims while minimising documented atrocities.

Early in the war, Biden said he had seen photographs of Hamas beheading babies. He had not; the White House later clarified the comments were based on unverified reports. The episode crystallised a hierarchy of belief: rapid certainty for claims that justified escalation and endless caution for evidence that demanded restraint.

### **The Politics of Fear**

As the gap between public claims and private knowledge widened, some US politicians began naming the political enforcement mechanisms that sustained the policy. Senator Bernie Sanders criticised the influence of pro-Israel lobby groups on US politics and the Democratic Party's response to Gaza.

"Many of my colleagues privately express horror," he said. "But they are afraid to speak out because AIPAC and its super PACs will spend millions to defeat them." Sanders pointed to the scale of US military support: "Last year alone, the US gave \$18 billion in military aid to Israel. And another \$12 billion has been approved."

The numbers mattered because they made complicity measurable... a generational divide widened into a chasm.

A July 2025 Gallup poll found only 32% of Americans approved of Israel's war, while 60% disapproved, its lowest standing in modern history. Among Democrats, only 12% sympathised more with Israelis than Palestinians, while 60% sided more with Palestinians. Younger Americans did not see Gaza as a distant "security dilemma." They saw it as an American crime, executed with American weapons - including 2,000lb bombs - paid for by US taxes, and shielded by US vetoes at the United Nations.

## **Breaking the Media Silence**

The shift accelerated when new media channels bypassed traditional gatekeepers. In early October 2025, Tucker Carlson interviewed economist Jeffrey Sachs in a conversation reported to have drawn more than 20 million views within 48 hours across X, TikTok, and YouTube, dwarfing most nightly network newscasts.

Carlson opened by framing the obsession as absurd ridicule: “We’re devoting all of our time to a boutique conversation about a tiny country on the other side of the world. It’s humiliating.” He voiced a growing American frustration: the sense that US political life had been warped around a single client relationship, and argued that the United States had written Israel “a blank check for hundreds of billions” that would never be repaid. “It’s not aid, it’s tribute,” he said.

Whatever one made of Carlson’s motives, the episode mattered because it showed a collapse of the old information regime: language once confined to marginal outlets was now mainstream in form and scale. The reckoning moved from policy disputes to legitimacy disputes.

## **Paper Trails and Legal Risk**

In London, the pomp of the government podium collided with a paper trail. Civil servants leaked internal legal advice warning ministers that continuing arms exports risked placing the UK in breach of international humanitarian law. The memos were reportedly read at senior levels and not acted upon.

When lawsuits arrived, the government reached for its oldest incantation: national security. This time, the courts

were less willing to be hypnotised. For the first time in modern British politics, ministers faced the plausible prospect that complicity would not remain a moral accusation but a legal question.

Parliamentary norms shifted as well... long-time Israel supporters publicly reversed themselves, acknowledging they had been wrong. What had once been unsayable began to appear in the parliamentary record, not as activist rhetoric but as an official accounting of policy and consequence.

Germany faced its most intimate reckoning. For decades, officials invoked historical guilt as a permanent licence to arm Israel, turning remembrance into policy reflex. As evidence of mass civilian destruction mounted, this moral narrative fractured.

Holocaust survivors and descendants published open letters arguing that remembrance without active compassion is a betrayal. Synagogues hosted vigils where prayers for Gaza's dead were spoken alongside the older liturgies of memory. Germany's hard-won moral authority turned, painfully, against itself.

The rupture ran along the seams of the Atlantic alliance. European committees debated arms end-use monitoring with a fervour once reserved for budgets. The Netherlands led a shift toward restrictions on dual-use exports and tighter inspections ... the language of "values" began to sound, even to some officials, like a liability.

## Inventory of Mechanisms

The reckoning hardened when the public began to trace the material pathways that made the war possible. Investigations did not only ask who authorised policy, they asked who supplied components, who insured shipments, who wrote the legal justifications, who laundered the narratives and who built the data infrastructure.

An investigation titled “The Missing Ingredient: Polish TNT” reported that the state-owned Polish company Nitro-Chem, Europe’s largest producer of TNT, had become a critical supplier of explosive material for US-made Mark-series aerial bombs used extensively by Israel after October 2023.

The investigation said Nitro-Chem supplied around 90% of the TNT imported by the United States for bomb production, and that in 2025 the company secured a record contract to supply 18,000 tons of TNT over three years, worth more than \$300 million. The symbolism was as grim as the logistics.

Nitro-Chem’s factory stood on the site of a Nazi arms complex built during the German occupation, once targeted by Polish resistance sabotage. Now, TNT produced on that soil travelled through a European supply chain into bombs that flattened Palestinian neighbourhoods. Poland supplied cheap explosive feedstock; US contractors captured the billions; Palestinian civilians absorbed the blast.

It was a supply chain, but it was also a moral map. Intelligence establishments, too, were unmasked. For years, Western security elites claimed intelligence was the ballast of wise policy... but Gaza suggested a darker truth: intelligence without morality is logistics for atrocity.

Analysts had flagged famine risk. Field cables had noted predictable targeting patterns. Liaison units had internally acknowledged friendly-fire killings of Israeli hostages while public lines insisted there was “no reliable evidence.” The scandal was not ignorance, it was the normalisation of knowledge that carried no moral weight.

When oversight bodies later demanded briefings, the record read like a ledger of foreknowledge: “we assessed,” “we anticipated”: phrases that returned again and again through redactions.

### **The Technology-Surveillance Nexus**

A further layer of complicity ran through Western technology, as demonstrated by investigative reporting by journalist Murtaza Hussain describing more than 1,400 Israeli intelligence veterans working in US tech firms such as Microsoft, Google, and Amazon.

Reports also described partnerships between major firms and Israeli military or intelligence-linked units, including Unit 8200, and argued that cloud infrastructure and data analytics capabilities were being integrated into surveillance and targeting systems used in Gaza.

Here, the reckoning took on a domestic character... These were not distant systems operating “over there”, they were embedded in Western corporate structures and talent pipelines, financed by Western capital, protected by Western law, and branded with Western ethical slogans.

In October 2025, leaked Israeli documents, first reported by multiple investigative outlets, were described as outlining a billionaire-backed influence network codenamed “Project

12 Tribes.” According to the reporting, the papers outlined coordination among former intelligence operatives, philanthropists and Israeli government-linked bodies to shape opinion, suppress pro-Palestinian activism and develop online narrative operations, including efforts to influence how generative AI systems reproduced pro-Israel framings.

The papers were described as outlining partnerships with private marketing and intelligence firms tasked with “training generative systems” to amplify preferred framings and suppress inconvenient narratives. The documents traced the project’s origin to a memo within Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies proposing “an exclusive group of the 12 most influential Jewish philanthropists, symbolising the 12 Jewish tribes,” with Israel’s government acting as a facilitating “13th.”

The planning papers described a decentralised “mothership” designed to mobilise private capital and influence without the constraints that bind formal state agencies. Names listed in the documents reportedly included Larry Ellison (Oracle), David Ellison (Paramount Global), Haim Saban, Sergey Brin and Frank Lowy, with requests that each contribute \$1 million to seed funding.

Reporting also drew lines between elite ownership of platforms and the politics of speech: Oracle’s role in the TikTok US data arrangement and Paramount leadership changes that critics argued would shape newsroom culture. Whether every claim in the leaks held up in full detail, the political meaning was unmistakable: influence operations were being conceived as an ecosystem spanning state, capital and platforms.

Despite these resources, Israel's propaganda effort appeared to be faltering with younger audiences. Online engagement frequently favoured critical content over official messaging.

At the 2025 UN General Assembly, Netanyahu spoke to a half-empty chamber as delegations staged a walkout; a tableau of isolation that would have been unimaginable a decade earlier.

### **Exposing the Networks**

In the UK, further leaks reportedly illuminated how influence travelled through donors, party networks, think tanks and diplomatic channels.

Two document sets reported in November 2025 - one involving emails associated with Ron Prosor, Israel's former ambassador to the UK, and another involving communications linked to former Prime Minister Ehud Barak - were described as revealing a web of relationships that blurred the line between advocacy, access and coordination.

The Prosor emails reportedly included a 2014 message from Conservative treasurer Mick Davis writing to Prosor during Israel's assault on Gaza: "I am thinking of you and my country and her people and soldiers all the time," language that suggested an intimacy beyond diplomatic form.

Another tranche concerned Conservative Friends of Israel (CFI), a lobby group that claimed support from a large share of Conservative MPs. The leaked messages were reported to show CFI's longtime director Stuart Polak discussing fundraising support from US billionaire Paul Singer and seeking introductions to similar donors.

If accurate, it was among the clearest documentary indications of transatlantic donor networks underpinning UK political lobbying on Israel, but the reported network did not stop at one party.

After Labour entered government in 2024, leaked diary material attributed to Israel's UK Ambassador Tzipi Hotovely was reported to show meetings with Labour Friends of Israel figures, executives from BP seeking access to gas reserves off Gaza and Labour donors with ties to senior ministers including David Lammy and Keir Starmer, including meetings during periods of intensified Gaza operations.

Further reporting described an email from Dean Godson, a Conservative peer and director of Policy Exchange, boasting to the Israeli ambassador that he and "a few comrades" had placed an anti-Jeremy Corbyn story in the Daily Mail. If true, it suggested a level of coordination between domestic media operations and diplomatic interests that would previously have been dismissed as implausible.

The Barak-linked emails added a financial and intermediary layer... Jeffrey Epstein appeared, in the reported material, not only as a criminal figure but as a broker connecting elites across politics, finance and intelligence. The documents were described in investigative reporting as showing Epstein linking Barak with Ariane de Rothschild of the Edmond de Rothschild Group, a private banking dynasty known for cross-border finance. The same tranche was reported to show the former British Ambassador to the UK, Peter Mandelson, maintaining contact after Epstein's 2008 conviction, contradicting public claims that he had severed ties.

Taken together, the reported leaks described a structure in which the UK provided political access, donors, media channels and parliamentary influence... Israel provided diplomatic strategy, former senior officials and intelligence expertise; the US provided intermediaries and wealthy political financiers; Europe provided discreet financial structures capable of moving money with minimal scrutiny.

This was not a theatrical conspiracy, it was a documented system: interlocking interests and incentives operating through normal channels, largely beyond democratic oversight.

### **The Privatisation of War**

By late 2025, even the language of “humanitarianism” had been absorbed into new forms of coercion. In November, UG Solutions, a North Carolina-based military contractor under scrutiny for its role in deadly Gaza aid operations, intensified recruitment of veterans for what appeared to be expanded deployment inside the Strip.

The recruitment coincided with a reported UN Security Council resolution establishing an “international stabilisation force” answerable not to the UN itself but to a Trump-chaired “Board of Peace.”

“This is not a peace plan,” a veteran diplomat said privately after reviewing leaked documents... “It is a containment plan.”

Aid sites became synonymous with bloodshed. Investigations documented patterns of violence by contractors: live ammunition, stun grenades and pepper spray deployed at almost every distribution, “even if there

was no threat.” One contractor, Anthony Aguilar, resigned and described what he had witnessed as “war crimes and crimes against humanity,” calling the sites “death traps.” Reporting also said UG Solutions hired members of Infidels MC, an American biker gang associated with anti-Muslim extremism, as armed security.

The arrangement was Orwellian: private American gunmen enforcing “stability” in a territory their government had helped destroy, protected by contractor shields that blurred accountability.

### **The Cultural and Legal Reckoning**

As the paper trails multiplied, the reckoning spread beyond policy into culture... Churches faced congregational votes of no confidence and pews emptied when sermons called for “balance” after weeks of episcopal silence on famine.

Pope Francis became, by many accounts, the first pontiff to use the word “genocide” in relation to Gaza and made nightly calls to Gāza’s Christian community, a stark contrast to governments that offered only calibrated “concern.”

Multinational corporations released pristine statements about humanitarian worry while distributing dividends derived from the logistics of siege and war. Shareholders revolted. Corporate counsel began to treat complicity not as a PR hazard but as a balance-sheet liability.

Newsrooms faced their own dock... Editors who softened headlines, buried lead paragraphs and recycled official claims confronted cancelled subscriptions and staff rebellions.

Public self-examinations offered careful phrases - “verification failures,” “editorial shortcomings” - but audiences had learned to read footnotes, follow funding and compare coverage with the evidence stream.

Platforms, deputised as censors under the banner of “user safety,” tagged Palestinian testimony as “sensitive content” while allowing calls for Gaza’s “erasure” by Israeli officials to circulate widely. Users adapted with coded language, mirror sites, and decentralised archives... The result was perverse and productive: a mass public newly literate in the mechanics of informational control.

Across culture, the tone shifted from irony to indictment. Documentary makers assembled chronological testimony from livestreams and satellite images while coders built encrypted repositories for deleted posts and shadow-banned videos, indexed by timestamp, location and casualty list. A new class of record-keeper emerged: curators of memory, working from kitchen tables to preserve what institutions tried to forget.

Education changed. From secondary schools to graduate seminars, syllabi shifted from civic pageantry toward accountability: tracing how an export licence becomes a killing, how a parliamentary vote becomes a denied aid convoy, how euphemism becomes policy.

Domestic courts began entertaining unprecedented challenges to arms-export licences under long-dormant genocide-prevention duties. Municipal authorities faced procurement lawsuits over suppliers tied to weapons systems; contracts collapsed; public tenders were rewritten with explicit human-rights risk clauses. Professional bodies followed: bar associations and law societies issued guidance

that complicity risk was not an abstract academic concept but a matter of legal ethics.

### **Moral Collapse, What Remains?**

The West's foundational self-conception as a moral civilisation imploded.

The language of human rights, repeated for generations, began to sound like branding. The myth of Western exceptionalism - the idea that virtue is inherited - died in public view and in its place came a harsher truth: moral authority is earned, not presumed; justice is a practice, not a slogan.

That collapse became explicit when international law itself was placed under coercion. As the International Criminal Court moved toward arrest warrants for Israeli leaders, the response from Western capitals was not evidentiary rebuttal but threat. In testimony later cited in court filings and reported by The Guardian, ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan stated that in April 2024 he was warned by a senior British official that the United Kingdom could defund – or even withdraw from – the Court if it proceeded with warrants against Israeli officials.

The warning, Khan said, was delivered without reference to jurisdiction or evidence. It was a political ultimatum, but pressure did not stop there. Khan further disclosed that on 1 May 2024 he received a call from US Senator Lindsey Graham, who warned that pursuing arrest warrants could provoke Hamas into killing Israeli hostages. The logic was strained, but the intent was clear: legal accountability itself was being framed as a moral risk.

When the Court did not retreat, the response escalated beyond diplomacy: According to reporting by the Associated Press and confirmed by ICC officials, judges and prosecutors associated with the Israel–Palestine case were subjected to sweeping US sanctions, measures normally reserved for autocrats and organised crime figures. Bank accounts were frozen, credit cards stopped working and official email systems were terminated; travel became impossible.

Canadian ICC judge Kimberly Prost, sanctioned in August 2025, described the effect bluntly: “You become a non-person. It’s the uncertainty. Small things accumulate.” Deputy Prosecutor Nazhat Shameem Khan said she never knew whether a declined payment was “a technical glitch or another sanction taking effect.”

International justice did not fail in theory; it was strangled in practice: through financial infrastructure, digital systems and bureaucratic attrition. The lesson was unmistakable: the so-called “rules-based international order” was not universal, but conditional; enforced downward, suspended upward and withdrawn entirely when it threatened protected power. Gaza did not merely expose selective enforcement. It revealed that international law, when aimed at real power, exists only at the pleasure of those it is meant to restrain.

When the masks of hypocrisy fall away, two questions remain...

First: what can be salvaged from the wreckage? Some traditions have re-emerged, stripped back and hardened by pressure: law when it resists choreography rather than performs it; witness journalism working beyond

compromised institutions; prophetic religion that chooses difficult compassion over comfortable conformity and the arts, reclaimed as a workshop of memory rather than distraction.

Second: who will insist on rebuilding? Wreckage alone does not produce a better future. The collapse of national innocence matters only if it gives way to adult responsibility: embargoes that bite; courts that refuse to defer to political theatre; schools that teach evidence over etiquette; media that prioritises victims over access; economies that treat complicity as a real cost, not a public-relations expense. The West will survive this reckoning but it will not emerge unchanged.

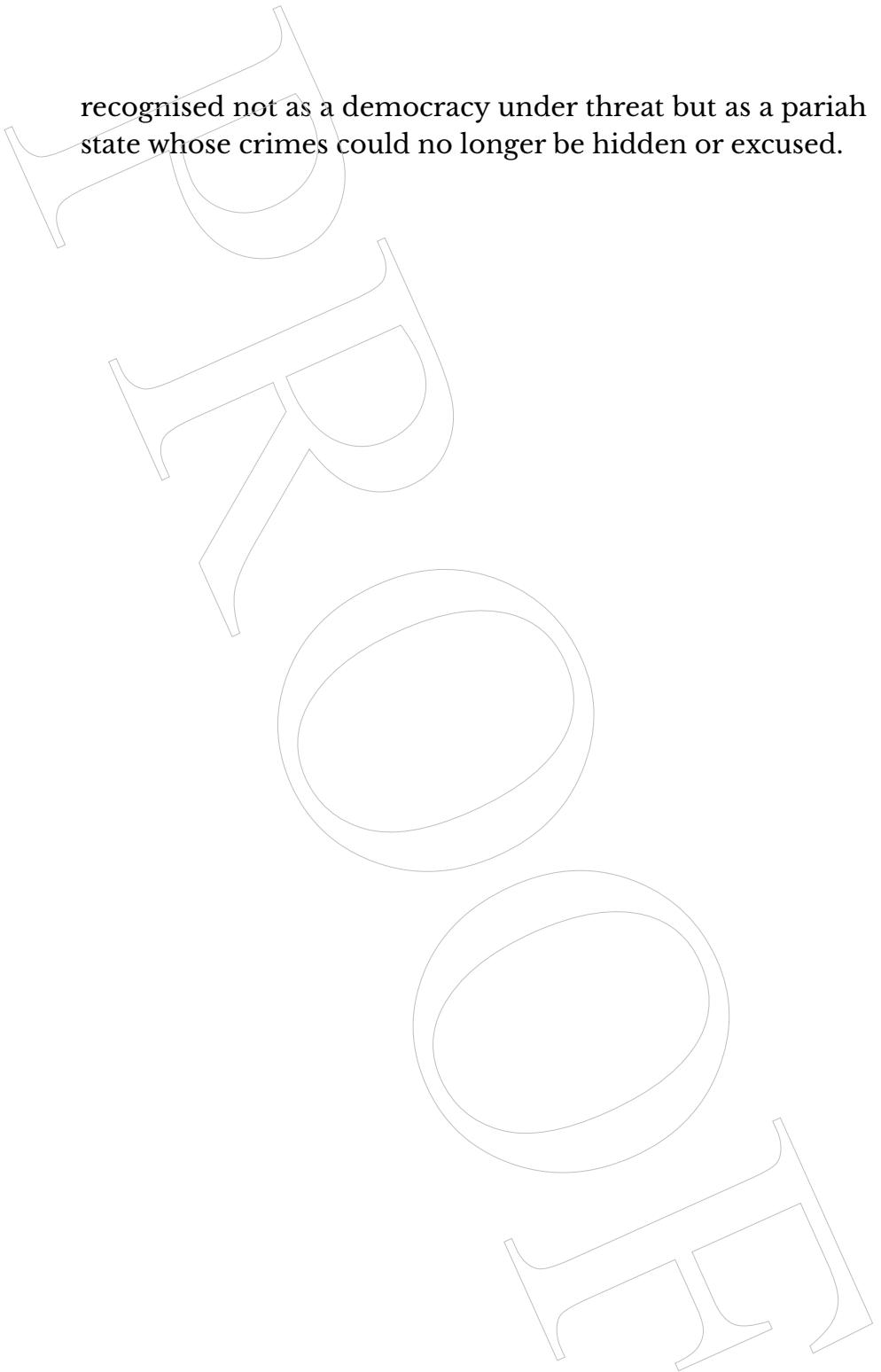
The slogans - “rules-based order,” “shared values,” “moral leadership” - will persist because language outlives meaning. But the audience is altered. The counter-archive exists: vast, redundant and hard to erase.

Gaza returned to the West not paralysing guilt but the painful gift of truth. Truth rearranges the furniture of a society: it changes how votes are cast and sermons heard, which newspapers are bought and which contracts are signed, what children learn and what ministers can no longer say without being challenged. What follows is not an epilogue of outrage, but the terrain of accountability.

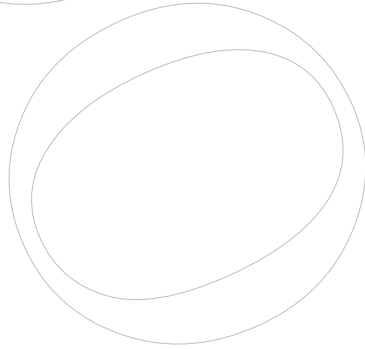
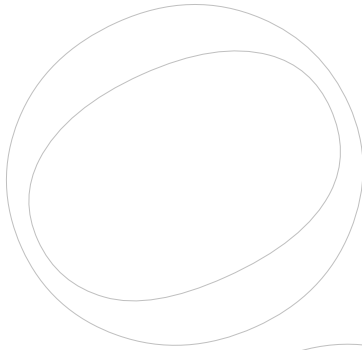
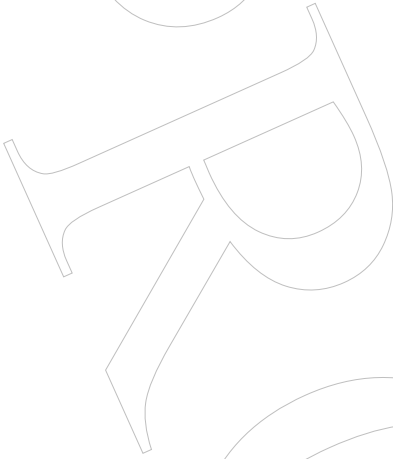
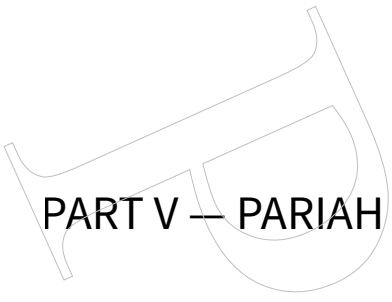
As courts, archives and citizens begin to act on what has been seen and documented, the age of impunity – long treated as inevitable – enters its most serious challenge yet.

As the West confronted its own collapse, another transformation completed itself: Israel became what it had always feared: isolated, condemned and increasingly

recognised not as a democracy under threat but as a pariah state whose crimes could no longer be hidden or excused.



PART V — PARIAH



## CHAPTER 10

### *Pariah*

*Gaza did not make Israel a pariah; it revealed the pariah Israel had already become, stripping away decades of carefully-cultivated myth to expose the machinery of colonial violence beneath.*

By 2025, Israel had achieved the status it had spent decades trying to avoid: pariah ... not through a formal diplomatic decree, but through an irreversible shift in global recognition.

That pariah status then entered the courtroom. In December 2025, Belgium formally intervened in South Africa's genocide case at the International Court of Justice under Article 63 of the Court's statute. This meant the interpretation of the Genocide Convention itself was now being shaped by multiple states, not just Pretoria. Israel was no longer facing a solitary accuser from the Global South, it was facing a widening legal coalition that included European governments willing to contest its claims of innocence in law.

Pariah status is not imposed by slogans or resolutions; it emerges when a state's claims to legitimacy collapse so completely that no amount of military power, diplomatic protection or narrative management can restore belief.

That withdrawal soon became visible inside Israel itself. As the war continued and international isolation hardened, Israel experienced an elite exodus unprecedented in its history. According to data compiled by Israeli universities and reported in late 2025, departments in mathematics, physics, medicine and computer science saw sharp losses of senior staff. Technology firms quietly relocated research teams abroad and graduate programmes reported collapsing enrolment.

The same implosion was similarly visible in the private sector: a report released in December 2025 by the Israel Advanced Technology Industries Association found that 53 percent of multinational tech firms had seen a sharp rise in employee requests to relocate abroad. This was no longer political protest, it was capital and expertise quietly voting with their feet.

Professor Dan Ben-David, president of the Shores Institute for Socioeconomic Research, warned that the trend represented more than ordinary mobility: “When your strongest human capital starts leaving,” he said, “it’s a sign that confidence in the system itself is breaking.”

One senior academic who left for Europe described the decision without rhetoric: “I didn’t leave because of politics, I left because I no longer believe this place can correct itself.” Another researcher, departing for North America, said the choice was existential: “I don’t want my children growing up inside something that feels permanently at war with reality.”

This was not economic migration. It was anticipatory exit. Pariah status, once dismissed as external hostility, was now being priced into life decisions by the very strata that had sustained the state’s legitimacy... It was also being priced

into trade. In 2024–25 Israel's diamond exports collapsed by more than a third as buyers withdrew, trade fairs were cancelled and US tariffs hit Israeli stones. One of Israel's oldest war-financing industries was beginning to crumble.

What collapsed was not merely Israel's reputation, but the architecture of belief that had insulated it from consequence. In 2025, Pew Research confirmed it: across 24 countries a median 62 percent of respondents now held an unfavourable view of Israel, with only 29 percent favourable. Israel was no longer controversial, it was rejected.

When history judges the twenty-first century, Gaza will be remembered not only for the scale of death it witnessed, but for the moment when denial became structurally impossible and when culture, long insulated from political reality, finally broke ranks.

That rupture became impossible to ignore in December 2025, when Lullaby, a Gaza solidarity single built around a traditional Palestinian children's song, climbed into the UK Christmas Top Five. Recorded by Together For Palestine, it marked the first time an Arabic-language recording had reached such a position in the chart. Millions chose to spend their holiday money not on festive escapism but on a song about a child in Gaza. What had once been confined to activist margins was now embraced by the mainstream: Gaza had broken through the emotional quarantine imposed on Western publics. The war was no longer something happening elsewhere, it had lodged itself inside popular culture... This was not an isolated gesture, it was part of a widening cultural alignment with the reality on the ground.

Weeks earlier, on 3 September 2025, *The Voice of Hind Rajab* screened in competition at the Venice International

Film Festival. Directed and written by Tunisian filmmaker Kaouther Ben Hania, the film recounts the heartbreaking final hours of six-year-old Hind Rajab during Israel's targeting of children and medics in Gaza. It stars Saja Kilani, Motaz Malhees, Clara Khoury and Amer Hlehel, with executive producers including Brad Pitt, Joaquin Phoenix, Rooney Mara and Alfonso Cuarón.

At its Venice premiere, the film received a standing ovation lasting approximately 24 minutes, one of the longest in the festival's history. The response was not to craft alone, but to recognition. Audiences were confronting, collectively and publicly, the human reality that political language and media framing had long worked to obscure. When the film went on to win the Silver Lion Grand Jury Prize, it confirmed what the ovation had already signalled: artists and audiences were no longer merely witnessing Gaza, they were aligning themselves with its truth. Culture had moved first, media would follow.

### **Reality, Uncut**

In mid-December 2025, a fracture appeared in the American information system when Tucker Carlson travelled to Qatar and visited a medical facility treating Palestinians evacuated from Gaza. Inside were children with amputations, catastrophic facial injuries and wounds that would define the rest of their lives.

Carlson described struggling to hold back tears as he walked among them. "Tens of thousands of children killed by a country with the most precise military technology in the world," he said, rejecting the language of accident and collateral damage that had long insulated Western audiences from moral consequence.

Filming on an iPhone - deliberately avoiding the mediation and polish of broadcast television - he released the footage on his independent platform to an audience of millions. For the first time, a major American media figure punctured the protective screen separating US audiences from the human cost of what their government was funding.

By then, the pattern was unmistakable. From music charts to film festivals to digital media platforms, the wall of abstraction surrounding Gaza was giving way; not through official reckoning, but through a cumulative cultural revolt against denial itself.

At the same time, Republican congressman Randy Fine was asked on social media how he felt after seeing a photograph of a dead Palestinian child. "Quite well, actually. Thanks for the pic!" he replied, before defending collective punishment. For many Americans, the moment required no further explanation... it exposed, in a single exchange, the moral posture of a political system no longer capable of even performing empathy.

Israel was not the only state committing atrocities, but no other US ally was doing so while demanding applause. The United States shipped the weapons, vetoed ceasefire resolutions, blocked investigations and wrapped the devastation in the language of security. Carlson's footage from Doha did not end that policy, but it did something dangerous to it... it let Americans see the children and once you see them, the language of justification no longer works.

### **Clinical Recognition**

In early 2024, a collective account by sixty-five American doctors, nurses and paramedics, published in the New York

Times, provided one of the clearest visuals of the reality on the ground for Gaza's children.

Forty-four of the sixty-five health workers surveyed reported seeing multiple cases of pre-teen children shot in the head or chest. Sixty-three observed severe malnutrition among patients, Palestinian medical staff, and the general population. Fifty-three saw children suffering from easily preventable infections, some of whom died as a direct result. Sixty-four reported that even the most basic medical necessities – soap, gloves, antibiotics – were usually unavailable. This was not anecdote, it was pattern.

Dr Feroze Sidhwa, a trauma surgeon, described seeing a new young child shot in the head or chest nearly every day he worked in Gaza. Thirteen such children died under his care. At first, he assumed the work of a single rogue shooter; then an emergency physician who had worked at a different hospital months earlier who had seen the same told him: “Yeah, me too. Every single day.”

Orthopaedic surgeon Dr Khawaja Ikram described treating a three-year-old and a five-year-old, each with a single bullet wound to the head. “There was,” staff told him, “a sniper waiting.” Paramedic Rania Afaneh described a child shot through the jaw, fully conscious, staring at her as he choked on his own blood.

Professor Nizam Mamode, testifying to the UK Parliament's International Development Committee, described a recurring sequence: after bombs fell, the drones descended. “They would come down and pick off civilians – children.” He recounted patients telling him they were shot while lying wounded on the ground by quadcopters hovering overhead, firing small cuboid munitions designed to maximise tissue

destruction. Mamode described it as “persistent targeting of civilians, day after day.”

Dr Victoria Rose, a London consultant plastic surgeon, witnessed the transformation firsthand. “Before the war, we were able to enter Gaza through Israel, taking in any equipment we needed. Now, we’re at the mercy of the WHO and the IDF as to where we can go, what we can bring in, and even which hospitals are functioning.” She described the horrifying shift in her work: from breast reconstruction in London to treating children with blast injuries in Gaza, where debris – masonry, metal, even vehicle parts – got propelled at high speed into civilians. She detailed the macabre improvisation born of the siege: “We used vinegar to clean wounds when we had no antiseptic dressings.”

This micro-level testimony aligned with the macro-level statistics.

Scholar Norman Finkelstein noted that between 7 and 31 October 2023 alone, approximately 1,900 Palestinian children were killed; more than in the worst year of the Syrian conflict. He concluded that by any humanitarian metric, “Israel in the 21st century is in a class all its own.” By mid-2025, Professor Michael Spagat estimated that over 100,000 Palestinians had been killed, placing Gaza among the bloodiest conflicts of the century, with one of the highest civilian-to-combatant death ratios ever recorded.

What emerged was not the fog of war, but its opposite: clarity. Estimates compiled from multiple humanitarian sources — including Save the Children and UNICEF — indicate that by the beginning of 2026 around 20,000 Palestinian children had been killed by Israel.

This was not a war conducted under tragic uncertainty; it was a system of killing whose effects were measured, repeated, legible and it was from this recognition – cold, clinical, undeniable – that Israel’s pariah status began to crystallise.

### **Weapons of Intentional Harm**

The means of killing were selected without shame, then documented by doctors. Two-thousand-pound bombs in dense cities, leaving craters forty feet wide, white phosphorus over the Jabaliya neighbourhood, the burning wedges etching the sky during a siege as routine as the sunrise, calibrated to keep calories just below survival.

A landmark investigation by the Dutch newspaper de Volkskrant, based on months of interviews with seventeen international doctors who worked in Gaza, documented what can only be described as a systematic campaign of torture-by-munition. The investigation revealed a chilling pattern: sniper fire targeting specific body parts of children – heads, chests, abdomens and even testicles – on different days, a rotation one surgeon described as a “game” being played by IDF soldiers. This was not random violence; it was methodical brutalisation.

But the snipers were only one dimension of the horror... The doctors also documented extensive use of tungsten cube fragmentation weapons, munitions specifically designed to shred internal organs while leaving minimal external traces. Dr Mohammad Tahir, a London-based orthopaedic and peripheral nerve surgeon, discovered one such weapon during surgery on a Palestinian man injured by an Israeli quadcopter drone.

“I was shocked,” he recounted. “A single tungsten cube penetrated his skin, cut through both the upper and lower trunks of the brachial plexus” – the network of nerves controlling the arm and hand – “and lodged itself in the skin of his back. Despite our best efforts, the paralysis is likely permanent due to the nature of the injury.” The cube was millimetres from the patient’s main artery. Without immediate medical care, death would have been certain, but survival, in this case, meant living with permanent paralysis: a calculated outcome. As Dr Tahir explained, “These perfectly formed cubes are small but lethal. They are designed to explode and cause maximum damage.”

An Amnesty International report from February 2025 found evidence of this new weapon system: missiles, seemingly launched from unmanned drones, that exploded into tiny sharp-edged metal cubes, each between two and four millimetres in size. These cubes were observed embedded deep in concrete walls and capable of penetrating thick metal doors, appearing purpose-built to cause maximum injury.

Trevor Ball, a former US Army explosives expert, emphasised the deliberate design: “The tungsten cubes are designed to maximise casualties within a specific radius. The amount of destruction they cause is chilling. These weapons are small compared to other munitions, but their ability to inflict harm in densely-populated areas makes them particularly devastating. When fired into a crowded area, the military knows most casualties will be civilians.”

An Al Jazeera investigation from November 2023 highlighted Gaza’s role as a “testing ground” for such Israeli weaponry. The Israeli Spike drone rocket, often modified

with tungsten cube fragmentation sleeves, was described as capable of shredding human flesh within a twenty-metre radius. “These projectiles tear tissue from flesh,” noted Erik Fosse, a Norwegian doctor working in Gaza.

Ahmed Saeed al-Najar, a survivor of a 2014 Spike drone attack, recounted his ordeal: “The drone missile came through my car’s sunroof, killing all six of my passengers instantly.” Al-Najar suffered extensive burns, the loss of his right leg and permanent injuries. Despite these horrifying accounts, global demand for Israeli drones actually surged after the conflict; a grotesque testament to the marketplace of atrocity.

Surgeons working in Gaza described wounds that defied conventional battlefield medicine. The Guardian reported that Israeli-made weapons designed to spray high levels of shrapnel caused devastating injuries, particularly to children. “The injuries we’re seeing are unlike anything we’ve encountered before,” said Dr Mark Perlmutter, an orthopaedic surgeon. “The bones are shattered beyond repair and many of the children we operated on had no choice but to undergo amputations.”

Dr Feroze Sidhwa observed: “About half of the injuries I took care of were in young kids. These splinters caused tremendous damage inside the body despite their small size.” Dr Sanjay Adusumilli added: “It’s heartbreaking to see a child come in with a tiny wound on the outside but devastating injuries internally. We saw so many lives cut short or permanently altered by these weapons.”

Dr. Sidhwa explained the particular vulnerability of children: “They have smaller bodies, their vital parts are

smaller and easier to disrupt. A single piece of shrapnel can do irreparable damage to their organs and blood vessels.”

Dr. Irfan Galaria noted that “one hundred percent of my surgical patients developed infections. The wounds were dirty, given the nature of the injury – rubble debris.” But it was the specialised weaponry – deliberately engineered for maximum suffering – that revealed the pariah state’s doctrine of cruelty.

### **Shielding, Language, and Western Complicity**

Recognition of this barbarism did not arrive because institutions invited it but because language finally failed.

For more than a year, Western governments worked not to halt Israel’s actions but to manage their description: statements were calibrated, verbs softened, agency obscured. Civilian deaths became “tragic losses,” bombed hospitals were “damaged infrastructure” and mass displacement was rendered as “evacuation.” This was not neutrality, it was protection.

From Washington to London to Brussels, the same linguistic architecture appeared: Israel was said to have the “right to defend itself,” while Palestinians were denied the right to exist without qualification. International law was invoked abstractly, never operationally. War crimes were “allegations,” while genocide was “unhelpful language.” The effect was cumulative... each day of delay normalised the next atrocity.

The United States vetoed multiple UN Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire, even as its own officials privately acknowledged the scale of civilian killing.

European states issued condemnations that carried no sanctions, no arms embargoes, and no legal consequence.

Britain's position was emblematic. Ministers repeated that Israel must act "within international law," while simultaneously licensing arms exports whose use in Gaza was documented in real time. When challenged, officials claimed there was "no clear risk" of violations; an assertion that collapsed under the weight of evidence but persisted through bureaucratic inertia. This was not ignorance, it was will.

Recognition became inevitable not because governments acted, but because the distance between their language and reality became impossible to sustain.

### **Criminalising the Witnesses**

As the gap widened, the response shifted from euphemism to suppression. Journalists who documented Israeli actions found themselves increasingly targeted; not by Israel alone, but by Western states enforcing silence at home. By September 2024, at least eleven journalists in Britain had been detained for "terror-related questioning" in connection with reporting on Gaza.

On 17 October 2024, police raided the home of Asa Winstanley, associate editor of The Electronic Intifada. The search warrant acknowledged his profession as a journalist but alleged possible offences under the Terrorism Act. His reporting focused on Israel's use of the Hannibal Directive and the killing of its own civilians on 7 October. The message was unmistakable: documentation itself was suspect.

The crackdown intensified... On 28 August 2024, sixteen officers – some in balaclavas - carried out a terrifying dawn raid on the home of Sarah Wilkinson, a journalist in her 60s. She was arrested under the same provision of the Terrorism Act, facing up to fourteen years in prison, and thrown in a cell where she was denied access to her essential medication. Her alleged crime: journalism.

The effect extended beyond those targeted. Editors self-censored, freelancers declined assignments and newsrooms retreated into official statements and embedded access. The criminalisation of witnesses answered a question that had come to hover over the conflict: how such crimes could occur in plain sight without immediate consequence. They were not unseen, they were suppressed.

### **Starvation as Doctrine**

The policies - manufactured by Israel, for Gaza - that compelled such journalists to take a stand, were no longer ambiguous... The deprivation of food, water, fuel and electricity was not an unintended consequence of war but a declared strategy. On 9 October 2023, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant had announced a “complete siege” of Gaza. “No electricity, no food, no fuel,” he said. “Everything is closed.”

Major General Ghassan Alian, head of COGAT – the Israeli military body responsible for humanitarian coordination – made the intent explicit: “You wanted hell. You will get hell.” This was not rhetoric, it was instruction.

By April 2025, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor reported that more than 60,000 children were suffering from acute malnutrition. Infants like

four-month-old Janan Al-Scafi died of starvation in hospitals stripped of supplies. From the floor of the US Senate, Bernie Sanders condemned the policy in plain terms: “civilised people do not starve children to death”.

The famine was enforced through design. After Israel banned UNRWA operations, desperate civilians were funnelled toward Israeli-controlled aid sites. A Haaretz investigation revealed that soldiers were under direct orders to fire on unarmed civilians seeking food in what troops cynically referred to as “Operation Salted Fish.” “It’s a killing field,” one soldier testified. “No crowd control. No tear gas. Just live fire with everything imaginable.”

Between late May and late June alone, at least 549 Palestinians were killed near aid distribution points. The total number of people shot while seeking food exceeded one thousand. “Our form of communication is gunfire,” another soldier said. “Sometimes we just charge at them from close range. There’s no enemy. No weapons. No threat.”

Doctors described patients with skeletal features reminiscent of Nazi concentration camps. Dr Mike Mallah reported that every patient he treated was malnourished. Paediatrician Dr Aman Odeh described mothers delivering prematurely because they themselves were starving, unable to produce milk, watching a cycle of death repeat from one generation to the next.

Wound nurse Laura Swoboda recounted the intimate tragedy of a single loss: “An infant that our paediatric cardiologist tended to overnight passed away and later that day I saw the family carry out the small body wrapped in a medical surgical drape.” Dr. Arham Ali reported newborns arriving “only hours or days old” suffering

from dehydration, infection, and hypothermia; deaths he described as “100 percent preventable.”

The famine was not a by-product, it was a mechanism.

### **Life After the Ceasefire**

When a ceasefire was announced in October 2025, it was treated internationally as resolution; inside Gaza, it marked a transition into a second phase of catastrophe.

In Deir al-Balah, twenty-eight-year-old Ahmed al-Deeb watched the floor of his tent turn to mud and sewage when the rains came. For months, his extended family of fourteen – including a sick two-year-old niece – had survived on a small mutual-aid fund run by strangers abroad. In September, that fund raised nearly \$3,000. In October, after the ceasefire, the donations collapsed to about \$300... by mid-November, barely \$150 had arrived.

“I cannot even start describing to you how bad it is,” al-Deeb said. If he couldn’t find \$400 for a bomb-damaged flat in Gaza City, the landlord would throw the family out.

His story was being repeated across the Gaza Strip. Megan Hall, an organiser based in Australia, ran ninety-five mutual-aid campaigns – each linked to specific families inside Gaza. Since early 2024, she had raised more than \$200,000. During the height of Israel’s bombardment, she could reliably send around \$5,000 a week. In October, across all ninety-five campaigns combined, she raised just over \$2,000.

“The drop in donations is catastrophic,” Hall said. “It feels like with the so-called ‘ceasefire’ the world thinks Palestinians don’t need our help anymore.”

Larger humanitarian operations noticed the same pattern. Gaza Soup Kitchen – a grassroots group that fed about 10,000 people daily – recorded a 51 percent drop in donations from September to October. Save the Children UK said income from its social-media fundraising for Gaza was down by roughly a third. Aid deliveries remained far below agreed targets: on average, fewer than 150 trucks entered Gaza each day, less than a quarter of the 600 pledged. On some days, half of UN-coordinated convoys were denied passage altogether.

As winter arrived, rains flooded tent camps housing nearly two million people. Sewage mixed with standing water. Children slept in soaked clothing and disease spread through overcrowded shelters.

UNICEF reported that in October alone – two months after the ceasefire – more than 9,300 children were hospitalised for severe acute malnutrition. A spokesperson, briefing journalists from inside Gaza, described the horror in intimate terms: “In Gaza’s hospitals I have met several newborns who weighed less than one kilogramme, their tiny chests heaving with the effort of staying alive.”

In October, about 8,300 pregnant and breastfeeding women were also hospitalised for acute malnutrition. “This pattern is a grave warning,” the spokesperson added. “This is not over. Generations of families, including those being born now into this ceasefire, have been forever altered by what was inflicted upon them.”

The ceasefire did not end the siege, it changed its optics; the world looked away and Gaza continued to die.

## The Political Vacuum

Behind the visible carnage, the political architecture meant to prevent or halt it had collapsed entirely.

In late November 2025, Arab and Palestinian officials involved in postwar planning described a diplomatic landscape paralysed by competing agendas and growing mistrust. Two parallel diplomatic tracks – the US-backed plan to deploy a multinational security force to Gaza, and emergency talks between Hamas and Egyptian intelligence officials in Cairo – had produced the same bleak message: there was no political consensus, no clear roadmap and no country willing to shoulder the risks of Gaza’s “day after.”

The international push to deploy a multinational force had effectively collapsed. Despite US pressure and months of negotiation, no Arab or Muslim government had agreed to send troops, particularly not into a scenario that might involve combat with Hamas or the policing of Gaza’s shattered terrain. “The Americans are trying to build the vehicle,” one Arab diplomat remarked, “without agreeing where it’s supposed to go or who is driving.”

The territory was already fragmenting into two zones: areas under direct Israeli control, and areas without any formal authority but where Hamas maintained a significant presence. The current diplomatic architecture – involving the US, Egypt, Qatar, Israel, and several European and Arab states – had reached a point of stagnation.

“The result is paralysis,” one negotiator said. “Everyone wants stability, but no one wants to take responsibility, and no one trusts the others.” “This is the most dangerous

phase,” another Palestinian source said. “Not the war, but the vacuum after it.”

### **The Assault on Healing**

The destruction of Gaza’s medical system was not collateral damage, it was a campaign.

Beyond visible injury lay a slower, more enduring form of harm. With sanitation systems destroyed and waste collection collapsed, garbage accumulated across displacement camps and ruined neighbourhoods. According to UN environmental assessments, toxic runoff seeped into soil and groundwater, while burning refuse filled the air with particulate matter. Gaza’s environment itself became a vector of disease.

Aid workers warned that this form of destruction would outlast any ceasefire. “You can rebuild a clinic,” said one environmental health specialist working with UNICEF, “but you cannot easily remove toxins from a water table.” UNICEF reported sharp increases in acute watery diarrhoea and other water-borne illnesses as sewage overflowed into camps already weakened by starvation.

Environmental collapse functioned as an extension of siege... Poison does not respect ceasefires, it persists in lungs, in soil and in bodies already exhausted by deprivation: the future was not only being denied, it was being contaminated.

By May 2025, the World Health Organisation confirmed that 94 percent of Gaza’s hospitals had been destroyed or damaged. Those still standing functioned as shells; without electricity, clean water, anaesthetics, antibiotics or sterile environments. Only 159 of 461 scheduled aid trucks were

allowed entry in December 2024, a policy that turned vinegar into a critical medical supply.

The killing of healthcare workers followed the same pattern as the destruction of facilities. More than 1,400 healthcare workers and over 400 humanitarian aid workers were killed during the assault on Gaza. Doctors were not caught in crossfire, they were targeted.

The killing of nine of Dr Alaa al-Najjar's ten children in a single Israeli airstrike on her family home in Khan Younis became emblematic of the brutality of the campaign. Only one child — an 11-year-old boy — survived, suffering catastrophic injuries. He was later operated on by Graeme Groom, a British surgeon working in Gaza, who described the case as “unbearably cruel,” saying he struggled to comprehend how a fellow physician could continue living after such a loss. Yet the annihilation of entire families in a single strike was not an anomaly, but a recurring feature of the war.

On 23 March 2024, Israeli forces attacked a clearly-marked humanitarian convoy in Rafah comprising ambulances, a United Nations vehicle and a fire truck. Fifteen aid workers were killed when the vehicles were struck one-by-one and survivors reported that those attempting to flee were shot. After the killings, Israeli forces attempted to conceal the evidence by burying the bodies in a mass grave... a twelve-year-old Palestinian boy, Mohammed al-Bardawil, identified as a key witness to the attack, was later fatally shot by Israeli forces before he could testify.

The meticulous ICC complaint filed by the Hind Rajab Foundation against Lt. Col. Beni Aharon for the tank-shelling of its namesake, six-year-old Hind and the

subsequent destruction of her ambulance rescue party showed that the targeting of children was not the act of a local sadist, but a chain-of-command reality. Hospitals were raided repeatedly, patients were forced to evacuate under fire and medical staff were detained, interrogated and disappeared.

The seizure of Kamal Adwan Hospital in December 2024 marked a turning point. As the last operational hospital in northern Gaza, it had become a refuge for the wounded, the displaced and the dying. Israeli forces stormed the facility, forcing doctors, nurses, patients and displaced families to evacuate at gunpoint. Some staff and patients were reportedly stripped of their clothing, lined up and ordered to walk to the ruins of the already-damaged Indonesian Hospital.

The World Health Organisation reported that parts of Kamal Adwan Hospital were set on fire while dozens of health workers and critically ill patients were still inside. At least three premature babies died from exposure to freezing temperatures during the forced evacuation.

The dismantling of Gaza's healthcare system rendered survival itself a form of resistance.

### **The Disappeared**

On a quiet morning in September 2024, before the day's shelling began to shake the outskirts of Nuseirat, sixty-seven-year-old Abdulaziz Jouda pushed his bicycle north toward a small olive grove. He knew the route was dangerous; it ran alongside the Netzarim Corridor, then controlled by Israeli forces and designated a "red zone" where soldiers often fired without warning, but the olives

were ready, and in Gaza the harvest comes whether it is safe or not. His friend, sixty-four-year-old farmer Jabr Musleh, went with him. They hoped to fill a few sacks and return before the tanks stirred. They never returned.

A local journalist, Ahmed Allouh – himself killed by an Israeli airstrike three months later – watched the two men enter the grove. Soon after, he heard two tank shells fired toward the same patch of trees. The bombardment continued so intensely he couldn't check if the men had survived. By evening, neither family had heard anything and their calls went unanswered and the night passed in dread.

At first light, when the shelling eased enough to move, relatives hurried to the grove. They found Musleh's body... and nearby lay Jouda's bicycle, his phone, his bag. But Jouda had vanished – not killed, not confirmed alive, simply absorbed into the widening void of Gaza's missing. A month later, the grove had been bulldozed and no trace of him remained.

Human rights groups contacted the Israeli military to ask whether he was detained. His name appeared nowhere. "He has disappeared into nothing," his daughter Ola said. "We don't have a grave. We don't have a body. We don't have an answer."

The missing remained a catastrophe within a catastrophe. UN figures put the number at over 11,000, but modelling studies and human rights groups suggested a far broader range: 15,000 to 38,000 people, many of them crushed under rubble, buried in unmarked graves or detained out of sight. Save the Children estimated up to 21,000 children alone were missing, lost in the fog of war.

There was a third category of missing Palestinians: those taken alive. Rights groups estimated at least 2,214 Gazans were currently detained under Israel's Unlawful Combatants Law, which allowed indefinite detention without charge or trial. Families were rarely notified and access to lawyers was limited or non-existent. Another 3,600 Palestinians were classified as forcibly disappeared detainees; people believed to be in Israeli custody but whose whereabouts and status were unknown.

For the families of Gaza's missing, this was the cruel spiral of uncertainty: a loved one might be under rubble, buried unnamed or still alive somewhere inside Israel's vast detention system. There was no mechanism to find out... The ceasefire may have silenced the bombs, but it had not ended the war for the families of Gaza's missing.

### **The Detention Regime**

Beyond the destruction of Gaza's cities and hospitals, a parallel system of violence operated out of sight. It was not improvised, but institutional.

Thousands of Palestinians were seized during Israeli ground operations and transferred to military detention sites inside Israel. Many were taken from bombed neighbourhoods, shelters, hospitals and aid convoys. Some were children. Many were never charged and many were never even registered.

The Sde Teiman military base in the Negev desert became the epicentre of this detention regime. Originally an army facility, it was rapidly converted into a mass holding site for Palestinians taken from Gaza. Survivors, whistleblowers and

leaked footage reconstructed a picture of systematic abuse there.

Detainees were blindfolded and shackled for days or weeks. They were forced to sit or kneel in stress positions for hours. Many were strapped into adult diapers and denied access to toilets. Food consisted of dry bread or a half cucumber. Water was rationed. They were held in open-air cages on concrete floors, exposed to desert heat by day and freezing temperatures by night. Loud music was played continuously, sleep deprivation was routine and sexual violence was widespread.

Ibrahim Salem, detained for fifty-two days, described detainees raped with rods and metal objects. “Most of us will come out with rectal injuries,” he said. “It was routine.” He described daily beatings and sexual assaults committed by both male and female soldiers, noting, “They laughed while doing it.”

Walid Khalili, a twenty-seven-year-old paramedic, described being hung from the ceiling by chains, electrocuted and shown photographs of his family while being threatened with their arrest. A whistleblower doctor described detainees brought to the camp’s field hospital unconscious, strapped down, defecating in diapers and fed through tubes. No records were kept, no rights acknowledged.

Former detainee “Nabela,” held in Gaza before transfer, recalled: “We were freezing and forced to remain on our knees on the ground. Music, shouting and intimidation – they wanted to humiliate us. We were handcuffed, blindfolded and our feet were tied in chains.” Since October 2023, at least ninety-eight Palestinians died in Israeli

custody. Prior to the war, Israeli prisons recorded only a handful of Palestinian deaths per year but during the war, the rate increased to roughly one death every four days.

The most disturbing revelation was who the dead were... A classified Israeli military intelligence database showed that out of more than 47,000 Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters listed, only twenty-one militants had died in custody by May 2024. But by that same point, sixty-five detainees from Gaza had died in Israeli jails. In other words: most of the dead were not combatants, many were ordinary civilians who had never stood before a judge.

In a decisive move, Israel barred the International Committee of the Red Cross from visiting Palestinian detainees from Gaza. The ban removed the last remaining mechanism of oversight. Families could not confirm whether their relatives were alive, lawyers were told their clients “did not exist,” bodies were withheld.

By 2025, Sde Teiman had become Israel’s black site - its physical manifestation of pariah status - compared by the Israeli human rights organisation B’Tselem to Abu Ghraib during the US occupation of Iraq. One Israeli doctor who treated detainees before resigning described the prison in stark terms: “It’s a place where people disappear.”

### **Children in the Torture System**

Among those who disappeared into Israel’s detention network were children.

By 2025, boys as young as fourteen were being swept up in the same mass arrests as adult men, taken from aid lines, ruined neighbourhoods, shelters and checkpoints,

blindfolded, zip-tied and transported into Israel without charge, warrant or notification to their families. Under Israel's "Unlawful Combatants" framework, they were not treated as minors or given lawyers or brought before judges; they simply vanished into the same legal black hole as everyone else.

In late June 2025, ten such boys were seized near the al-Shakoush aid distribution zone in Rafah, one of the 'humanitarian corridors' created under US-Israeli supervision. Nearly a month later they were released through the Red Cross and taken straight to Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis where doctors found them emaciated, bruised, barely able to stand and suffering severe psychological trauma. "They came back broken," said trauma specialist Dr Saeed Al-Masri. "They were not only starved, they were terrorised."

One of the boys spoke quietly to a journalist, while his friend told him not to cry: "We thought the aid place was safe. Soldiers came. They tied my hands and covered my eyes. I don't know how many days passed." Their injuries matched what survivors had already described from inside Sde Teiman.

There, children were subjected to the same regime as adults: shackled and blindfolded for days, forced into stress positions, denied toilets, left in adult diapers, starved on scraps of bread and confined in open cages on concrete floors under extreme heat. Loud music and shouting were used to deprive them of sleep. Medical care was arbitrary, punitive, or absent.

A fourteen-year-old boy who had been held earlier in the year told UN investigators: "They put cigarettes out

on my arms. They hit my face with boots, I couldn't see for days." Former detainees described boys being present during sexual torture sessions. Ibrahim Salem, who spent fifty-two days inside, said that children were not spared when prisoners were raped with rods and metal objects. Soldiers, he said, laughed while doing it.

Inside the camp's military field hospital, children were reportedly strapped to beds, fed through tubes and left soiled and untreated – recorded nowhere, existing on no official register.

For some, even Sde Teiman was not the final destination. By 2025, young detainees were being transferred into an even more extreme facility: Rakefet, an underground prison beneath the Ramla complex that had been closed decades earlier for being too inhumane for human confinement. Reopened under the authority of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, it holds Palestinians in permanent darkness.

Every cell, corridor and yard lies underground. There is no sunlight, no fresh air, no sense of time. Mattresses are confiscated each morning and returned late at night. Prisoners are allowed out of their cells only for minutes at a time into concrete enclosures with no view of the sky. Beatings, dog attacks and starvation-level rations are routine.

Among those buried there was an eighteen-year-old Gaza civilian, seized at a checkpoint and held for months without charge or trial. Lawyers from the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) who reached him in September 2025 reported that he had not seen daylight since his arrest. When he asked about his family, guards silenced him. As

he was led away, the rumble of an elevator could be heard, suggesting the cells lie even deeper beneath the ground. “Please come back,” were his final words to them. He was later released in October 2025 under the latest ceasefire agreement after approximately nine months in detention.

For adolescents, prolonged deprivation of sunlight is not merely cruel. It is neurological torture; disrupting hormonal cycles, impairing brain development and inflicting permanent psychological harm. “Keeping people underground without daylight destroys body and mind,” said Tal Steiner of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel. “It is deliberate cruelty, a form of torture.”

Under international law, children in detention are entitled to special protection. Israel is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits arbitrary detention, physical abuse, sexual violence, and incommunicado confinement. None of those protections applied. The ten boys who emerged from Rafah survived, many others did not but all of them will carry what was done to them for life.

They are not anomalies of war, they are evidence of a system.

### **Beyond the Border: The Collapse of Law**

Israel’s pariah status did not remain confined to Gaza or even to the occupied territories, it radiated outward, eroding legal norms beyond its immediate reach... The enforcement of the Gaza blockade on the high seas represented a qualitative escalation.

In October 2025, Israeli naval forces intercepted and seized the Global Sumud Flotilla in international waters,

detaining over 450 participants. Their convoy comprised of approximately forty civilian vessels flying the flags of Britain, Ireland, Norway, Turkey and Canada. Its mission was humanitarian: to deliver food and medical supplies to Gaza and to challenge the legality of an eighteen-year naval blockade that had already been deemed unlawful by UN bodies.

On 2 October, the aid ship *Mikeno* briefly broke Israel's seventeen-year naval blockade of Gaza, carrying food and medicine to a population under siege. For Gazans watching live trackers, its signal inside Gaza's waters was a moment of hope... "They are the bravest people on earth," said Gaza professor Dr Haidar Eid.

Under international maritime law, vessels on the high seas fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of their flag states... armed interception of such foreign-flagged civilian ships constitutes a violation of sovereignty. Legal experts described the seizure as piracy and an act of aggression under the UN Charter and former British diplomat Craig Murray called it "an act of war – not just against Gaza-bound aid workers - but against every country whose flag those ships flew."

Among those seized was Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, whose participation turned what might have been another forgotten episode into an international scandal. Her presence exposed Israel's fear: fear of empathy, fear of decency, fear of conscience. By 2024, she had linked environmental collapse with colonial occupation, declaring at a Berlin rally that "Gaza must be free." It was a brief statement, but a dangerous one, because it broke

the unspoken pact between Western environmentalism and foreign policy.

Turkish journalist Ürsen Çelik later told TRT World that soldiers “dragged Greta by her hair, beat her and forced her to kiss the Israeli flag.” Çelik said the abuse was filmed by soldiers who laughed as they recorded the scene.

Swedish officials confirmed that Thunberg was held in the port of Ashdod and that she complained of hunger, dehydration and insect-infested bedding. Other detainees reported similar mistreatment. One Scottish volunteer, seventy-year-old Margaret Pachetta, said: “There was no food, no water. I told a guard my leg was broken. She slammed the metal door on it and said, ‘Oh, sorry.’” Israel’s government dismissed all allegations as “brazen lies.” Yet no witness retracted their statement.

The precedent was not new. In 2010, Israeli commandos killed ten activists aboard the Mavi Marmara. Smaller flotillas had been seized repeatedly in the years since. What changed in 2025 was not the act itself, but the context and the global silence that greeted this act of piracy. The so-called international community, paralysed by fear of US power, had become complicit in the erosion of the very maritime law that has underpinned global trade and security for centuries.

### **Biological Warfare by Neglect**

The violence did not end with bombs, bullets, or detention camps... It extended into the domain of disease.

The pattern was not new. During the COVID-19 pandemic, while Israel deployed third and fourth-dose boosters for

its general population in defiance of WHO calls for a moratorium, it was simultaneously blocking vaccine shipments destined for Gaza. Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaila reported that Israeli authorities refused entry to around 2,000 doses of Sputnik V vaccine intended for frontline health workers in the besieged strip. “These doses were intended for medical staff working in intensive care rooms designated for COVID-19 patients,” she said, “but the occupation authorities prevented their entry.”

As Saleh Higazi of Amnesty International observed at the time: “While Israel celebrates a record-setting vaccination drive, millions of Palestinians living under Israeli control will receive no vaccine or have to wait much longer ... there could hardly be a better illustration of how Israeli lives are valued above Palestinian ones.”

By 2025, the weaponisation of public health had intensified. Israeli authorities blocked the entry into Gaza of 1.6 million vaccine syringes, cold-chain refrigeration units and nearly one million bottles of infant formula. The supplies, approved and ready, remained stranded at crossings for weeks. UNICEF spokesperson Ricardo Pires explained the obstruction: “Both the syringes and the refrigerators are considered dual-use by Israel and these items we’re finding very hard to get through clearances and inspections, yet they are urgent.”

Without them, Gaza’s immunisation programme collapsed.

The WHO’s Regional Director, Hanan Balkhy, described the scale of the crisis: “We are at stock zero of 42 percent of vaccines.” UN agencies warned that tens of thousands of infants and young children had missed routine vaccinations for measles, polio, pneumonia and cholera. Overcrowded

displacement camps, contaminated water and widespread malnutrition created ideal conditions for outbreaks. “This is not a political issue,” a UNICEF spokesperson said. “These are syringes for children. Refrigerators for vaccines. Bottles for babies.”

In Gaza, health officials said that “pockets” of unvaccinated children had become “an entire generation.” International law prohibits the obstruction of humanitarian supplies essential to civilian survival. UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher contextualised the crisis starkly: “Israel has blocked all humanitarian aid and the situation risks becoming genocide.”

Israel was weaponising disease, deliberately creating conditions for epidemics to flourish and blocking the very tools that could prevent them. This was slow violence, unfolding across generations. It did not shock; it exhausted, and in doing so, it erased.

## **Reproductive Violence**

The assault extended beyond disease into the domain of reproduction itself.

Few countries invest as heavily in the preservation of human life at its earliest stages as Israel. Its fertility clinics operate at population scale, its genetic research sits at the global frontier. Preimplantation genetic testing is routinely integrated into standard IVF workflows. Cryopreservation techniques support long-term storage of eggs and embryos at scale. In practical terms, Israel has built a world-class apparatus for preserving reproduction down to the embryo.

At the same time, through military action and siege, Israel oversaw the systematic destruction of Palestinian reproductive capacity.

In late 2023, Gaza's leading IVF facility, Al Basma IVF Centre, was hit and its cryopreservation system failed, destroying an estimated 4,000 embryos along with around 1,000 additional specimens of sperm and unfertilised eggs. For many patients – cancer survivors, women beyond peak fertility, couples with non-reversible infertility – these embryos were not “samples” but their only remaining chance to have biological children.

For Najwa Abu Hamada, a Palestinian woman whose stored embryos were lost in the attack, the language was personal and absolute: “The genocide is not only targeting men, children and women, it is also targeting frozen fertility eggs – my only hope. Israel came and even carried out genocide which reached even the embryos that belong to me at the Al Basma centre. What can compensate me?”

The clinic's founder, Dr Bahaeldeen Ghalayini, described the scale of the loss in human terms: “We know deeply what these 5,000 lives, or potential lives, meant for the parents.” International investigators framed the destruction of the clinic not as incidental damage but as part of a wider pattern, concluding that it constituted a measure intended to prevent births among Palestinians in Gaza.

The Al Basma case could not be separated from Gaza's wider health collapse. Investigative bodies described the cumulative effect of attacks on hospitals, maternity wards, power supplies, water systems and medical logistics as the destruction of Palestinians through reproductive violence.

This language was precise. It described documented mechanisms that reliably suppress reproduction: the destruction of fertility services, the elimination of stored embryos, the collapse of safe pregnancy and delivery conditions as well as the imposition of malnutrition, stress, and environmental harm. The contrast was not written in ideology or abstraction, it was written in embryos preserved on one side of a border and embryos destroyed on the other.

### **Recognition Becomes Consequence**

By late 2025, recognition began to harden into consequence.

Germany's reckoning was particularly acute... Even as Chancellor Friedrich Mertz landed in Tel Aviv in December 2025 to reaffirm what he called "unwavering" support for Israel, one of Germany's most recognisable institutions quietly delivered a contradictory verdict. Lufthansa Cargo suspended all military and security-related shipments to and from Israel, citing export-control law and sanctions that made such transports "operationally impossible", regardless of routing.

The halt came without moral language, references to Gaza, or appeals to humanitarian concerns. Lufthansa attributed the suspension to tightening export regimes and sanctions frameworks that heightened the legal risk of handling military goods destined for Israel. The airline did not step back out of principle, it stepped back because the law left no room to proceed.

"Unwavering support" becomes difficult to sustain when the supply chain required to deliver that support simply stops functioning. Germany's support for Israel had not been withdrawn, but the freight labels now read "legally

impossible,” and in the world of defence logistics, that determined reality.

Through 2025, trade delegations were cancelled after the Dubai Summit - where the Israeli booth stood conspicuously empty - military partnerships were placed “under review” and cultural exchanges evaporated; the Berlin Philharmonic quietly dropped its tour of Tel Aviv.

In sport, pressure mounted. Seventy-three professional athletes – including World Cup winner Paul Pogba – signed a joint letter demanding that UEFA suspend Israel from European football... among the signatories were Morocco’s Hakim Ziyech, England cricket star Moeen Ali, Spain’s Adama Traoré and dozens of Premier League and Serie A professionals.

Central to the players’ appeal was the devastation of Gaza’s sporting infrastructure. According to documentation from campaign groups Game Over Israel and Athletes 4 Peace, at least 421 Palestinian footballers had been killed since Israel’s assault on the enclave began. Stadiums, training centres, football pitches, youth facilities and gyms had been razed or rendered unusable. The signatories highlighted the death of Gaza football legend Suleiman al-Obeid, often dubbed the “Palestinian Pelé,” who was killed while waiting for humanitarian aid.

The athletes’ intervention came on the heels of a sharply-worded legal letter from more than thirty genocide experts, international jurists and human rights lawyers, warning that UEFA could be “legally accountable” for facilitating war crimes by continuing to admit Israel to European competitions. Campaigners repeatedly invoked UEFA’s 2022 suspension of Russia following its invasion

of Ukraine. There, the federation acted within days, citing football's responsibility to uphold peace and human rights, but in the case of Israel, critics said, UEFA had stalled.

The Football Association of Ireland passed a resolution formally calling on UEFA to suspend the Israel Football Association. The Turkish Football Federation made a similar demand... "Sport is not just entertainment," the athletes' letter argued. "It is a universal language of dignity, community and hope." They insisted that allowing Israel to continue in UEFA competitions while carrying out documented atrocities "normalises the destruction of human life" and communicates that "some lives matter less."

The language was no longer activist, it was institutional... Recognition was becoming operational reality.

### **Anatomy of a Pariah**

How does a state become a pariah? Slowly, then suddenly.

Intent had been spoken aloud. Ministers like Itamar Ben-Gvir promised to "erase Gaza." Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich vowed to "lift all restraints," calling for a "tent city" of a displaced people. A nuclear threat was floated on prime-time television by a Knesset member as an "option for study."

In September 2025, Jonathan Pollard – the former US Navy intelligence analyst imprisoned for spying for Israel, later embraced as a patriot and now a Knesset candidate – shattered decades of studied ambiguity. "An A-4 Skyhawk was parked at Tel Nof air base with some interesting weapons under its wings," Pollard recounted, describing a moment during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. "We told the Americans:

‘Take your eye in the sky and have a good look at the airplane that’s on that runway.’ And the next day the airlift started.”

When pressed by the presented on his meaning, Pollard did not flinch: “We threatened to use unconventional weapons. I’ll leave it at that.” He argued Israel should be willing not merely to signal nuclear readiness, but to act on it: “Is this what you want us to threaten now?” she asked him? “Absolutely,” he responded, “except this time we should go forward with it if necessary.”

Pollard also articulated a clear political programme: declare Oslo dead, annex Gaza, the West Bank and Jordan Valley, allow only Jews to own property, permit Palestinians to rent and pay taxes but not vote and encourage most Palestinians to leave. “I’m tired of euphemisms,” he declared. “I’m tired of saying ‘we have something in the basement.’ It’s enough already.”

“Elements of this rhetoric have already filtered into practice. Investigative reporting revealed that Israeli forces used AI-assisted systems to generate vast target lists, while a method officers referred to as ‘Where’s Daddy?’ involved waiting until a suspected militant returned home before striking; knowingly turning family presence and trauma into a weapon.” Similarly, the Hannibal Directive was invoked on 7 October, a doctrine that no hostage must be taken alive, leading to Israeli forces shooting indiscriminately at anyone heading for the Gaza border.

As scholar Norman Finkelstein argued, “It’s perfectly obvious what Israel’s strategy is. It’s gotten the green light from the White House to try to empty out Gaza. Finishing the job means annihilating the civilian population and pulverising its infrastructure until people have no choice

but to leave.” This was not a war of defence, but a war of expulsion; a “final solution to the Gaza question,” according to Finkelstein, that mirrored the very ideologies the state claimed to oppose.

Israel had not merely violated international law, it had abandoned it. The evidence formed a coherent whole: declared intent, operationalised policy, institutionalised violence, suppressed witnesses, exported impunity, biological neglect and reproductive erasure.

No single atrocity defined the pariah. The system did. The term returned to global vocabulary not as insult, but as diagnosis: a polity that placed itself outside the moral community while insisting it remained its centre. Gaza did not create this reality, it revealed it... and once recognised, it could not be unseen.

What followed that recognition was not restraint or accountability, but continuation. The exposure of Israel as a pariah did not halt the machinery of destruction in Gaza, nor did it confine itself to the visible aftermath of bombardment. The violence extended beyond bodies pulled from rubble and names added to casualty lists, moving into the administrative systems that determine who is remembered, who is counted, and who is permitted to have a future. What followed was not only mass killing, but the destruction of lineage itself, as entire Palestinian families were removed from the civil record, their existence terminated not only biologically but historically.

### **The Erasure of Bloodlines**

On 26 January 2026, Al Jazeera reported, based on an analysis of Gaza’s civil registry, that more than two thousand

seven hundred Palestinian extended families in Gaza had been completely erased since October 2023, their names removed from official records after three generations from the same household were killed, marking one of the most comprehensive acts of familial destruction documented in a modern conflict.

In a territory with a pre-genocide population of just over two point two million people, the confirmed extermination of entire bloodlines on this scale represents not merely mass killing but a form of social annihilation whose consequences extend far beyond the immediate death toll. The analysis found that more than eight thousand people were killed within these erased families alone, while roughly forty thousand families were directly targeted overall, producing an average of more than four deaths per household, a pattern that reveals the systematic nature of the violence rather than the randomness often invoked to explain civilian casualties.

Beyond those families that were entirely wiped out, more than six thousand families were left with only a single surviving member, individuals who now live with the knowledge that when they die, whether through continued violence, deprivation, illness, or age, their family line will vanish completely from Gaza's official records, as though it had never existed. In this way, death extends forward in time, ensuring that the destruction cannot be repaired through reproduction, memory, or continuity.

Civil registries are not neutral administrative tools but repositories of social existence, binding individuals to families, histories, and futures. To be removed from them is not simply to be killed, but to be unremembered. In

Gaza, this form of erasure has become a defining feature of the violence, with families not merely fragmented but eliminated as units of history.

The youngest recorded victim among the erased families was one year old, while the oldest was one hundred and one, a span that encompasses infancy, childhood, adulthood, and old age, all extinguished within the same campaign of destruction. What is being erased is not only life but time itself, as past generations are retroactively silenced and future generations prevented from ever coming into being.

The destruction of the al-Najar family from Khan Younis illustrates this reality with devastating clarity. Malik al-Najar had just graduated from high school and was photographed celebrating with his father, mother, and uncles, a moment that should have marked the beginning of adulthood and possibility. For generations, the family had lived in the area, working to provide stability, education, and safety for their children, only for that future to be erased in a single airstrike.

Malik was killed alongside his father, his sister, and twenty-two members of his extended family, with sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins all wiped out in one night, resulting in the disappearance of entire branches of the family tree at once. When his mother later returned to the site where their home once stood, she described seeing her son's clothes scattered across the rubble, blown away by the force of the explosion, and said she could not remain there because all the memories she associated with that place vanished in seconds.

What haunted her most, she explained, were the final moments she would never know, as she wondered whether Malik screamed and whether the children screamed,

imagining every hardship they endured as if it were unfolding before her eyes. Her testimony is not exceptional but emblematic of a wider condition in which survivors are left not only with grief but with an absence so complete that it resists comprehension.

When a Palestinian family disappears in this way, they take with them their history, their traditions, their shared experiences, and their future, as names that would have been spoken for generations are removed from Gaza's collective identity. This is not collateral damage incidental to war, but the deliberate elimination of social continuity itself.

The killing has continued even during periods described as ceasefires, with hundreds of Palestinians killed and thousands injured after October, including children, journalists, and civilians engaged in the most basic acts of survival. Attacks occurred on the vast majority of days during the ceasefire period, emptying the term of meaning and reinforcing the reality that Gaza exists in a permanent state of conditional extermination rather than temporary conflict.

Children have borne a particularly severe burden, with every surviving child in Gaza now estimated to require some level of mental health or psychosocial support due to the scale of trauma they have endured. They have witnessed the deaths of parents and siblings, been repeatedly displaced under fire, lived through relentless bombardment, starvation, untreated illness, and the collapse of education, while being forced to exist in overcrowded and unsafe conditions that deny even the most basic elements of childhood.

Journalist Owen Jones captured the moral distortion this reality exposes by asking audiences to imagine one

extended family being violently killed in Britain, with grandparents, parents, teenagers, toddlers, and newborn babies all murdered in a country of roughly sixty-nine million people, noting that such a crime would be regarded as one of the great atrocities of the postwar era and would dominate public consciousness for generations. Gaza, by contrast, with a population just over two million, has seen more than two thousand seven hundred extended families wiped out entirely, each with its own memories, histories, celebrations, and tragedies erased as though they never existed.

Genocide is often misunderstood as a singular event defined solely by mass killing, but scholars of genocide have long emphasised that it is a process aimed at dismantling the social structures that allow a people to exist across time. The destruction of families, the elimination of lineages, and the erasure of names from civil records are not peripheral to this process but central to it, ensuring that the damage inflicted cannot be repaired through memory, reproduction, or cultural transmission.

In Gaza, this process has unfolded in full view of the world, documented in detail, dated, counted, and yet repeatedly denied or minimised by those with the power to intervene. The result is not only the devastation of a people but the corrosion of the moral frameworks that claim to govern international life.

This is why the erasure of Palestinian families cannot be understood as a tragic by-product of war or as collateral damage incidental to military objectives. It represents a form of violence aimed at severing the past from the future, ensuring that what once existed cannot be rebuilt because

the social foundations required for rebuilding have been deliberately destroyed.

When bloodlines are extinguished, the damage does not end with the present generation. It reaches backward into memory and forward into time, producing a future defined not by uncertainty but by absence. In Gaza, the erasure of families has become the mechanism through which the future itself is eliminated, ensuring that even survival carries with it the certainty of disappearance.

## CHAPTER 11

### *The Erasure of the Future*

*The crime did not end with the killing... It extended to the unborn, the educated, the healed; a systematic assault on every institution that might allow Palestinian society to survive.*

The crime had been documented. The bodies were counted, the testimonies gathered, the evidence archived; but the machinery of destruction did not pause for the record. Even as investigators compiled dossiers and courts issued rulings, the killing continued and its targets expanded. What followed was not only the elimination of a people, but the erasure of their future.

One of the clearest expressions of this logic appeared not in Israeli statements but in the diplomatic manoeuvres that followed the assault. As Gaza was reduced to rubble, Western governments quietly revived an old fiction: that Palestinians could be “saved” by being removed. Evacuation was reframed as humanitarianism and displacement was repackaged as protection.

South Africa confronted this logic directly. In its filings and public statements, Pretoria warned that proposals to relocate Palestinians – whether temporarily or permanently – constituted a continuation of the crime itself. There was no humanitarian pathway out of Gaza, South African officials argued, because removal under conditions of siege,

bombardment and starvation is not rescue but expulsion. Once displaced, Palestinians would not be permitted to return. The future being erased was not only demographic but territorial: land emptied under force does not remain neutral ground.

This was not a theoretical concern. Israeli ministers spoke openly of encouraging “voluntary migration,” while foreign governments explored third-country resettlement schemes behind closed doors. Egypt, Jordan and other neighbouring states were pressured to absorb refugees permanently. The language was careful; the intent was not... Population transfer, long recognised in international law as a crime, was being normalised through bureaucratic euphemism.

The choice presented to Palestinians was brutally simple: remain and face annihilation, or leave and forfeit the right to return. South Africa named this for what it was: the conversion of genocide into administrative exit – a people being offered survival on the condition of disappearance.

Even as displacement was reframed as humanitarian necessity, evidence accumulated that removal was not a temporary response but a precondition for permanence. Satellite imagery analysed throughout 2025 by independent researchers and reported by *The New York Times* and *Haaretz* revealed the systematic construction of fortified zones, hardened bases and new road networks inside Gaza; patterns inconsistent with short-term security operations. Analysts noted the emergence of permanent “security corridors” dividing the territory and controlling civilian movement. “This is not what drawdown looks like,” one military analyst told reporters. “This is what long-term presence looks like.”

Israeli officials continued to describe the measures as provisional, invoking “buffer zones” and “stabilisation,” but the infrastructure told a different story. Gaza was being reconfigured as a controlled space: its population reduced, its mobility extinguished and its land reorganised for indefinite domination without formal annexation. It was occupation without declaration and settlement logic without settlers.

This logic was not first revealed in policy papers or military briefings, but in emergency rooms... Dr Mark Perlmutter, an orthopaedic surgeon who treated wounded Palestinians in Gaza, described “several children shot with high-velocity bullet wounds in both the head and chest.” Dr Ahlia Kattan recalled treating “an 18-month-old little girl with a gunshot wound to the head.” A steady arrival of wounded children exposed the doctrine’s real effect: when everyone is declared involved, no one is protected.

The bombing of universities and hospitals was not an aberration. It followed from a legal and political logic that had already collapsed the distinction between combatant and civilian. Institutions that reproduce life – schools, clinics, laboratories, maternity wards – were reclassified as threats by definition. Doctors soon began documenting harm that extended beyond immediate violence.

What emerged in Gaza was a form of violence that did not end when the bombs fell. It continued silently, incubating in bodies not yet born. Physicians began reporting congenital abnormalities that could not be explained by genetics alone, but by prolonged exposure to siege, starvation and the toxic aftermath of bombardment.

In May 2025, Dr Ezin Shahab, a physician in Gaza, described the birth of a full-term baby girl with anencephaly: a condition in which the brain and skull fail to form. “She had no brain – not in the poetic sense of innocence, but anatomically,” he wrote. “No memory, no future.” The child had eyelashes, fingers and a beating heart, but no possibility of life. The mother had endured months of malnutrition, displacement and unrelenting trauma before giving birth to silence.

Shahab and his colleagues reported a growing pattern of deformities: cleft palates, malformed limbs, neural-tube defects, organ damage. The suspected causes were environmental: heavy metals, explosive residues and industrial toxins pulverised into Gaza’s air, soil and water by repeated strikes. “Bombs struck not only buildings, but chromosomes,” Shahab wrote. “This is a war against birth.”

A peer-reviewed study published in *The Lancet* supported this assessment, warning that in-utero exposure to war pollutants could result in permanent developmental disorders and genetic mutations passed down for decades. “The most profound consequence of war,” the study concluded, “may not be visible in the rubble, but in the chromosomes of children not yet born.”

Under the Genocide Convention, this kind of harm is not incidental... Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about a people’s physical destruction includes poisoning their environment, collapsing their healthcare and deforming the biological chain that allows a society to reproduce itself. Gaza was being attacked not only in the present tense, but in the grammar of inheritance.

In Gaza, weapons did not always explode; some incubated. The assault on the future was no longer metaphorical, it had entered the womb... It was biological, educational, infrastructural and generational: a systematic effort to ensure that survival itself would be degraded, conditional and incomplete.

The destruction of universities was not merely an attack on buildings, but on continuity. Gaza's academic institutions had produced doctors, engineers, teachers, archivists: people capable of rebuilding what war destroyed, but their elimination narrowed the future in advance, ensuring that even survival would come stripped of autonomy.

Hospitals, too, were reduced not only as sites of care but as repositories of knowledge. Medical records vanished with wards, research data burned with laboratories and generations of clinical experience were erased alongside patients. This was not simply a campaign to kill, it was a campaign to prevent recovery.

What was unfolding was a form of violence calibrated beyond the battlefield; a violence that reached forward in time, seeking not only to destroy a population, but to deform what came after. It was an assault on inheritance itself: on bodies not yet born, on institutions not yet rebuilt, on futures not yet lived.

The erasure of the future had begun, but this erasure did not depend solely on bombs, it was sustained and normalised through process.

## The Architecture of Delay

By the end of 2025, the Gaza ceasefire was still routinely described as “fragile.” The word persisted long after it had ceased to describe reality. Fragile suggests accident, delicacy or the risk of sudden breakage... What existed in Gaza was something else entirely: a condition engineered to endure without resolving anything. A pause without transition, a suspension without consequence, a reckoning denied through process.

In a New Year after the guns had largely fallen silent, not a single promised element of transformation had materialised. There was not only a meaningful Israeli withdrawal, but an expansion of presence. There was no transfer of authority and no functioning Palestinian governance. No reconstruction had been initiated capable of sustaining life. A bitter winter of freezing temperatures, flooding and gale force winds had returned to a territory still defined by rubble, displacement and dependence on sporadic aid deliveries for day-by-day survival. Violence had been slowed just enough to avoid formal collapse, while every mechanism capable of forcing political consequence was kept inert. This was not diplomacy under strain, it was diplomacy performing exactly the function required of it.

On paper, the ceasefire architecture agreed at the end of 2024 was straightforward. Phase one would halt large-scale hostilities. Phase two – spoken of at the time as an inevitable progression – would begin the real work: withdrawal, interim security arrangements, governance transition, and reconstruction. The sequencing was presented as technical, the timelines were described as flexible. By December 2025,

phase two had not merely been delayed, it had been nullified in practice while remaining nominally alive.

That outcome was neither accidental nor the result of mismanagement. Every step toward transition was conditioned on Israeli approval, and that approval was consistently granted in ways that guaranteed non-implementation. Israel did not walk away from the ceasefire. It adopted a more durable strategy: agreement in principle, paired with conditions that made execution impossible while preserving technical compliance.

The distinction mattered: a ceasefire that collapses creates diplomatic crisis, a ceasefire that survives without delivering change creates exhaustion. It transfers responsibility downward and outward and allows power to harden while accountability dissolves.

By mid-2025, diplomats involved in the process no longer spoke privately of withdrawal or reconstruction as realistic outcomes. By the end of the year, resignation had replaced expectation. The shared understanding, rarely articulated in public, was that Israel retained veto power over every substantive development while remaining formally within the framework. The reckoning – ending occupation, relinquishing unilateral control, accepting political consequence – was postponed indefinitely. Delay was not neutral: it operated as a slow, cumulative weapon.

The durability of the ceasefire raised a deeper question... How could a pause persist for more than a year without transition, enforcement, or accountability? The answer lay in the structure of ceasefires themselves, relying as they do on good faith rather than compulsion. A party that agrees in

principle while endlessly conditioning implementation can claim compliance, and so ambiguity becomes armour.

By the end of 2025, that ambiguity had become the central operating space of the conflict. Meetings continued, statements were issued and concern was expressed. Responsibility diffused, process replaced pressure ... but pressure – political, diplomatic, material – was the only mechanism capable of forcing reckoning. The ceasefire survived precisely because it was hollow but by the end of 2025, that hollowness had become its defining feature: not a bridge to peace, but a system for avoiding it.

### **Israel Expels Aid Groups as Gaza Goes Dark**

As winter storms tore through Gaza at the end of 2025 – flooding displacement camps, collapsing thousands of makeshift shelters and exposing families to sewage-soaked ground – Israel began dismantling the last independent presence inside the besieged territory.

On 1 January 2026, Israel moved to revoke the operating licences of 37 international humanitarian organisations working in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, triggering a sixty-day countdown to the closure of much of the territory's remaining humanitarian infrastructure unless the groups submitted to a newly-imposed political vetting regime. Those targeted included ActionAid, CARE International, the International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Medico International, Medical Aid for Palestinians, Médecins Sans Frontières, Oxfam, World Vision, Mercy Corps and Action Against Hunger: organisations that collectively run Gaza's field hospitals, trauma wards, malnutrition clinics, water systems, emergency shelters and disease-monitoring networks.

At the same moment, Israel reaffirmed its total ban on foreign journalists entering Gaza, a policy Defence Minister Israel Katz said would remain in force because independent reporters could endanger Israeli soldiers. In practice, this meant that as humanitarian agencies were being forced out, the world's press was being kept out as well, leaving only reporters embedded under Israeli military control to document events inside the Strip.

The combined effect was unprecedented. Never before in modern warfare had a civilian population been subjected to both the expulsion of humanitarian infrastructure and the elimination of independent media oversight at the same time. Gaza was not merely being blockaded... again... it was being turned into a closed information and relief zone.

Ten foreign ministers - from the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Switzerland - issued a rare joint statement condemning Israel's new rules as "restrictive" and "unacceptable," warning that the forced closure of NGOs would have "a severe impact on access to essential services including healthcare." They described Gaza's humanitarian situation as "catastrophic."

Under Israel's new regulatory framework, humanitarian organisations were required to submit detailed personal data on all employees, including Palestinian staff inside Gaza. Aid agencies warned that this was not a registration process but a form of compelled intelligence cooperation. While humanitarian organisations were barred from importing items deemed "dual-use," Israeli authorities quietly allowed commercial traders to bring those same items into Gaza. Generators, metal pallets and tent poles - critical for hospitals, water systems and winter-proof

shelters – were prohibited for aid agencies yet permitted for private import and sale. “It seems highly improbable that the Israelis don’t know about them,” one diplomat observed.

The result was a two-tier system: humanitarian organisations operating under international law were restricted and expelled, while commercial traders were permitted to profit from scarcity. Aid agencies and independent journalists are how the world learns how many children are starving, which hospitals still function and how many civilians are wounded. By expelling NGOs and barring journalists, Israel was not protecting soldiers, it was protecting narrative control.

As Gaza sank into winter, floodwater and ruin, the people who counted the dead – and the records of how they were killed – were being removed. This was not bureaucracy, it was the closing of a crime scene.

### **Doctors In The Dark**

One of the most haunting images of the Gaza war was not taken during an airstrike or inside a collapsing building but in a moment of stillness amid devastation. It was a photograph of a single man in a white doctor’s coat walking through pulverised streets toward two Israeli tanks, unarmed - not running or hiding - but surrendering himself in order to protect his patients.

That man was Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza. A paediatrician and hospital director, he had already lost his own son, Ibrahim, to an Israeli airstrike that killed dozens of hospital staff. When the photograph circulated around the world in January 2025, it resonated because it captured the

destruction of medicine itself standing in front of military power.

One year later, Abu Safiya was still being held in an Israeli prison without charge... according to his lawyer, Gheed Kassem, he had lost a third of his body weight,

In the United States, Safiya's case was quietly erased. The last time the New York Times mentioned the doctor was on 7 January 2025, the day of his arrest, when the paper led with an unproven Israeli allegation that militant groups had used Kamal Adwan Hospital as a command centre; a claim that was never substantiated. From that point on, the most prominent detained doctor in Gaza vanished from the American press when the Washington Post likewise stopped mentioning him entirely.

This disappearance was not because Abu Safiya was obscure... he was well-known within Gaza and deeply connected to international medical networks, and anyone with a phone could have reached colleagues able to speak about his work. Had he been free, he would have provided devastating testimony about children dying of starvation under siege and about the systematic collapse of Gaza's healthcare system. He would also have directly rebutted the grotesque claims that appeared in parts of the Western media suggesting that malnourished children had died because of pre-existing conditions rather than hunger.

Dr Safiya recorded a voice note in November 2023: "We are doctors, not soldiers. But they bomb us as if we were military targets. Today I held a child's hand while she died because we had no oxygen. Tomorrow it may be my turn, but I will not leave. Someone must stay to witness."

Inside Israel, however, his case continued to be reported. In July 2025, Haaretz journalist Nir Hasson reported he was suffering severe hunger and abuse, had been beaten, had an irregular heartbeat and was being held underground without access to daylight.

Abu Safiya was not the only senior Gaza doctor removed in this way. Dr Ahmed Muhanna, one of Gaza's most senior anaesthesiologists and emergency care consultants, was detained by Israeli forces in December 2023 while al Awda Hospital was under siege and held for 665 days without ever being charged.

When Muhanna was released in late 2025 after 665 days in Israeli detention, he was driven back into Gaza through a landscape that no longer resembled the place he had carried in his memory. He said the scale of the destruction made his skin crawl, that his chest tightened and that he began to cry as he passed through streets that had been erased. Seventy five of his colleagues at al Awda Hospital had been killed while he was in detention. Across Gaza as a whole, more than 1,200 healthcare workers had been killed since 7 October 2023 and at least 384 had been detained by Israeli forces, according to Healthcare Workers Watch.

Muhanna returned to a healthcare system that had been hollowed out almost beyond recognition. The United Nations Human Rights Office reported that 94 percent of Gaza's hospitals had been damaged or destroyed. There was not a single functioning MRI machine left anywhere in the territory and only one CT scanner remained. Cancer patients were deteriorating because treatments were blocked and kidney patients were dying because dialysis machines were unavailable, newborn babies were dying

because incubators had no power. The World Health Organization reported that 77 percent of Gaza's population, including 100,000 children, continued to face acute food insecurity even after a ceasefire was formally in place. Malnourished children were being brought into hospitals that no longer had the ability to treat them.

Muhanna had also seen what happened to sick people inside Israeli detention facilities: he watched two men die after guards refused to provide medical care. One of them suffered a catastrophic intestinal obstruction. Muhanna warned that he required urgent surgery, but the guards ignored him... by the next morning, the man was dead.

A United Nations investigation later concluded that Israel operates a de facto state policy of organised torture in its detention system. Abu Safiya remained trapped inside that system, held without charge while his health deteriorated. The meaning of these detentions was not legal but political. Gaza's doctors were not only healers but witnesses who could describe, in clinical and measurable terms, what siege, starvation and bombing were doing to civilian bodies. They could speak with authority about the collapse of life itself, which is precisely why they were removed.

In Gaza, hospitals were flattened. In Israeli prisons, their directors were buried alive. In the American press, their names were erased... the war was not only being fought with bombs but with silence.

### **The Financial Siege**

By the time Israel moved to curtail and expel international aid agencies from Gaza, the siege had already expanded into

a second, less visible domain: money. Gaza was being turned into a place the world's financial system would not touch.

On 31 October 2025, banks across Gaza reopened after a temporary ceasefire. Long queues formed, but there was no cash. Outside the Bank of Palestine in Gaza City, Wael Abu Fares, a 61-year-old father of six, described the reality: "There is no money, no liquidity at the bank. You just come, do paperwork and leave."

Economist Mohammad Abu Jayyab explained what had replaced normal banking: "People go to greedy merchants for cash and pay a huge fee of between 20 and 40 percent."

For Iman al-Ja'bari, a mother of seven, that meant waiting days for a few hundred shekels. "You spend two or three days waiting and in the end you get 400 or 500 shekels. What can this buy?"

By early 2026, humanitarian agencies estimated that 98 percent of Gaza's banking infrastructure had been damaged or disabled, and that only two of the Strip's 94 ATMs were still functioning: Israel had not allowed fresh banknotes into Gaza for months. Digital balances existed, but cash – the only thing that worked in street markets, taxis, and pharmacies – had become almost unobtainable. This was not a temporary malfunction, it was structural.

Afaf Talab Jalo, a 48-year-old single mother of five in Gaza City, received aid in digital form but could not access it without losing a large share. "When I want to withdraw cash through brokers, I have to pay additional commission fees," she said. Even when she paid by phone, prices were higher... "Not everything can be purchased with an app. Transportation cannot be paid that way."

Safaa Abualatta, 23, in the al-Shati refugee camp, summed up the trap: “There are no functioning banks, no ATMs, and almost no way to access cash without paying high fees. Even for those who receive money from abroad, getting it in cash is a struggle.”

As physical money disappeared, people began repairing damaged banknotes to keep trading. Manal al-Saidi, 40, said she spent her days patching torn bills just to buy bread. “I make 20 or 30 shekels and leave with a loaf, just enough to get by.” Shopkeeper Samir Namrouti, 53, said he accepted mutilated notes as long as their serial numbers were intact: “If it has a serial number, I treat it as money.”

Then the next layer of the siege took hold... On 5 January 2026, it was confirmed that banks, card networks, payment apps and crowdfunding platforms across the world were now blocking transfers into Gaza, even when they were small and sent directly to civilian families. This was not about who sent the money, it was about where it was going.

Under Israeli-driven counter-terror finance rules, Gaza had been designated an extreme-risk destination where every dollar entering the Strip was now treated as potentially criminal. Banks were warned that even humanitarian payments could expose them to sanctions or loss of dollar-clearing privileges.

Faced with that threat, financial institutions chose the path of least institutional risk, and the cruellest possible outcome for Gaza’s population... they blocked everything.

Transfers failed without explanation, payments were reversed days later and crowd-funding platforms froze

withdrawals. Relatives abroad discovered that even when money was sent, it never arrived.

With lawful channels closed, some donors turned to cryptocurrency. Youth-led aid networks inside Gaza reported that food, water and medical supplies could now only be purchased with digital tokens like USDT, because traditional transfers were being stopped. One organiser said simply: “Without crypto, nothing reaches us,” while another added: “Without USDT, we wouldn’t be able to buy even a single water tank.” But even that escape was dangerous: Ghassan Shaker received the equivalent of \$357 from his sister in Kuwait through a local crypto broker... The money vanished. “I trusted him,” Shaker said. “But he never sent it. It just disappeared.”

This was what financial siege looked like in practice. Aid agencies were being forced out, cash was being choked off and private donations were being blocked... Gaza was not only being bombed and starved; it was being financially erased. This was collective punishment, executed through banking systems.

### **Violence Inside Compliance**

The pariah state revealed its contempt for international agreements not through open defiance, but through the calculated survival of the ceasefire itself. Israel never needed to collapse the agreement: it functioned instead as a tactical pause, a mechanism for managing optics while retaining full coercive control. Agreement in principle replaced obligation in fact - the machinery of violence slowed, recalibrated and resumed inside the language of compliance.

After unilaterally re-imposing a total siege on 2 March 2025 and cutting electricity to Gaza again on 12 March, Israel launched one of the deadliest assaults of the war on 18 March. The attack was timed to coincide with the pre-dawn Sahur meal during Ramadan. It was not military necessity, it was terrorism deployed as strategy.

More than 400 Palestinians were killed in a single night, including at least 170 children. Hospitals reported mass-casualty conditions within minutes and entire families were erased before sunrise. Former Israeli peace negotiator Daniel Levy described the calculation behind the timing: “Doing this just before the pre-dawn meal during Ramadan? That was intentional. It wasn’t just about killing, it was about desecrating and stirring tensions.”

For Benjamin Netanyahu, collapse-without-collapse served immediate political survival. It delayed corruption proceedings, stabilised a far-right governing coalition and reaffirmed a posture of unrestrained dominance through violence. Ceasefires became interludes for re-arming rather than steps toward peace.

The pattern did not end with Ramadan. On 19 October 2025, an explosion in Rafah killed an Israeli soldier.. Israel immediately declared the ceasefire broken and launched retaliatory strikes across Gaza. Within twenty-four hours, journalists and US sources reported that the Rafah blast had not been caused by a Hamas ambush, as Netanyahu claimed but was the result of an Israeli bulldozer detonating unexploded ordnance left behind by previous Israeli strikes.

The declaration of violation remained in place... The bombardment continued.

Ten days later – during a declared ceasefire – Israeli airstrikes hit homes, tent shelters, schools and hospital zones across Gaza, killing at least forty-six children as they slept and injuring more than 250. The strikes targeted densely-populated areas where displaced families had sought refuge from earlier bombardments. Paramedics described “chaotic and horrific” scenes as they pulled the bodies of young children from the rubble.

In the southern Sabra neighbourhood of Gaza City, three women and a man were recovered from beneath the ruins of the al-Banna family home. In the Bureij refugee camp, five members of the Abu Sharar family were killed when their home was flattened: neighbours said the explosion “shook the entire district.”

At Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, women wept around the bodies of Bayan al-Shawaf and her four children, killed when a missile struck their tent in the al-Mawasi displacement camp; the very area Israel had designated as a “safe zone.” Hospital workers said the children were still wearing pyjamas. “This was a massacre,” an exhausted emergency worker said. “Entire families were wiped out in seconds.”

Hospitals already operating beyond capacity treated patients in corridors, stairwells, and car parks as ambulances queued outside. Israel claimed the strikes were retaliation for an alleged ceasefire violation by Hamas, a claim Hamas denied. No evidence linking the targeted structures to militants was released. Human rights organisations warned that deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure during a truce may constitute war crimes under international law.

By early December 2025, what international officials continued to describe as a ceasefire had produced more than 350 Palestinian deaths, nearly 900 injuries and over 600 documented military violations since it ostensibly began on 10 October.

Gaza's Government Media Office recorded the scale of this fraud. Since the ceasefire of 10 October, Israel had committed at least 875 documented violations, including airstrikes, artillery fire, demolitions and sniper attacks. More than 411 Palestinians were killed after "peace" was declared. A ceasefire that permits systematic killing is not a pause in genocide, it is its bureaucratic continuation.

Palestinians faced daily sniper fire, tank shelling, drone strikes and aerial bombardments, particularly in areas east of the arbitrary "yellow line" Israel had drawn across more than half the territory... This was day 790 of what the International Court of Justice had already characterised as genocide.

### **Children Under Cover**

On 29 November, an Israeli quadcopter drone targeted and killed two brothers in the Bani Suhaila neighbourhood of Khan Younis: Fathi Abu Aasi was nine years old, his brother Juma was ten.

The boys had left home that morning to gather firewood to sell in order to buy food and medical supplies for their disabled father, who waited for them to return so he could set the table. Instead, neighbours rushed to his shelter with the news that his children had been killed.

“I removed the shroud and hugged them,” he said. “My little Juju’s head was blown off. God rest his soul. His arms were severed and parts of his torso were gone. Fathi’s right hand and left leg were cut off.” The Israeli military admitted carrying out the strike, describing the two boys as “suspects who crossed the yellow line, conducted suspicious activities on the ground, and approached IDF troops... posing an immediate threat.”

“Following identification,” the statement continued, “the Israeli Air Force eliminated the suspects in order to remove the threat.” Two children gathering firewood... an immediate threat. Eliminated.

UNICEF reported that at least sixty-seven children had been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire took effect, an average of nearly two children per day.

On 3 December, at least five Palestinians, including two children, were killed when an Israeli drone strike hit tents housing displaced people in al-Mawasi, igniting the shelters and burning families alive. Hospital staff reported bodies arriving “badly charred.”

The pattern was unmistakable; ceasefires were not pauses in violence but opportunities for more refined brutality ... moments when families let their guard down, when children finally slept without fear, only to be murdered in that sleep by a state that had learned the world’s outrage was toothless. Every preserved ceasefire delivered the same message: there was no agreement Israel would honour, no law it would respect, no sanctuary it would recognise. Peace itself was weaponised: not as an endpoint, but as cover.

Gaza writer Aya Al-Hattab described what this meant on the ground. “We are now living under a ceasefire, or at least that is what the US and the rest of the world have been telling us. But in Gaza, we haven’t felt it at all,” she wrote. “World leaders discuss the ‘day after’ and finalise their peace plans, proposing and deciding our fate, while we remain in the depths of the unknown.”

### **Punishment of Witness**

Those who recorded these crimes were similarly targeted. Journalists like Shireen Abu Akleh, and later the 112 media workers killed in the first four months of the genocide, were eliminated in numbers without precedent. Cameras were smashed, the phones of the dead were confiscated as “intelligence” and final uploads were transmitted from failing batteries, sometimes minutes before death. This was not collateral damage, it was policy.

That policy was formalised by the end of 2025 when on 29 December, Israel’s defence minister Israel Katz publicly confirmed that foreign journalists would remain barred from entering Gaza. His justification was “risk to soldiers,” but no independent risk assessment was ever produced. Access was limited to tightly-controlled military embeds whose routes, filming and interviews were supervised by the same army carrying out the destruction.

The Foreign Press Association sued the Israeli government, warning that a total ban on independent reporters in an active war zone had no precedent in any democracy. The Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Without Borders and the European Broadcasting Union issued joint statements calling the blackout a violation of international humanitarian law. When a state decides who is allowed to

see a war, it is not protecting security, it is sealing a crime scene.

International press organisations warned repeatedly that Palestinian reporters were being treated as combatants for the act of documentation itself. To witness was to become a target, with the record being hunted alongside the people it described, with the targeting even extending to aid workers.

In March 2025, an Israeli drone strike killed eight members of the UK-based Al Khair Foundation, including three journalists, during an agreed ceasefire. Israeli claims that the group were “terrorists operating a drone” were categorically refuted by the Foundation, which stated that its personnel were erecting shelters for displaced civilians. The pattern was circular... Killing produced evidence and evidence produced witnesses. Witnesses were then eliminated.

The same logic was applied to humanitarian organisations. In December 2025, Israel announced that dozens of aid groups – including Médecins Sans Frontières, CARE, Oxfam affiliates, Caritas and the International Rescue Committee – would be expelled from Gaza unless they handed over detailed personal data on their Palestinian and international staff.

Aid agencies warned that compliance would amount to forced intelligence cooperation, exposing their workers and families to arrest, blacklisting or targeting. More than 500 humanitarian and medical workers had already been killed. Now Israel was demanding their names. UNRWA had been dismantled through the same method, the remaining witnesses were being removed.

The consequences of killing all of these targets rebounded inward. By May 2025, the Israeli Defence Forces were facing a silent epidemic: at least thirty-eight Israeli soldiers were suspected to have died by suicide since the war began, twenty-one in 2024 alone; the highest rate in a decade. This was not simply post-traumatic stress from combat, it was moral injury.

The collapse had been chillingly prefigured more than two decades earlier by Israeli academic Arnon Soffer, who warned of the psychological toll of endless domination: “If we want to remain alive, we will have to kill and kill and kill. All day, every day... The only thing that concerns me is how to ensure that the boys and men who are going to have to do the killing will be able to return home... and be normal human beings.” They could not. The soaring suicide rate was the answer.

Was it what they had seen or done that they couldn't live with, or was it knowing that the rest of the world despised them for doing it... so that telling anyone, anywhere, at any future point in time that they were an Israeli could expose them?

### **The Sponsors in the Dock**

To speak of Israel's pariah status without examining its patrons is to miss another essential question: who supplied the weapons, the financing and the diplomatic protection that made this unthinkable event possible? This was never a condition borne by Israel alone... it radiated outward.

Washington supplied the armour and the protection of a veto. It framed the obstruction of humanitarian aid as “operational decisions” and treated international law as

advisory, all while fast-tracking a fourteen-billion-dollar supplemental arms package.

The medics' testimonies exposed the consequences. Tens of thousands of tons of military equipment flowed uninterrupted, while hospitals documented the absence of soap, gloves, antibiotics and anaesthetics. The imbalance was not logistical, it was political.

Much of that tonnage passed through a single point of origin that epitomised the quiet machinery of complicity: a 125,000-square-foot warehouse in Jersey City, New Jersey, at 1A Colony Road. According to a joint investigation by the Palestinian Youth Movement and Progressive International released in November 2025, the anonymous industrial facility – ringed by rail lines – had quietly become one of the most important nodes in Israel's global weapons pipeline.

For the first eight months of 2025, it moved more than a thousand tons of military cargo to Israel every single week. Inside, three interconnected New Jersey logistics companies – Interglobal Forwarding Services, G&B Packing Company and G&G Services – performed nearly every stage of the supply chain: inspecting, packaging and dispatching everything from Merkava tank parts and F-16 components to rifle ammunition, armoured vehicles and explosives.

All three were owned by the same family – the Grossmans – whose freight business dated back to 1947, a year before Israel's creation. Researchers found that 91 per cent of all Israel-bound military sea cargo not routed through US military bases passed through this warehouse alone. Between January and late August 2025, the facility processed an average of 878 tons of sea cargo per week, plus an additional 263 to 525 tons of air cargo. Air-shipment records

were heavily redacted, suggesting the true volume was likely far higher.

Most sea cargo followed a now-routine path: from the warehouse to the Port Newark–Elizabeth Marine Terminal, loaded onto Maersk vessels, shipped to Tangier, Morocco and then transferred onto another Maersk ship bound for Haifa. Cargo logs showed frequent shipments destined for the Israeli Ministry of Defence, as well as major Israeli weapons manufacturers such as Rafael Advanced Systems and Israeli Military Industries. One shipment to IMI in 2025 included 340 tons of rifle ammunition alone. The report concluded bluntly: the Jersey City warehouse was “the default location for any export of military goods to Israel.”

In one Israeli government document, companies shipping weapons to the Ministry of Defence were specifically instructed to label cargo with G&B Packing’s address. The warehouse’s industrial surroundings helped obscure its true function. The compound included HAZMAT rooms for inspecting and packaging hazardous materials, including explosives and a twenty-four-hour camera system with licence-plate readers.

When journalists visited the facility in November 2025, they identified a military vehicle parked behind a fence: a “David” armoured vehicle manufactured in Alabama by MTD Armor Corporation and used widely by Israeli forces. The companies’ contractual ties to Israel stretched back decades, coordinated through Israel’s New York logistics office known as “the Mission” and founded in 1947, the same year the Grossman family established their freight business.

The Mission reviewed vendor bids, negotiated purchases, approved contracts and coordinated the shipment of

equipment, often using Interglobal and G&B as primary logistics partners. The arrangement was enabled by Washington, which provided at least \$3.3 billion annually in Foreign Military Financing, plus another \$500 million for missile defence; funds that allowed US companies to manufacture the weapons flowing through Jersey City.

The Center for International Policy reported that the United States delivered nearly \$4.2 billion in military equipment to Israel between October 2023 and May 2025 alone. Despite internal US government briefings in spring 2024 confirming to President Biden that Israel was deliberately obstructing humanitarian aid – a finding that under US law should have triggered an immediate suspension of military support, nothing changed and the supply chain remained intact.

Complicity was no longer abstract... It had addresses, contracts, shipping manifests and weekly tonnage figures. The genocide was not only enabled by ideology and rhetoric, but by forklifts, rail spurs, customs forms and insurance policies. This was not a failure of oversight, it was administration.

### **Planning Gaza's Future Without Palestinians**

If the bombing destroyed Gaza's present and the arms pipeline sustained its destruction, the Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC) revealed something more chilling: Gaza's future was already being designed, in rooms where no Palestinian was allowed to speak.

From American docks, the chain of control ran inland... In October 2025, the United States established a CMCC in Kiryat Gat, a non-descript Israeli town twelve miles from the Gaza border. The centre was presented as a hub to monitor

the ceasefire, coordinate humanitarian access and plan Gaza's reconstruction under Donald Trump's twenty-point framework. Giant copies of the document were displayed throughout the building, but what unfolded inside exposed how Gaza's future was actually being decided, and by whom.

Israeli operatives conducted widespread surveillance of US forces and allied delegations stationed at the base, according to sources briefed on disputes over open and covert recordings of meetings and internal discussions. The scale of the monitoring became so extensive that the US commander, Lt Gen Patrick Frank, summoned his Israeli counterpart and demanded that "recording has to stop here."

Staff and visitors from other countries raised similar concerns: some were advised not to share sensitive information for fear it could be collected and exploited. The Israeli military dismissed the allegations as "absurd," claiming the IDF merely "documents and summarises meetings... as any professional organisation of this nature does."

When US and Israeli media reported that Israel was ceding authority over what entered Gaza to the US military, the reality was different. Two months into the ceasefire, Washington possessed leverage, but Israel retained control of Gaza's perimeter and all entry points. "We didn't take over [aid]," one US official explained. "It is an integration. It is hand in glove. They remain the hand, and the CMCC has become the glove over that hand."

US forces deployed to the CMCC included logistics experts trained to operate in natural disasters or hostile terrain. They arrived expecting to increase aid flows but soon discovered that Israeli restrictions – not engineering

challenges – were the primary obstacle, and within weeks, several dozen had left.

Items as basic as pencils and paper required to restart schools were barred without explanation. Tent poles and chemicals needed for water purification remained on “dual-use” restriction lists, prohibited on the grounds they could theoretically be repurposed for military use.

The most revealing feature of the CMCC was who was absent... The centre brought together military planners from the United States, Israel, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates. Diplomats and humanitarian organisations were invited to attend discussions. Palestinians were not.

There were no representatives of Palestinian civilian institutions, humanitarian organisations, or the Palestinian Authority stationed at the centre or invited into planning sessions. Attempts to include Palestinians via video link were repeatedly cut off by Israeli officials. US military planning documents avoided the words *Palestine* and *Palestinian*, referring instead to Gaza’s inhabitants as “Gazans.” Trump’s plan nominally recognised Palestinian aspirations to statehood and promised seats in a temporary administration. In practice, Gaza’s future was being designed in a building where Palestinian voices were not merely absent but actively excluded.

The interior of the CMCC resembled a dystopian start-up. A cavernous, windowless hall was carpeted with astroturf. Whiteboards divided the space into informal clusters where soldiers mixed with diplomats and aid workers. Corporate language arrived with the troops. Palestinians were sometimes described as “end users.”

Blithe mnemonics organised the work... “Wellness Wednesdays” focused on restoring hospitals that had been systematically bombed. “Thirsty Thursdays” addressed public services in a place where children had been killed while collecting water and disease spread through collapsing sanitation. The building itself carried a grim residue: it had previously been used by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, whose food-distribution sites became death traps for hundreds of Palestinians. Branded products from the now-defunct organisation remained piled in the basement.

Many diplomats and aid workers were deeply uneasy about participating. They worried the CMCC blurred military and humanitarian roles, excluded Palestinians from planning their own future, lacked a clear international mandate and risked violating international law. Yet they also feared that disengagement would leave Gaza’s future entirely in the hands of Israel and newly-arrived US military planners unfamiliar with the territory they were redesigning. “This is the only chance we have of the Americans listening,” one diplomat said. “We just don’t know how much time and energy to invest.”

That mandate arrived weeks later – and with it, the final hollowing of international law.

On 17 November 2025, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2803, endorsing what Washington called a “comprehensive plan” to end the Gaza conflict. In practice, the resolution codified the very architecture of exclusion taking shape in Kiryat Gat. At an online seminar hosted by SOAS University of London in December, two former senior

UN officials warned that the resolution marked a moment of institutional collapse.

Craig Mokhiber, former head of the New York office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, described Resolution 2803 as “a mechanism of Israeli and US oppression with a UN stamp of approval... The UN appears to have gone full colonial two years into the genocide,” he said. The resolution created a US-led “Board of Peace” and an “International Stabilisation Force,” both ultimately answerable to Donald Trump. The plan annexed to the resolution granted Israel the right to continue occupying Gaza until Israel and the Board together decided otherwise.

“If you read the Trump plan,” Mokhiber said, “it is Donald Trump himself – like King Leopold – who has effectively become the owner of Gaza under this resolution.” The resolution authorised Israel to maintain a so-called “security perimeter” covering approximately half of Gaza indefinitely, in direct contradiction of rulings by the International Court of Justice. Palestinian self-determination was deferred to an undefined future, subject to US veto.

“Not since the UN purported to partition Palestine against the will of the indigenous people,” Mokhiber said, “has the UN acted in such a baldly colonial, unlawful and ultra vires way.” Jonathan Whitt, until recently acting head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory, warned that the resolution entrenched an “architecture of fragmentation.”

Under Israel’s doctrine, Palestinians remaining in designated “red zones” were treated as outside the scope of protection. “We’ve seen this throughout my time in Gaza,” Whitt said. “Those who don’t move when they’re

ordered to move become ineligible for protection and are essentially killed... The United States cannot claim to defend a rules-based order while subverting those rules,” he concluded. “The emperor has no clothes.”

The CMCC and Resolution 2803 together formed a single structure: operational exclusion underwritten by legal fiction. Gaza’s future was not being negotiated. It was being administered without its people... By late 2025, the CMCC’s role was already waning. Dozens of US military staff sent in October had returned to their home bases after their remit concluded. Designing an abstract future for Gaza in a political vacuum proved easier than implementing it.

Israel insisted the ceasefire would not progress until Hamas was demilitarised. Neither the United States nor its allies had a plan for achieving what two years of bombardment had failed to deliver. Asked about a timeline for implementation, one US official declined to provide one. “The US military is not at the heart of this,” he said. “It falls more into the political world.”

The architecture remained, the future did not. By late 2025, the erasure of Gaza had acquired a final logic: those who had not been killed, starved, or biologically damaged were now to be removed.

### **The Silent Expulsion**

While political leaders congratulated themselves for preserving a ceasefire, Israel pressed ahead with what human rights experts described as a coordinated strategy to drive out Gaza’s remaining population. Western media frequently framed these measures as humanitarian logistics rather than coercive policy, obscuring their cumulative effect.

An Israeli official told the Associated Press that the Rafah crossing would open only for Palestinians exiting Gaza, not for those seeking to return. That was not relief, it was expulsion.

Earlier in 2025, Israel established a discreet bureaucratic arm known as the Voluntary Migration Administration... Its function was not persuasion but attrition: to make life unliveable, then label flight “choice.” Reports emerged of injured Palestinians permitted to leave Gaza for medical treatment only if they signed documents pledging never to return; exit became conditional on erasure.

Washington’s reconstruction proposals envisioned “alternative safe communities” described as fenced compounds of prefabricated housing units or converted shipping containers, each with shared toilets and showers. These were presented as interim solutions to displacement, replacing neighbourhoods Israel had flattened. Eligibility depended on security vetting that excluded anyone who had ever received a salary from Hamas, even in a civilian capacity, and anyone related to someone who had. Even if a pilot project began immediately, it would take at least six months to house the first 25,000 people, barely one per cent of Gaza’s population. This was not rebuilding, it was sorting.

As Gaza was rendered uninhabitable, a parallel economy took shape elsewhere. Politically connected contractors and foreign firms began positioning themselves to control reconstruction, logistics and aid delivery. Internal US planning documents described Gaza not as a humanitarian emergency, but as a commercial opportunity. “Everybody and their brother is trying to get a piece of this,” said Matt Michelsen, founder of the Florida-based firm Gothams LLC.

“People are treating this like another Iraq or Afghanistan. They’re trying to get rich off it.”

Proposals circulated for a single “master contractor” to control humanitarian trucking, charging fees per vehicle even as aid remained blocked. Humanitarian experts warned the scheme would monetise access to a population still under siege. “This isn’t humanitarianism,” said Amed Khan, an American medical aid provider who has worked in Gaza. “It’s disaster capitalism, and Gaza is the disaster.”

Destruction had become the opening act of profit, with reconstruction imagined not as restoration for Palestinians, but as extraction without accountability. The ceasefire, in this design, functioned not as a step toward return but as a corridor of departure.

### **The Architecture of Removal**

Israel’s shock recognition of Somaliland did not land as a quirky diplomatic curiosity, but rather as an alarm bell.

In late December 2025, Israel became the first state in the world to recognise the self-declared Republic of Somaliland: a breakaway territory carved out of Somalia that no United Nations member had previously acknowledged as sovereign. Peter Hagar of the YouTube channel Revolutionary Change joked incredulously during his show: “Israel recognising Somaliland is like Narnia recognising Atlantis.”

Within days, the recognition triggered emergency sessions at the United Nations and protests in Somalia, whose president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, publicly stated that his government’s intelligence services believed Somaliland had agreed to three core conditions in exchange for recognition:

to accept Palestinians displaced from Gaza, to host Israeli military facilities and to join the Abraham Accords.

Diplomats from Pakistan, Arab League states and multiple African countries repeated versions of this claim before the UN Security Council, warning that Israel's move appeared to be tied to Palestinian relocation. The allegation was not that Israel was seeking allies, but that it was constructing a geographic outlet for a population it no longer intended to allow to remain.

Gaza had already been rendered uninhabitable ... once a territory is made unliveable, removal no longer needs to be declared, it happens by force of conditions. Western and Israeli officials had explored "third-country" options throughout 2025 but Somaliland offered something uniquely valuable: a politically weak, diplomatically-isolated territory that could be bound by patronage and security dependency.

This is how population transfers are built in the twenty-first century; not with trains and barbed wire, but with development aid, security co-operation and the language of humanitarian relocation. Somaliland was not recognised because it was a state, but because it might become a destination.

Gaza's future was being planned not around who would live there, but around who would be permitted to remain... On 23 December 2025, Israel's defence minister made that intent explicit. "We are deep in Gaza and we will never leave all of it," Israel Katz declared. "No such thing will happen." He announced plans to establish permanent Israeli communities in northern Gaza under the *Garinei Nahal* programme: military units that transition into civilian

settlements. What had been inferred was now stated, the erasure of the future was policy.

### **Pariah Economy, Pariah Culture**

Pariah status hardened into economic reality as an industry that had long marketed itself as “defence” encountered a cost it had never been forced to price in before, namely reputational exposure grounded not in allegation but in evidence.

The Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund divested, pension funds in New York and California inserted genocide clauses into their charters, procurement officers began invoking “due diligence” in earnest and banks started factoring legal and evidentiary risk into lending and insurance decisions, not comprehensively or uniformly, but with effects that were visible and cumulative.

Contracts were cancelled or deferred: the Dimona battery gigafactory project was placed on indefinite hold, Intel suspended its planned multi-billion-dollar expansion of its Kiryat Gat semiconductor plant and major defence and security exhibitions began restricting Israel’s official access, including France’s decision to bar Israeli firms from the Eurosatory arms fair and Britain’s decision to exclude Israeli government officials from the DSEI exhibition. These were not symbolic gestures but institutional decisions shaped by compliance risk, political pressure and the rising cost of association.

The economy, in other words, absorbed a truth long obscured by power, which is that markets depend on belief and that belief does not survive sustained public exposure to mass civilian harm.

Cultural institutions responded not by silencing speech but by withdrawing funding, platforms and prestige. Film festivals ended sponsorship relationships, theatres refused the pretext of false balance and cultural organisations adjusted programmes rather than proceed as if nothing had happened, developments that forced critics to confront the reality that claims of being “apolitical” had long functioned as a shelter for the comfortable rather than a position of neutrality.

Where institutions did intervene directly, the line between protection and censorship became clear. The BBC’s condemnation of musician Bob Dylan’s Glastonbury set, after a crowd chanted violent slogans targeting the Israeli military and a police investigation followed, showed how far some cultural authorities were willing to go to shield a foreign armed force from even non-material protest. As the group Kneecap observed in response, the issue was not safety or incitement but control of the narrative.

Alongside institutional withdrawal, an independent cultural response emerged outside official platforms. Films were assembled from smuggled footage, theatre was built from testimony and affidavits and musicians combined traditional forms with protest and lament. The keffiyeh did not circulate as fashion but as continuity, marking Gaza not as a moment but as a permanent presence in global cultural life.

Religion, long tied to state power and nationalism, was also forced into a reckoning. When Israel’s Supreme Court invoked the biblical figure of Amalek to justify starvation, religious language itself came under scrutiny, prompting dissent within Jewish communities as synagogues and

organisations reclaimed Judaism from state violence and rooted it in ethical refusal, most visibly in declarations of “Not in our name” by groups such as Jewish Voice for Peace.

In churches that had preached reconciliation while famine advanced, congregations thinned or withdrew, while elsewhere churches returned to the language of the biblical prophets, reading their condemnations of injustice and starvation as descriptions of the present rather than as distant history. In mosques, grief was channelled into sustained civic work through legal defence funds, voter registration drives and long-term organising, as faith moved out of abstraction and into public life.

### **The Humanitarian Catastrophe**

While leaders congratulated themselves on preserving a ceasefire, 2.2 million Palestinians remained confined to just 42 per cent of Gaza’s pre-war land area. UN agencies reported that 81 per cent of Gaza’s housing stock had been destroyed or severely damaged. Nine in ten Palestinians were displaced or without permanent shelter after winter rainstorms washed away thousands of tents. Sewage overflowed into displacement camps and UNICEF warned of looming outbreaks of water-borne disease as cases of acute watery diarrhoea surged.

Additionally, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency reported that Israel was blocking approximately 6,000 aid trucks; enough food and relief to sustain Gaza’s population for three months. Medical Aid for Palestinians found that less than five per cent of aid offloaded consisted of medical supplies, despite systematic attacks on every hospital in the territory and at Nasser Medical Complex, forty-two essential medical items were at zero stock. A single CT scanner served

hundreds of thousands and an estimated 55,000 pregnant women remained in Gaza under siege conditions.

In November 2025, the UN Committee Against Torture reported credible evidence that Israel was operating a de facto policy of organised and widespread torture: beatings, dog attacks, electrocution, waterboarding, sexual violence, forced nudity, surgeries without anaesthesia. Torture was not an aberration, it was administrative.

The medical profession was not exempt from this administrative logic... Some eight years previously, more than 1,000 Palestinian political prisoners launched a mass hunger strike to protest prolonged isolation, denial of medical care and indefinite administrative detention without charge: The Israeli state's response was not negotiation, but preparation for medical coercion.

In a formal letter dated 31 May 2017, the UK medical organisation Medact warned that Israeli authorities were planning to compel physicians to force-treat and force-feed hunger-striking prisoners. The letter, addressed to Dr Mark Porter, then chair of the British Medical Association council, cited directives from Israel's Ministry of Health instructing hospitals to replace doctors who refused to participate with those willing to do so. It also described plans for prison-based medical units and a field hospital operated with Magen David Adom and the Israeli military.

Medact's director, Dr David McCoy, warned that such measures would constitute a grave violation of medical ethics. Citing the World Medical Association's Declaration of Malta, the letter stressed that force-feeding hunger strikers is "unjustifiable" and that physicians must resist coercion rather than administer it... The concern was not

hypothetical: Israeli legislation passed in 2015 explicitly authorised force-feeding of hunger-striking prisoners, overriding medical consent and ethical objection. In this framework, medicine ceased to function as care, it became another administrative instrument; tasked not with preserving life as dignity, but with breaking resistance while maintaining biological viability. Torture did not always wear a uniform, sometimes it wore a white coat.

The violence did not end only in bodies... it metastasised inward. As the war dragged on, Israeli soldiers began to describe not victory or defence, but moral disintegration. Testimonies collected by the veterans' organisation Breaking the Silence revealed units operating without meaningful rules of engagement, commanders issuing contradictory or deliberately vague orders, and soldiers unsure whether any limit still existed.

“At first they talked about intent,” one reservist recalled. “Then ability. Then necessity. By the end, none of that mattered. We had the means, so we used them.” Another described neighbourhoods designated as free-fire zones: “If something moved, it was a target. That included children. That included animals. That included nothing at all.”

What emerged was not a series of isolated abuses but the collapse of military doctrine itself. The distinction between combatant and civilian was no longer eroded; it was discarded. Soldiers spoke of operating in an environment where restraint was perceived as weakness and hesitation as disloyalty. The result was not only the destruction of Gaza, but the corrosion of those tasked with carrying it out.

Several described returning home unable to reconcile their actions with any moral framework. “I don't know what we

became,” one said. “All that’s left is shame.” The war had not only erased Palestinian futures; it had hollowed out the ethical core of the force that prosecuted it... and yet, within this devastation, voices endured.

Palestinian animators Hanin Khuras, Shorouq Darwish and Nour Awad worked with displaced children from al-Nuseirat camp and Deir al-Balah to create the stop-motion film *When She Left, Life Bloomed* as a way of processing trauma. Produced by Animation Community 4 Palestine, the film told a story of loss and rebirth in which an elderly woman, wounded by an explosion, becomes transparent and begins to fade. From her disappearing body, red roses emerge and drift with the wind. They land, take root, and bring colour back to barren land.

The children who made that film - recording their own annihilation frame-by-frame while the world’s most powerful states supplied the weapons and blocked the exits - may never see it shown, but still they spoke. This is what witness means when witness is all that remains.

Gaza’s record did not become a static museum of horror, it became a working workshop. Verification ceased to be scepticism and became ethics. Names remained names – Yara, Mahmoud, Alaa – even as the numbers climbed, the tally accused and the names consoled.

Justice began moving faster than empires and universal jurisdiction shed inertia. Export licences demanded justification measured in lives saved, while universities severed partnerships embedded in atrocity, ethics codes named participation in violence as malpractice... The age of impunity fractured under sustained attention.

## Final Reckoning

No empire has ever collapsed because a sentence was well-turned, but sentences can teach patience and patience can sustain change.

Gaza was meant to be erased, but instead it forced memory into permanence.

On winter mornings, when the tide recedes, Gaza's glittering shoreline will reveal what the water hid: a chipped blue kitchen tile, a spoon bent by some unimaginable force, a child's shoe caked in salt. Each is ordinary, and each is proof.

If the future finds us worthy, it will not be because we perfected language. It will be because, having seen, we learned to count, to keep, to change, and carried those habits forward.

The archive endures. The names endure. The vow endures.

By late 2025, the silence that had sustained Western consensus had finally fractured. Arguments once treated as unspeakable entered mainstream discourse, not because they were radical, but because the evidence had overwhelmed the frame that excluded them.

On 12 December 2025, conservative broadcaster Tucker Carlson devoted a prime-time monologue to questioning whether unconditional US support for Israel still served American interests at all. The significance was not Carlson's conclusions, but the fact that the argument could now be made openly on a mainstream platform. The question had shifted from whether criticism was permissible to why unquestioned obedience had ever been treated as immune from scrutiny. When taboo collapses, obedience follows it.

From Gaza's ruins, the world received its severest exam.

This book exists because erasure is already underway. Long before the rubble is cleared, the struggle over meaning will begin over what is remembered, what is minimised and what is denied. Archives are not neutral; they are built by those who refuse to let violence pass into abstraction.

PARIAH is not an argument for sympathy, nor a petition for mercy. It is a record, and records endure precisely because they stand where forgetting is most convenient.

## AFTERWORD

*Out of this wreckage came something unanticipated: witness.*

Millions of people, unconnected by nation or faith, saw through the fog of propaganda and recognised one another in grief. They kept the images, shared the testimony, preserved the evidence. Against the apparatus of erasure, these consciences built the world's first collective archive of truth. This is what remains when the dust settles: not victory, not defeat, but record... the names, the dates, the faces and the proof.

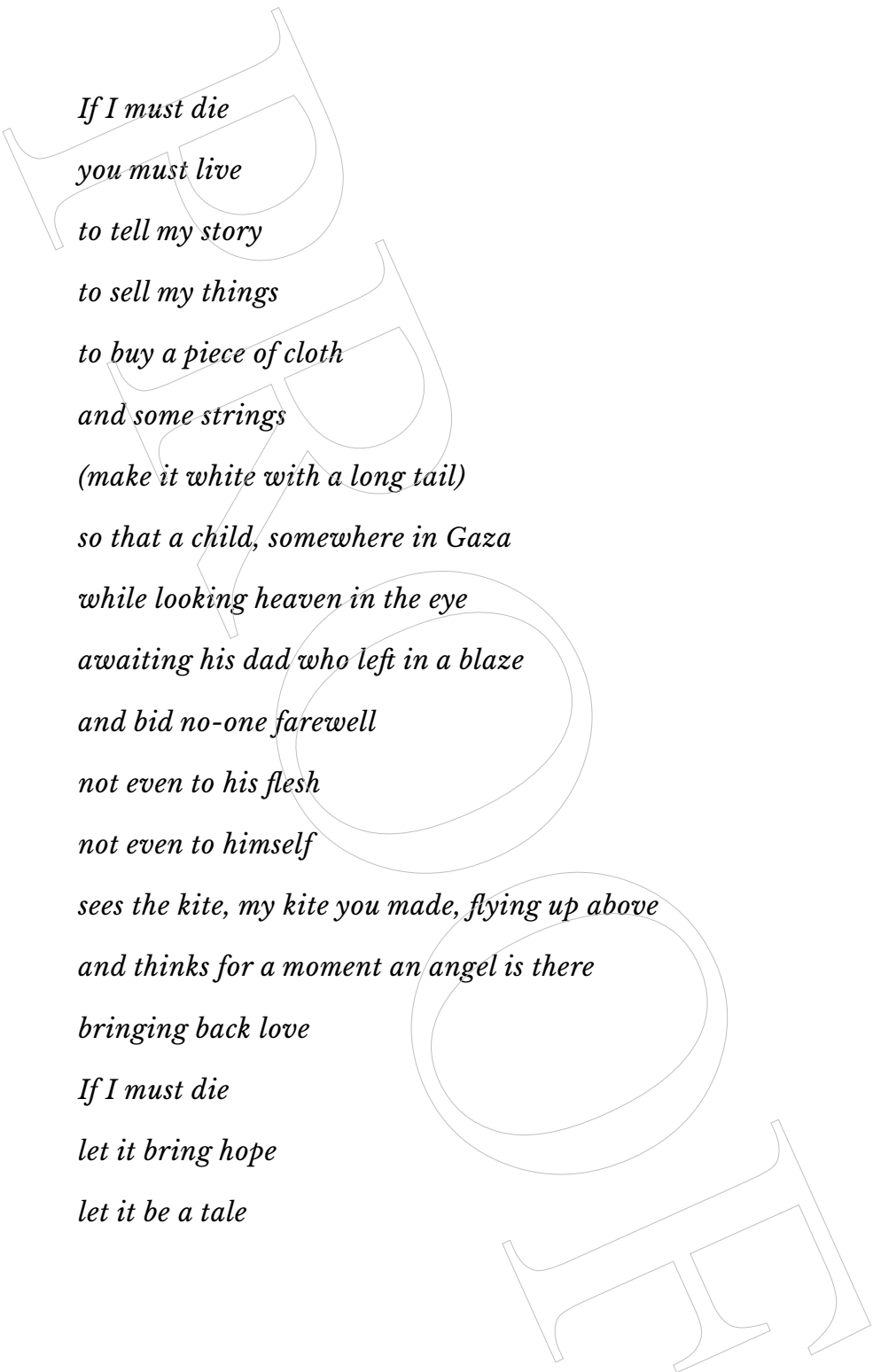
Every fragment preserved is a refusal to forget, every memory passed on is a quiet act of justice. We don't yet know the true total of people killed in this assault, but more than 250 journalists were killed ensuring the world would see. They died with cameras in their hands and truth on their lips; their record became the conscience of our time.

Gaza changed the world because it forced humanity to see itself: its cruelty, its indifference and its endurance. The mirror it held up did not shatter. It remains, and in it, no nation can hide from what it did, or failed to do, while Gaza burned.

It exposed the moral exhaustion of empire and the strength of those who have nothing left but truth. In that sense, Gaza did not die in vain, it became a measure of conscience.

No one will ever be able to claim they did not know.

The future will be written by those who remember, may they never let the world forget.



*If I must die  
you must live  
to tell my story  
to sell my things  
to buy a piece of cloth  
and some strings  
(make it white with a long tail)  
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza  
while looking heaven in the eye  
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze  
and bid no-one farewell  
not even to his flesh  
not even to himself  
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above  
and thinks for a moment an angel is there  
bringing back love  
If I must die  
let it bring hope  
let it be a tale*

*Dr Refaat Alareer, author of the poem 'If I must die', was a 44-year-old Palestinian professor from Gaza. On 6 December, 2023, he was killed by an Israeli airstrike along with his family after posting this haunting cri de cœur to social media. To this day, it resonates globally and was translated into dozens of languages, recited publicly and used as a tribute to honour the lives of all Palestinians who continue to be killed by Israel.*

## REFERENCE MATERIALS

### Glossary

#### INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS & LEGAL BODIES

COGAT (Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories) - The Israeli military unit that administers civilian affairs in the occupied Palestinian territories. COGAT controls all humanitarian aid, commercial imports and movement of people into and out of Gaza and the West Bank. It serves as the liaison between the Israeli military and Palestinian civilian authorities.

HRF (Hind Rajab Foundation) - Legal advocacy organisation established in 2024 and named after six-year-old Hind Rajab, who was killed by Israeli tank fire in Gaza. The HRF pursues universal jurisdiction cases against Israeli military and political officials in European courts, filing over 60 complaints by late 2025, according to its publicly reported filings and statements. The foundation has become a symbol of decentralised justice when international institutions move slowly.

ICC (International Criminal Court) - An independent international tribunal based in The Hague that prosecutes individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. On 20 May 2024, the

ICC Prosecutor announced he was seeking arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza. On 21 November 2024, the ICC issued the warrants.

ICJ (International Court of Justice) - The principal judicial organ of the United Nations, based in The Hague, Netherlands. Also known as the World Court. The ICJ settles legal disputes between states and gives advisory opinions on legal questions referred by UN organs. On 26 January 2024, the ICJ ruled on South Africa's case alleging Israeli genocide in Gaza, finding the allegations "plausible" for the purpose of provisional measures and ordering provisional measures.

PHRI (Physicians for Human Rights Israel) - Israeli human rights organisation that documents violations of medical ethics and the right to health in the occupied territories and Israel's detention system. PHRI's investigations documented at least 98 Palestinian deaths in Israeli custody during the Gaza war.

PRCS (Palestine Red Crescent Society) - The Palestinian national Red Cross/Red Crescent society, providing emergency medical services, ambulances, and humanitarian assistance in the occupied Palestinian territories. Multiple PRCS paramedics and ambulances were targeted during the Gaza war, including the ambulance sent to rescue six-year-old Hind Rajab.

UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) - UN agency established in 1949 to provide assistance and protection to Palestinian refugees. UNRWA operates schools, health clinics, and social services in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Israel

has repeatedly accused UNRWA of ties to Hamas and in 2024 passed legislation effectively banning its operations in Israeli-controlled territory.

## **HISTORICAL EVENTS & OPERATIONS**

**Nakba** (Arabic: "The Catastrophe") - The 1947–1949 mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the establishment of the state of Israel, as documented by Israeli, Palestinian, and international historians. Over 750,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homes, and more than 500 villages were destroyed. Palestinians commemorate the Nakba annually on May 15. The event is central to Palestinian collective memory and identity.

**Deir Yassin Massacre** (9 April 1948) - Attack by Zionist paramilitary groups Irgun and Lehi on the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin near Jerusalem, killing over 100 villagers including women and children. The massacre spread panic across Palestine and accelerated the mass exodus of Palestinians during the *Nakba*.

**The Six-Day War** (1967) - War in which Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights. Israel has militarily occupied the West Bank and Gaza (until 2005 withdrawal of settlements) ever since, creating the legal and political framework of occupation that continues to the present.

**First *Intifada*** (1987–1993) - Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, characterised by strikes, boycotts, and stone-throwing by Palestinian youth. The largely nonviolent resistance was met with harsh Israeli military response. The *Intifada* led to the Oslo Accords, which established the Palestinian Authority.

Second *Intifada* (2000–2005) - More violent Palestinian uprising following the collapse of peace negotiations. Marked by suicide bombings against Israeli civilians and major Israeli military operations in Palestinian cities, including the siege of Jenin refugee camp in 2002.

Operation Cast Lead (2008–2009) - Three-week Israeli military assault on Gaza that killed over 1,400 Palestinians, more than half of them civilians. Israel claimed the operation targeted Hamas rocket fire. The UN's Goldstone Report found evidence of war crimes by both sides but primarily by Israel.

Operation Pillar of Defence (2012) - Eight-day Israeli operation in Gaza that killed over 160 Palestinians in sustained bombardment. Began with assassination of Hamas military chief Ahmed al-Jabari.

Operation Protective Edge (2014) - 51-day Israeli military operation in Gaza that killed over 2,100 Palestinians, including approximately 500 children. The operation included a ground invasion and extensive bombardment of civilian areas. Israel claimed it was responding to Hamas rocket fire and tunnel construction.

7 October 2023 - Hamas-led attack on southern Israel that killed approximately 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, and took about 240 hostages. The attack triggered Israel's massive military assault on Gaza. Initial Israeli claims about the attack's details, including systematic rape and beheaded babies, were later revised, retracted, or not substantiated by subsequent investigations, though the fundamental horror of civilian deaths remained undisputed.

## MASSACRES & ATROCITIES (Historical Reference)

King David Hotel Bombing (1946) - Terrorist attack by Zionist militant group Irgun (led by future Prime Minister Menachem Begin) against British administrative headquarters in Mandatory Palestine. Killed 91 people including 28 British, 41 Arabs, and 17 Jews. At the time, contemporary British government statements and international media explicitly called Irgun "Jewish terrorists."

Qibya Massacre (1953) - Israeli military raid led by Ariel Sharon on the Jordanian West Bank village of Qibya that killed 69 Palestinian civilians, mostly women and children sheltering in their homes. Forty-five houses were demolished. The operation was part of Israel's "retribution policy" against Palestinian infiltration.

Sabra and Shatila Massacre (1982) - Mass killing of between 460 and 3,500 Palestinian and Lebanese Shia civilians in refugee camps in Beirut, Lebanon, carried out by Lebanese Christian Phalangist militias while Israeli forces surrounded the camps and prevented escape. Israeli defence minister Ariel Sharon was found "personally responsible" by an Israeli inquiry. The massacre remains emblematic of Israeli complicity in atrocities against Palestinian refugees.

Jenin Refugee Camp (2002) - Large-scale Israeli military operation during the Second *Intifada* in which forces bulldozed entire sections of the Jenin refugee camp with families still inside. The exact death toll remains disputed, in part because Israel obstructed UN fact-finding efforts. Survivors described systematic executions and use of Palestinian civilians as human shields.

## LEGAL & POLITICAL CONCEPTS

**Genocide** - Under the 1948 Genocide Convention, acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. These acts include: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction; imposing measures to prevent births; and forcibly transferring children. The legal definition requires proving specific intent (*dolus specialis*), not just the scale of killing. In ICJ proceedings at the provisional-measures stage, the Court assesses whether rights under the Genocide Convention are plausible and at risk, which is a lower threshold than proving genocidal intent on the merits.

**Crimes Against Humanity** - Widespread or systematic attacks against civilian populations, including murder, extermination, deportation, torture, sexual violence, and persecution. Unlike genocide, crimes against humanity do not require intent to destroy a particular group but do require an attack against a civilian population.

**War Crimes** - Serious violations of the laws of war (international humanitarian law), including wilful killing of civilians, torture, taking hostages, extensive destruction of property not justified by military necessity, using civilians as human shields, and targeting protected persons or objects like hospitals and schools.

**Apartheid** - As defined under international law, an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over another, with the intent of maintaining that regime. The crime of apartheid is defined in the 1973 International Convention on the

Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the Rome Statute of the ICC. Multiple human rights organisations have concluded that Israel's treatment of Palestinians constitutes apartheid.

Universal Jurisdiction - Legal principle that allows national courts to prosecute individuals for serious international crimes (genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity) regardless of where the crime was committed or the nationality of perpetrators or victims. This principle enables German or Belgian courts, for example, to prosecute Israeli officials for crimes committed in Gaza.

Occupation (Military) - Under international law, temporary control of territory by a foreign military force. The occupying power has obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure the welfare of the occupied population and is prohibited from transferring its own civilian population into occupied territory (settlements). Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 and maintained effective control over Gaza despite withdrawing settlements and soldiers in 2005.

Blockade - Military operation to prevent goods and people from entering or leaving a territory. Israel has maintained a naval blockade of Gaza since 2007. Under international law, blockades must allow humanitarian supplies to reach civilians and cannot be used to collectively punish a population. Multiple legal experts have deemed Israel's Gaza blockade illegal.

Collective Punishment - Punishing a group of people for the actions of individuals within that group. Prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 33: "No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not

personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited."

## **POLITICAL TERMINOLOGY**

**Annexation** - Formal extension of sovereignty over territory. While Israel has not formally annexed the West Bank, it has effectively annexed East Jerusalem and has applied Israeli civil law to West Bank settlements, creating a de facto annexation. In 2025, Israeli officials began openly discussing formal annexation plans.

**Fatah** - Secular Palestinian nationalist political party founded by Yasser Arafat in the 1950s. Dominated the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and now controls the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Rival to Hamas.

**Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)** - Palestinian Islamist political and military organisation that has governed Gaza since 2007. Designated as a terrorist organisation by Israel, the United States, European Union, and others. Hamas combines military resistance to Israeli occupation with social services and political governance. Formed in 1987 during the First *Intifada* as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood.

**Hasbara** (Hebrew: "explaining" or "explaining propaganda") - Israeli state propaganda system designed to shape international public opinion in favour of Israeli government policies. *Hasbara* includes official government communications, coordination with pro-Israel advocacy groups worldwide, and social media campaigns. The term is used both by Israeli officials to describe their public diplomacy and by critics to describe coordinated disinformation.

Palestinian Authority (PA) - Interim self-government body established in 1994 under the Oslo Accords to govern parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Led by Fatah party. The PA governs Areas A and B of the West Bank in coordination with Israeli military control. Has not held elections since 2006 and is widely viewed by Palestinians as corrupt and collaborating with Israeli occupation.

Settlement - Israeli civilian communities built in the occupied West Bank and (until 2005) Gaza Strip. All settlements are illegal under international law as an occupying power cannot transfer its own civilian population into occupied territory (Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 49). As of 2024, over 700,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Zionism - Political movement for the establishment and support of a Jewish state in historical Palestine. Founded in the late 19th century by Theodor Herzl. Supporters view it as the Jewish national liberation movement; Palestinian critics view it as a settler-colonial project that necessitated their dispossession. The term encompasses a range of ideologies from liberal to revisionist/religious nationalism.

## **GEOGRAPHIC TERMS**

Al-Quds (Arabic name for Jerusalem) - Holy city claimed as capital by both Israelis and Palestinians. Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its "eternal and undivided capital." Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as their future capital. The international community does not recognise Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem, which Israel captured and effectively annexed in 1967.

Gaza Marine - Natural gas field discovered off Gaza's coast in 1999, containing an estimated 1 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas. For over two decades, Palestinians have been systematically denied access to this resource through Israeli restrictions on fishing zones and energy infrastructure development. Gaza sits atop substantial energy wealth while its population has been denied electricity for all but a few hours daily.

Gaza Strip - Coastal territory of 365 square kilometres (141 square miles) along the Mediterranean Sea, bordered by Israel and Egypt. Home to approximately 2.3 million Palestinians, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Under Israeli military occupation since 1967; Israel withdrew settlers and soldiers in 2005 but maintained control over borders, airspace, and territorial waters. Sealed under blockade since 2007.

Green Line - The 1949 armistice line between Israel and its neighbours, generally considered the boundary between Israel proper and the occupied Palestinian territories. Named for the green ink used to draw the line on maps during armistice negotiations. Israel's settlement expansion has deliberately blurred this line.

Khan Yunis - Major city in southern Gaza, was home to over 400,000 people. Site of 1956 Israeli massacre. Heavily bombarded and invaded during the 2023–2026 war. Birthplace of several Hamas leaders.

Netzarim Corridor - Israeli-controlled strip cutting across central Gaza from east to west, established during the 2023–2026 war. Named after a former Israeli settlement. Described by Israeli officials as a "kill zone" where anyone entering is shot on sight. The corridor effectively bisected

Gaza, preventing displaced Palestinians from returning north and restricting humanitarian access.

Rafah - City on Gaza's southern border with Egypt. Site of 1956 massacre of Palestinian civilians by Israeli forces. During the 2023–2026 war, over one million displaced Palestinians sheltered in Rafah before Israel's ground invasion in May 2024. The Rafah crossing is the only border crossing between Gaza and Egypt not controlled by Israel.

Rafah Crossing - The only border crossing between Gaza and Egypt, located at Gaza's southern tip. Controlled by Egypt but subject to Israeli restrictions. During the blockade, Rafah was Gaza's only non-Israeli-controlled entry/exit point, though it remained largely closed. During the 2023–2026 war, Israel repeatedly blocked humanitarian aid convoys at Rafah despite international pressure.

Sde Teiman - Israeli military base in the Negev desert that was converted into a detention facility for Palestinian prisoners from Gaza during the 2023–2026 war. Multiple investigations documented systematic torture, medical neglect, and at least 29 deaths at the facility. Israeli doctors who worked there described it as having conditions worse than a dungeon.

West Bank - Landlocked Palestinian territory of approximately 5,655 square kilometers (2,183 square miles) east of Israel and west of Jordan. Under Israeli military occupation since 1967. Divided into Areas A, B, and C under Oslo Accords, with Israel maintaining full security control over 60% of the territory (Area C) where most settlements are located.

## WEAPONS & MILITARY TECHNOLOGY

**AI Targeting Systems** - Artificial intelligence systems, as reported by Israeli and international investigative outlets, used by the Israeli military to identify bombing targets. The system codenamed "Lavender" reportedly assigned "killability scores" to Palestinians based on their behaviour patterns and associations. Another system, "Where's Daddy?", tracked targets to their family homes for night strikes. These systems dramatically expanded the scale and speed of targeting during the Gaza war.

**DIME Weapons (Dense Inert Metal Explosives)** - Experimental weapons that produce intense, localised explosions with limited fragmentation beyond the blast radius, but release carcinogenic tungsten particles. Designed to reduce "collateral damage" but cause devastating injuries to those within the blast zone. Palestinian doctors reported unprecedented injury patterns consistent with DIME weapons during Israeli operations in Gaza.

**Flechette Shells** - Artillery shells that release thousands of small metal darts designed to shred human tissue. Documented use by Israeli forces in Gaza. Their use against civilian populations is prohibited under international law.

**Iron Dome** - Israeli air defence system designed to intercept short-range rockets and artillery shells, developed with US funding. During Iranian missile attacks in 2024–2025, Iron Dome showed significant failures, with multiple missiles striking Israeli cities despite the system.

**White Phosphorus** - Incendiary weapon that ignites on contact with oxygen, burning at extremely high temperatures. Creates a smokescreen but causes severe

burns and death when it contacts human flesh. Use of white phosphorus in civilian areas is prohibited under international humanitarian law. Multiple investigations documented Israel's use of white phosphorus in Gaza and southern Lebanon during the 2023–2026 war.

## **MEDIA & DOCUMENTATION**

**Disinformation** - False or misleading information deliberately spread to deceive. Distinguished from misinformation (false information spread without intent to deceive). The Gaza war saw extensive disinformation from multiple parties, including fabricated atrocity stories, misattributed images, and AI-generated content.

**Geolocating** - Determining the geographic location where a photo or video was recorded by matching visual features (buildings, landmarks, terrain) to satellite imagery or maps. Essential tool for verifying footage from Gaza and attributing specific attacks to locations and military units.

**Livestreaming** - Broadcasting live video in real time via the internet. Palestinian journalists and civilians livestreamed the destruction of Gaza throughout the war, creating unprecedented real-time documentation of warfare and civilian casualties. This made the Gaza war the first conflict extensively documented from inside the combat zone by the population under attack.

**Verification** - Process of confirming the authenticity, location, and time of digital content (photos, videos, documents). During the Gaza war, independent journalists and organisations verified thousands of videos and images to create an evidentiary record. Verification techniques include geolocation (matching visual features to satellite

imagery), chrono location (determining when footage was recorded), and metadata analysis.

## **ORGANIZATIONS & GROUPS**

BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) - Palestinian-led global movement launched in 2005 calling for boycotts of Israel until it complies with international law regarding Palestinian rights. Modelled on the anti-apartheid movement against South Africa. Condemned by Israel and some Western governments as antisemitic; defended by supporters as legitimate nonviolent resistance to occupation.

Haganah - Largest Zionist paramilitary organisation during the British Mandate, later forming the core of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). Officially more restrained than Irgun and Lehi but collaborated with them during the 1948 war and participated in the expulsion of Palestinians.

IDF (Israel Defence Forces) - Official name of Israeli military, encompassing ground forces, air force, and navy. All Israeli citizens (with some exemptions) are subject to mandatory military service. The IDF has governed the occupied Palestinian territories since 1967 through its military administration.

Irgun - Right-wing Zionist paramilitary organisation active during the British Mandate period (1931–1948). Carried out numerous attacks against British and Palestinian targets, including the King David Hotel bombing and Deir Yassin massacre. Led by Menachem Begin, who later became Israeli Prime Minister and won the Nobel Peace Prize: a transformation from "terrorist" to "statesman."

Lehi (Stern Gang) - Radical Zionist paramilitary organisation that split from Irgun in 1940. Carried out assassinations and bombings against British and Palestinian targets, including the Deir Yassin massacre alongside Irgun. Future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was a Lehi member.

Mossad - Israel's national intelligence agency, responsible for intelligence collection, covert operations, and counterterrorism activities abroad. Mossad has carried out numerous assassinations of perceived enemies of Israel and operations in Arab countries.

## **LEGAL & RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS**

Al-Haq - Palestinian human rights organisation based in Ramallah, West Bank. Documents Israeli violations of international law and Palestinian human rights. Israel designated Al-Haq and several other Palestinian rights groups as "terrorist organisations" in 2021, a designation widely rejected internationally.

Amnesty International - Global human rights organisation that has documented Israeli violations of international law in the occupied territories. In 2022, Amnesty published a report concluding that Israel's treatment of Palestinians constitutes apartheid. Israel accused Amnesty of antisemitism.

B'Tselem (The Israeli Information centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) - Israeli human rights organisation that documents violations in the occupied territories. In 2021, B'Tselem formally described the entire area under Israeli control (Israel, West Bank, Gaza) as a single "regime of Jewish supremacy" constituting apartheid.

Creative Community for Peace (CCFP) - Pro-Israel lobby group operating within the entertainment industry, according to court filings and investigative reporting, according to court filings and investigative reporting, founded by a former Universal Music executive and legally tied to StandWithUs, which has received funding from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office. CCFP targets artists who criticise Israel or support Palestinian rights. In late 2024, CCFP was behind the campaign that led to UK Terrorism Act charges against Irish rap group Kneecap member Liam Óg Ó hAinmídh for allegedly displaying a Hezbollah flag at a concert. The case revealed a state-backed campaign using entertainment industry channels to silence critical voices under the guise of fighting extremism.

Global 195 - Coalition of legal experts pursuing accountability for war crimes in Gaza through domestic courts worldwide using universal jurisdiction. Works in partnership with the Hind Rajab Foundation to file criminal complaints across multiple jurisdictions.

Human Rights Watch - International human rights organisation that has extensively documented Israeli and Palestinian violations of human rights and laws of war. Also concluded in 2021 that Israeli policies toward Palestinians constitute crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution.

UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI) - Pro-Israel advocacy organisation in the United Kingdom that provides legal support to defend Israel's actions and challenge critics. Former directors have served as defamation lawyers representing Israeli officials and supporters when challenged over their roles or statements regarding Gaza.

The organisation has been involved in what critics allege are attempts to suppress critical reporting of Israeli actions and to intimidate journalists and activists through legal threats.

#### POLITICAL FIGURES (Key References)

Ariel Sharon - Israeli military officer and politician, Prime Minister 2001–2006. Commanded the Qibya massacre (1953), found "personally responsible" for Sabra and Shatila massacre (1982), later led operations in Gaza. Despite war crimes findings, became Prime Minister. His career exemplifies Israeli impunity for crimes against Palestinians.

Arnon Soffer - Israeli geographer and demographic strategist whose prophecies shaped government policy at the highest levels. As founder of the University of Haifa's geography department and emeritus professor, Soffer spent decades warning of what he called the demographic threat posed by Palestinian population growth. He has been quoted as saying: "If we don't kill, we will cease to exist." For Soffer, Gaza's destruction was not a war crime but a demographic necessity. He continues to lecture at Israel's National Defence College, sharing his hardline theories with military leaders. His work exemplifies how demographic anxiety became justification for systematic oppression and violence.

Benjamin Netanyahu - Prime Minister of Israel (1996–1999, 2009–2021, 2022-present). Leader of right-wing Likud party. Subject of ICC arrest warrant for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza. Known for expanding settlements, opposing Palestinian statehood and alliance with far-right parties.

Bezalel Smotrich - Israel's Finance Minister and leader of the Religious Zionist party. Advocates annexation of the West Bank and has made explicitly genocidal statements about Gaza. In government, controls settlement expansion and civil administration of the West Bank.

Francesca Albanese - Italian lawyer serving as UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (appointed 2022). In 2022, she described Gaza as "a territory under permanent siege designed to destroy hope," detailing systematic denial of exit permits that resulted in over 1,000 deaths of critically ill patients between 2018–2022. Her subsequent reports documented evidence of genocidal acts in the 2023–2026 assault. Israel and pro-Israel advocacy groups have attempted to discredit her work, but her findings align with those of major human rights organisations and are based on extensive documentation.

Itamar Ben-Gvir - Israel's National Security Minister and leader of the far-right Jewish Power party. Called for "erasing" Gaza and advocated lifting all restraints on military operations. Made statements calling for nuclear strikes on Gaza in public statements and interviews.

Karim Khan KC - British lawyer serving as Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court since 2021. In February 2024, Khan expanded the ICC's ongoing investigation into the "Situation in Palestine" to include the events of October 7 and their aftermath, with specific focus on starvation as a method of warfare, indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure, and targeting of protected sites. On 20 May 2024, he announced prosecutors were seeking arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant (for war crimes and

crimes against humanity) as well as three Hamas leaders. On 21 November 2024, the ICC issued the warrants. Khan faced intense pressure from Israel and its allies to drop or delay the investigation.

Yoav Gallant - Former Israeli Defence Minister during the Gaza war. Subject of ICC arrest warrant alongside Netanyahu. Removed from office by Netanyahu in late 2024, reportedly for disagreeing with war strategy.

## **INTERNATIONAL LAW INSTRUMENTS**

Genocide Convention (1948) - UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Defines genocide and obligates states to prevent and punish it. South Africa invoked this convention in its case against Israel at the ICJ, arguing that Israel has obligations to prevent genocide even when committed by its own forces.

Geneva Conventions (1949) - Four treaties establishing international legal standards for humanitarian treatment in war. The Fourth Geneva Convention specifically protects civilians in occupied territory. Key provisions prohibit collective punishment, torture, destruction of property, and transfer of occupying power's population into occupied territory.

Rome Statute (1998) - Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court. Defines genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Israel has not ratified the Rome Statute but ICC asserts jurisdiction over crimes committed in Palestinian territories based on Palestine's accession to the treaty.

UN Security Council Resolutions - Binding decisions by the UN Security Council. Resolution 242 (1967) called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories. Resolution 2334 (2016) condemned Israeli settlements as illegal and an obstacle to peace. The US has used its veto power to block hundreds of resolutions critical of Israel.

## CONCEPTS & PHENOMENA

Administrative Detention - Imprisonment without charge or trial, ostensibly for security reasons. Israel holds thousands of Palestinians in administrative detention, sometimes for years, based on secret evidence. The practice violates due process rights and is used systematically as a tool of control.

Battle-Tested - Marketing term used by Israeli arms manufacturers to promote weapons systems that have been used in actual combat against Palestinians. Gaza serves as a laboratory and showroom for Israel's weapons industry, which has doubled its exports over the past decades.

Dahiya Doctrine - Israeli military strategy formalised after the 2006 Lebanon war, named for the Beirut suburb reduced to rubble by aerial bombardment. The doctrine promises deterrence through overwhelming, disproportionate destruction of civilian infrastructure: the punishment of entire societies until resistance becomes impossible. It codifies what international law would consider collective punishment and deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure as official military doctrine. Gaza became the proving ground for this strategy, with successive military operations ("Mowing the Lawn") implementing progressively more devastating applications.

Dual Legal System - Israel's application of different legal systems to Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the same territory (the West Bank). Settlers are governed by Israeli civil law and can vote in Israeli elections; Palestinians are governed by Israeli military law and cannot vote. This dual system is a hallmark of apartheid.

Hannibal Directive - Secret Israeli military protocol established in the 1980s authorising massive force, including artillery, airstrikes and tank fire to prevent soldiers from being captured alive, even if it means killing the hostages themselves. The underlying calculus: better Israeli soldiers die than be taken alive and used as bargaining chips in prisoner exchanges. On 7 October 2023, investigations revealed the directive was activated at multiple locations. Forensic analysis by Haaretz and other outlets documented that IDF operations under the directive directly endangered or killed at least 54 Israeli hostages and many civilians. The directive's cold logic meant pilots fired on convoys containing hostages when they couldn't distinguish between Hamas fighters and Israeli captives. Evidence emerged that many civilian deaths near the border resulted from Israeli helicopter fire and tank shelling after the army applied the directive.

Mowing the Lawn - Israeli military doctrine referring to periodic operations to "degrade" Hamas capabilities in Gaza. The metaphor reveals the acceptance of recurring violence as routine maintenance rather than a problem to be resolved. These operations became opportunities to test weapons systems for export.

Normalisation - In Palestinian political discourse, establishing normal relations with Israel without resolving

the Palestinian question. Palestinians oppose normalisation with Israel by Arab states (like the Abraham Accords) as abandoning Palestinian rights in exchange for commercial and security benefits.

**One-State / Two-State Solution** - One-state solution: Proposal for a single democratic state between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea with equal rights for all. Two-state solution: Separate Israeli and Palestinian states living side-by-side. The two-state solution was international consensus for decades but is increasingly viewed as impossible due to settlement expansion.

**Right of Return** - Palestinian refugees' claimed right to return to homes from which they or their ancestors fled or were expelled. Based on UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948). Israel rejects this right, arguing it would undermine Israel's Jewish demographic majority. Palestinians view it as a fundamental and non-negotiable right.

**Shoot-to-Kill Policy** - Israeli military rules of engagement that permit shooting Palestinians who pose no immediate lethal threat. During the Great March of Return protests (2018–2019), Israeli snipers shot over 200 unarmed Palestinian demonstrators, including medics and journalists, killing many.

## **USAGE NOTES**

**Population Figures** - Population statistics in Gaza are contested. This book occasionally uses figures from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, which are generally considered reliable and have been validated by international organisations including the WHO. Israel disputes casualty

figures but has not provided alternative comprehensive data.

**Terminology Politics** - The language used to describe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is heavily contested: "Judea and Samaria" (Israeli term) vs. "West Bank" (international term); "Neighborhoods" (Israeli term for settlements) vs. "colonies" or "settlements"; "Security barrier" (Israeli term) vs. "apartheid wall" (Palestinian term); "Conflict" vs. "occupation" vs. "apartheid" vs. "genocide"; "Terrorist" vs. "militant" vs. "resistance fighter". This glossary uses internationally recognised terminology and international law framework.

**Transliteration** - Arabic place names and terms are transliterated according to common English usage rather than strict academic transliteration. For example: "Al-Quds" rather than "al-Quds," "Rafah" rather than "Rafah."

This glossary provides essential context for understanding the historical, legal, and political framework of the Gaza war and its aftermath. Many of these terms are contested, reflecting deep political divides. The definitions provided here are based on international law, academic consensus and human rights documentation rather than the political preferences of either side.

### **Timeline of Key Events**

Gaza and the October 7 Aftermath, including Regional Escalation: Lebanon, Yemen, Iran.

This chronological reference provides context for the events chronicled in this book.

Dates are drawn from multiple verified sources including UN reports, court documents, investigative journalism and official statements.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT: ARCHITECTURE OF SIEGE**

1948 – *Nakba* ("Catastrophe") – Over 750,000 Palestinians are violently expelled by Zionists, or flee, during the war surrounding Israel's establishment. Over 15,000 Palestinians are killed in a series of mass atrocities, including dozens of massacres, such as at Deir Yassin. Gaza becomes home to refugees from dozens of destroyed Palestinian villages.

1956 – Khan Yunis and Rafah Massacres – Following the Suez Crisis, Israeli forces execute hundreds of Palestinian civilians in Khan Yunis and Rafah. The massacres establish a pattern of violence against Gaza's population that will recur for decades.

1967 – Six-Day War and Occupation Begins – Israel occupies Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories. The occupation of Palestinian territories continues to the present day.

1987–1993 – First *Intifada* – Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. Largely nonviolent mass resistance including strikes, boycotts, and civil disobedience.

1993 – Oslo Accords – Israel and PLO sign peace agreement. Creates Palestinian Authority with limited self-governance in parts of West Bank and Gaza. Occupation continues.

2000–2005 – Second *Intifada* – More violent Palestinian uprising following collapse of peace talks. Israeli settlements continue to expand during this period.

2005 – Israeli "Disengagement" from Gaza – Israel withdraws settlements and troops from inside Gaza but maintains control over borders, airspace, territorial waters and population registry. UN rules occupation continues.

2006 – Hamas Wins Democratic Elections – Hamas wins Palestinian legislative elections, certified as free and fair by international observers. Israel, US and EU reject the result and impose sanctions.

2006 – Dov Weisglass Articulates "Diet" Policy – Senior Israeli official states goal is to "put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger" crystallising siege strategy.

2007 – Total Blockade Begins – After Hamas takes control of Gaza, Israel imposes hermetic blockade controlling all imports, exports, movement of people. Egypt cooperates at Rafah crossing.

2008–2009 – Operation Cast Lead – 22-day Israeli military assault kills over 1,400 Palestinians, including 300+ children. Goldstone Report finds evidence of war crimes by both Israel and Hamas.

2010 – David Cameron Calls Gaza an "Open-Air Prison" – Future British Prime Minister describes Gaza's conditions during this period of tightened siege.

2012 – Operation Pillar of Defence – 8-day Israeli military operation kills 160+ Palestinians. Ceasefire reached through Egyptian mediation.

2014 – Operation Protective Edge – 51-day Israeli assault kills over 2,200 Palestinians, including 500+ children.

Entire neighbourhoods destroyed. UN reports widespread evidence of war crimes.

2018–2019 – Great March of Return – Weekly mass protests at Gaza fence calling for right of return for refugees. Israeli snipers kill over 200 Palestinian demonstrators, including medics and journalists. Thousands more wounded, many by live ammunition.

2021 – Operation Guardian of the Walls – 11-day Israeli assault kills 260+ Palestinians, including 66 children. Widespread destruction of residential towers and infrastructure.

## **2023: OCTOBER 7 ATTACK, REGIONAL ESCALATION**

### **OCTOBER 2023**

7 October – Hamas Breaks Through Fence – Palestinian fighters breach Gaza's perimeter fence and attack Israeli military bases and communities. Approximately 1,200 Israelis killed, including civilians and soldiers. About 250 hostages taken into Gaza. Evidence later emerges that significant numbers of Israeli casualties resulted from IDF application of Hannibal Directive.

7 October – Israel Declares War – Israeli government declares war and begins mobilisation. Prime Minister Netanyahu vows "mighty vengeance."

8 October – Lebanon Front Opens – Hezbollah begins firing rockets and anti-tank missiles at Israeli positions along the northern border. Near-daily cross-border exchanges begin, opening a second front.

8–10 October – Initial Bombardment Begins – Israel begins massive aerial bombardment of Gaza. Entire residential blocks destroyed and electricity cut to enclave.

9 October – Complete Siege Announced – Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant announces "complete siege" of Gaza: "No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly."

11 October – Evacuation Order – Israel orders 1.1 million Palestinians in northern Gaza to evacuate south within 24 hours – impossible for population including elderly, disabled and hospitalised.

13 October – Jabalia Refugee Camp Strike – Israeli airstrike on Jabalia refugee camp kills dozens of civilians. Military acknowledges strike, claims was targeting Hamas commander.

Mid–Late October – Ground Invasion Begins – Israeli forces enter northern Gaza, encircle Gaza City and split the territory into sectors.

17 October – Al-Ahli Arab Hospital Explosion – Blast at Gaza City hospital kills hundreds sheltering there. Israel claims Palestinian rocket malfunction; Palestinians and independent investigations point to Israeli strike. Independent investigations reached differing conclusions. Independent investigations reached differing conclusions. Incident becomes flashpoint in information war.

27 October – Communications Blackout – Israel cuts internet and phone services to Gaza. Information flow severely restricted. Palestinian journalists struggle to report.

Late October to November – Yemen Enters the War – Yemen's Houthi movement begins launching drones and missiles toward Israel and attacking Red Sea shipping linked to Israel, opening a third front in solidarity with Gaza.

### **NOVEMBER 2023**

1 November – Jabalia Refugee Camp Struck Again – Second massive airstrike on densely populated refugee camp. Video shows entire buildings collapsing.

10 November – Al-Shifa Hospital Raid Begins – Israeli forces storm Gaza's largest hospital, claiming major Hamas command centre underneath. Evidence for claims never materialised as described.

15 November – Death Toll Surpasses 15,000 – Gaza's Health Ministry reports over 15,000 killed, nearly half children. Hospitals ceasing to function, morgues overwhelmed.

19 November – Capture of the Galaxy Leader – Houthis seize an Israel-linked cargo ship in the Red Sea and take 25 crew hostage, signalling escalation of their maritime campaign.

22–30 November – First Temporary Ceasefire – Humanitarian pause facilitated by Qatar and Egypt. Some hostages released in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. Limited aid enters Gaza.

### **DECEMBER 2023**

1 December – Fighting Resumes – Ceasefire ends. Israeli operations expand into southern Gaza where displaced population had been told to flee.

6 December – Dr Refaat Alareer Killed – Palestinian poet and professor killed by Israeli airstrike along with his family, weeks after his poem "If I Must Die" went viral globally.

29 December – South Africa Files ICJ Case – South Africa files genocide case against Israel at International Court of Justice, presenting evidence of genocidal acts and intent.

## **2024: THE LEGAL RECKONING AND REGIONAL WAR**

### **JANUARY 2024**

January – Red Sea Escalation – US and UK forces begin airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen in response to attacks on commercial shipping. Regional conflict expands.

11 January – ICJ Hearings Begin – International Court of Justice holds public hearings on South Africa's genocide case. Israel rejects allegations.

26 January – ICJ Provisional Measures – Court rules genocide allegations are "plausible" and orders Israel to take measures to prevent genocide, ensure humanitarian aid, and preserve evidence. Does not order ceasefire.

29 January – Hind Rajab Killed – Six-year-old Palestinian girl killed after hours-long emergency call for help. Ambulance sent to rescue her also destroyed, killing two paramedics. Incident becomes symbol of war's civilian toll and inspires founding of Hind Rajab Foundation.

### **FEBRUARY 2024**

11 February – Rafah Assault Begins – Despite over 1.4 million displaced Palestinians sheltering in Rafah, Israel begins military operations in southernmost city.

12 February – ICC Prosecutor Expands Investigation – Karim Khan KC announces expanded ICC investigation into "Situation in Palestine" including October 7 events and aftermath, with focus on starvation as warfare method.

29 February – "Flour Massacre" – More than 100 Palestinians are killed in Gaza City while queuing for humanitarian aid. Incident becomes symbol of manufactured famine.

#### MARCH 2024

25 March – UN Security Council Ceasefire Resolution – After US abstains rather than veto, Security Council passes resolution calling for immediate ceasefire during Ramadan. Israel rejects resolution and continues operations.

#### APRIL 2024

1 April – World Central Kitchen Workers Killed – Israeli airstrike kills seven World Central Kitchen aid workers in clearly marked convoy. International outcry. Israel claims tragic error.

1 April – Israeli Strike on Iranian Consulate in Damascus – Israel bombs Iran's diplomatic compound in Syria, killing senior IRGC commanders. Strike violates diplomatic norms and triggers Iranian retaliation.

13–14 April – Iran's First Direct Attack on Israel – Iran launches "Operation True Promise," a major drone and missile attack on Israel in retaliation for Damascus consulate strike. Most projectiles intercepted by Israel and allied forces. Both sides signal desire to avoid full-scale war.

30 April – Campus Protests Spread Globally – Student protests demanding universities divest from Israel spread

across US and internationally. Police violence at Columbia, UCLA, and other campuses.

## MAY 2024

7 May – Rafah Evacuation Orders Expand – Israel orders mass evacuations from Rafah despite no safe areas remaining. Israel seizes the border crossing with Egypt. Over 100,000 flee in days.

20 May – ICC Prosecutor Seeks Arrest Warrants – Karim Khan announces ICC prosecutors seeking arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant, and three Hamas leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

26 May – Rafah Tent Camp Massacre – Israeli strike on displaced persons' camp in Rafah ignites a blaze, killing at least 45 people including many children. Images of charred remains shock global audience.

## JUNE 2024

8 June – Nuseirat "Hostage Rescue" Operation – Israeli operation in central Gaza frees four hostages but kills over 270 Palestinians, including many civilians. Called "massacre" by human rights groups.

## JULY 2024

19 July – ICJ Advisory Opinion on Occupation – International Court of Justice rules Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories is unlawful and must end. Also rules settlements violate international law.

## **AUGUST 2024**

August – Polio Outbreak – First polio case in Gaza in 25 years detected. WHO and UNICEF launch emergency vaccination campaign amid ongoing bombardment.

## **SEPTEMBER 2024**

1 September – Mass Grave Discoveries – Reports emerge of mass graves at hospitals raided by Israeli forces, with evidence some Palestinians buried alive.

17 September – Pager Attacks in Lebanon – Coordinated explosions of pagers and walkie-talkies across Lebanon and Syria kill dozens and injure thousands, including civilians and children. Widely attributed to Israeli operation targeting Hezbollah.

27 September – Hassan Nasrallah Assassinated – Israel assassinates Hezbollah leader in massive Beirut strike that kills hundreds. Marks major escalation in Lebanon.

## **OCTOBER 2024**

1 October – Israeli Ground Invasion of Southern Lebanon – Israel begins full-scale ground offensive into Lebanon. Widespread destruction and mass displacement follow.

7 October – One-Year Anniversary – Global protests mark first anniversary. Death toll in Gaza now exceeds 42,000 according to Health Ministry (widely considered undercount as thousands remain under rubble).

23 October – Hind Rajab Foundation Files ICC Dossier – HRF submits 120-page dossier to ICC naming 24 Israeli

soldiers and commanders for Hind Rajab killing, with extensive forensic evidence.

## **NOVEMBER 2024**

13 November – UK Parliamentary Confrontation – MPs across political spectrum confront government over arms exports to Israel, citing Netzarim Corridor as "kill zone" and questioning complicity in war crimes.

21 November – ICC Issues Arrest Warrants – International Criminal Court issues arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Also issues warrants for Hamas leaders.

27 November – Lebanon Ceasefire – A ceasefire is brokered limiting Hezbollah's presence near the border. Brings temporary halt to Lebanon front.

## **DECEMBER 2024**

December – Famine Conditions – UN agencies report entire population of Gaza facing acute food insecurity. Famine conditions in northern areas. All 17 bakeries in north destroyed.

## **2025: INTENSIFICATION, REGIONAL WAR, AND INTERNATIONAL FRACTURES**

### **JANUARY 2025**

13 January – UK Parliamentary Rebellion – House of Commons session reveals deep divisions over arms exports to Israel. MPs cite evidence of war crimes and question government complicity.

19 January – Gaza Ceasefire Agreement – A truce is reached between Israel and Hamas including provisions for aid and hostage exchanges. Violations begin soon afterward.

20 January – Donald Trump Inaugurated – Trump returns to presidency. Signals strong support for Netanyahu government and Israeli operations.

## **FEBRUARY–MARCH 2025**

Ongoing – Death Toll Surpasses 50,000 – Estimates suggest actual death toll far higher when including those under rubble and indirect deaths from hunger, disease, lack of medical care.

Legal Proceedings Expand – Hind Rajab Foundation files over 60 legal complaints across Europe. Universal jurisdiction cases proceed in multiple countries.

19 March – Global 195 Coalition Coordinates – Legal coalition working with HRF continues pursuing cases across 135 jurisdictions using eyewitness testimony and forensic evidence.

March–May – Renewed Israeli Attacks – Israel resumes significant air and ground operations in Gaza, claiming Hamas is reorganising. Ceasefire collapses.

## **MAY–AUGUST 2025**

16 May – 19 August – Major Gaza Offensive – Israel launches a new ground and air campaign across Gaza, causing mass casualties. Three-month operation devastates remaining infrastructure.

## **JUNE 2025**

13 June – Israel Strikes Iran – Israel initiates major airstrikes on Iranian nuclear, missile, and military infrastructure, beginning twelve-day Iran–Israel war.

19 June – Iran's Missile Salvo – Iran fires ballistic missiles at Israeli military and civilian sites, including a direct hit on a hospital in Be'er Sheva. Significant casualties on both sides.

24 June – Iran–Israel Ceasefire – A US-brokered deal ends the short but intense Iran–Israel war after twelve days of hostilities.

## **AUGUST–OCTOBER 2025**

20 August – 2 October – August Offensive – Additional Israeli operations intensify across central and northern Gaza.

## **SEPTEMBER 2025**

9 September – Israeli Attack on Qatar – Israel launches an airstrike in Doha, Qatar, targeting senior Hamas figures present for ceasefire discussions. Strike violates Qatari sovereignty and triggers diplomatic crisis. Qatar threatens to withdraw from regional mediation efforts.

2025 – Ongoing Yemen Front – Houthi forces continue attacking Red Sea shipping throughout the year; the US, UK, and Israel conduct repeated strikes in Yemen.

## **OCTOBER 2025**

10 October – Ceasefire Takes Hold – Fragile ceasefire halts bombardment after two years of devastating war. Palestinians dare to hope the catastrophe might be ending.

17 October – US Unveils Draft 20-Point Gaza Plan – Within a week of ceasefire, Washington circulates draft plan for Gaza's future, including International Stabilisation Force and US-led "Board of Peace."

25 October – Centcom Produces Military Planning Papers – US Central Command develops first detailed military planning documents for divided Gaza, outlining "green zone" and "red zone" concept.

28 October – Jordan Listed as Potential Contributor – Pentagon planning papers list Jordan as potential contributor of hundreds of troops and thousands of police, despite King Abdullah's public refusal.

29 October – Intelligence Assessments on Hamas – US intelligence reports conclude Hamas is already reasserting administrative control in western Gaza (the designated "red zone").

30 October – PA Involvement Timeline Set – US planning notes state Palestinian Authority involvement won't be achievable before Q4 2026 at earliest, revealing long-term foreign control.

## **NOVEMBER 2025**

2 November – Winter Storms Begin – Severe winter storms begin flooding tent encampments across Gaza. Displaced families wade through freezing mud and sewage.

3 November – Jordan Reiterates Refusal – Days before UN vote, Jordan formally reiterates it will not deploy troops to Gaza, calling such participation politically explosive domestically.

4 November – Red Zone Reconstruction Plans Revealed – Internal US notes describe reconstruction in western Gaza "red zone" as "not presently feasible" with no plans before 2027.

6 November – Arab States Demand Timeline – Qatar and Egypt issue joint statements supporting ceasefire but demanding clear timeline for Israeli withdrawal, which US plan does not provide.

8–10 November – Major Camp Flooding – Severe flooding destroys tent camps across Gaza. Children drown, families lose what little they have. International aid groups describe catastrophic conditions.

9 November – Israel Reaffirms Material Blocks – Israel reaffirms policy blocking "dual-use" materials including tent poles, tarpaulins, generators and pipes needed for winter survival.

11 November – Mediators Warn of Frozen Conflict – International mediators publicly warn that without full deployment and political resolution, Gaza risks becoming permanent "not war, not peace" frozen conflict.

12 November – UN Security Council Passes ISF Mandate – UN Security Council adopts US resolution authorising International Stabilisation Force for Gaza green zone. Resolution passes 13-0 with two abstentions (Algeria, Russia).

12 November – Palestinian Authority Welcomes Resolution – PA publicly welcomes UN vote as pathway back to Gaza, but internal memos warn of "legitimacy crisis" if PA seen returning under foreign occupation.

13 November – Hamas Officially Rejects Plan – Day after UN vote, Hamas categorically rejects entire partition plan, refuses disarmament, denounces ISF and Board of Peace as "occupation by other means."

14 November – Guardian Exposes Partition Plan – Guardian publishes leaked US military documents revealing full extent of green zone/red zone division, restriction of reconstruction, integration with Israeli forces.

Mid-November – 1.5 Million Still Without Shelter – Humanitarian assessments show 1.5 million Palestinians still waiting for winterised shelter materials. Nearly all infrastructure west of yellow line non-functional.

Late 2025 – Ceasefire Violations – Israel accused of hundreds of ceasefire violations. More than 300 Palestinians killed after the ceasefire begins.

Late 2025 – Lebanon Tensions Rise Again – Israel carries out targeted killings of Hezbollah commanders. Hezbollah responds with cross-border rocket and drone attacks.

#### PLANNED TIMELINE: 2026–2027

(Compiled from leaked planning documents and official statements.)

(Compiled from leaked planning documents and official statements.)

1 January 2026 – Board of Peace Begins Mandate – US-led "Board of Peace" chaired by Trump scheduled to begin overseeing Gaza transition. Mandate runs until 2027.

Late January 2026 – ISF Deployment to Begin – International Stabilisation Force scheduled to begin phased deployment in Gaza green zone, "starting small" with few hundred troops.

February 2026 – Green Zone Activation – Green zone to be formally activated under ISF control. Reconstruction limited to this eastern area only.

March 2026 – Green Zone Reconstruction Starts – Reconstruction projects scheduled to begin in green zone. ISF to establish control of crossings along yellow line dividing Gaza.

April 2026 – Palestinian Police Training Begins – New 200-officer Palestinian police force to begin training under international oversight, restricted to green zone operations.

Mid-2026 – Full Integration with IDF – ISF expected to achieve full operational integration with Israeli military units stationed along yellow line and at crossings.

Q4 2026 – Earliest PA Administrative Presence – Palestinian Authority administrative involvement deemed achievable no earlier than fourth quarter 2026, over a year after ceasefire.

Mid-2027 – Palestinian Police Force Expands – If all benchmarks met, Palestinian police could scale to 4,000 officers, still only one-fifth of total security presence in green zone.

2027 – Red Zone Reconstruction Review – US plans contingent review of western Gaza reconstruction. Trump's Board of Peace mandate scheduled to end. No guarantees for unified governance.

## **HUMAN TOLL BY LATE 2025**

Gaza: Over 70,000 Palestinians killed (official figures; actual toll likely significantly higher). Thousands more injured or missing under rubble.

Israel: Around 2,100 Israelis killed across all fronts since October 2023.

Regional: Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, and Syria all suffer additional casualties tied to the regional conflict.

## **ONGOING CONTEXT**

Throughout this period – Over 250 Palestinian journalists killed (highest death toll for journalists in any conflict in history); Over 500 medical workers and aid workers killed; 70% of Gaza's housing stock damaged or destroyed; All universities in Gaza destroyed or severely damaged; 90% of population displaced at least once, many multiple times; Complete breakdown of health, water, and sanitation systems; International community remains divided on response; Western arms supplies to Israel continue despite ICJ and ICC rulings; Global protests for Palestinian rights reach unprecedented scale; Splits emerge within governments, institutions, and civil society over Gaza; Social media becomes primary battlefield for truth and propaganda.

## NOTES

Note on Casualty Figures – Palestinian Health Ministry figures are used as they are the only comprehensive count available and have been validated by WHO, UN agencies and independent researchers. Israeli government has not provided alternative comprehensive data. Figures are widely considered undercounts as thousands remain under rubble and indirect deaths from hunger and disease are not included in official totals. The figure of 70,000+ by late 2025 reflects cumulative casualties across the full period of conflict. In early 2026, Israeli media cited a senior Israeli security source as saying the military now accepts that more than 70,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza.

Note on Dates – Some events (particularly strikes and casualties) are approximate as exact timing is difficult to verify in active conflict zones. Where dates are disputed or uncertain, this is noted. Priority given to most reliable sources including UN documentation, ICJ/ICC filings, and verified investigative journalism.

Note on Regional Context – This timeline integrates events across the broader regional conflict including the Lebanon front (Hezbollah), Yemen front (Houthis and Red Sea), and direct Iran–Israel hostilities. These interconnected theatres form part of the same strategic picture triggered by 7 October 2023.

BRONZE



9 789699 193989

# pariah

*n. & adj. A state or person cast outside the circle of moral belonging.*

For decades, Israel cultivated the image of a besieged democracy; Western-aligned and morally untouchable. But the Gaza genocide — the first mass atrocity ever documented in real time, by its victims — shattered that narrative.

As bombed neighbourhoods streamed live on phones, as entire families disappeared beneath rubble, and as Western and Arab leaders remained silent, something irreversible broke.



ISBN 978-969-9193-98-9



9 789699 193989