



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What has been happening in Gaza since October 2023?

Israel has been killing Palestinians through air, land, and sea invasions as a continuation of the Israeli occupation against Palestine that began in 1967. Even prior to 1967, Israel ethnically cleansed 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and more than 13,000 were killed as far back as 1948 in the “Nakba.”¹

The horrific events that occurred on October 7, led by Gaza’s governing body, Hamas, with other military wings of Palestinian organizations, is used as a basis for retaliation and a justification for the current genocide. While many still argue about the morality of collective punishment on the Palestinian people related to the events of October 7, we cannot deny the humanitarian catastrophe that is taking place in Gaza and other occupied territories, such as the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where Hamas has never had a governing and/or military presence.

Since October 7 Israel:

- Killed 30,000 people, the majority of whom are women and children.²
- Injured more than 70,000 Palestinians with thousands still buried under rubble.³
- More than 1 out of 100 Gazans have been killed since October 7.
- Displaced 1.4 million Palestinians from their homes who are now seeking refuge in the most southern part of the Gaza strip against the Egyptian border called Rafah. Rafah is 25 sq. miles (64 sq km) – just above the size of Manhattan.⁴

These statistics demonstrate a genocidal intent to kill as many Gazans as possible in a condensed period of time. As a reference point, about 12,400 people were killed by US and allies in nearly 20 years of war in Afghanistan. As of November 25, more than 2x the number of women and children were killed in Gaza than have been killed after almost two years of Russian attacks on Ukraine.⁵

International Crimes Against Humanity

There have been a number of international crimes against humanity committed by Israel since October 7, although it is important to note that many of these crimes occurred prior to October 7 under Israeli occupation. The following list is not exhaustive.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/25/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-death-toll.html>https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/27/palestine-and-israel-brief-history-maps-and-charts?traffic_source=KeepReading

² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

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Examples of international war crimes that have been carried out by Israel since October 7 include, but are not limited to:

- Indiscriminate attacks that fail to distinguish between civilians (women, children, the elderly, journalists, and healthcare workers) and military objectives.⁶ Israel has killed more than 100 journalists breaking international laws that are intended to protect press.
- Attacks that have been directed against civilian objects (homes, places of worship, schools).⁷
- The use of white phosphorus on civilians. People exposed to white phosphorus can suffer respiratory damage, organ failure and other horrific and life-changing injuries, including burns that are extremely difficult to treat and cannot be put out with water.⁸
- Starvation or forced famine as a weapon of war. As of February 27, 2.2 million Palestinians are facing severe hunger shortages⁹. Deliberately starving civilians by “depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including willfully impeding relief supplies” is a war crime, according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Starvation is a war crime under the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute. It was also recognized as a war crime and general violation of international law by the UN Security Council in 2018.
- Deliberately bombing or targeting schools. Hundreds of schools, including those run by the UN, in Gaza have been bombed, and students and teachers killed, in more than 100 days of Israeli bombardment.¹⁰
- Deliberately bombing or targeting hospitals. Most of Gaza’s hospitals are out of service by fighting and lack of fuel, leaving a population of 2.3 million without proper healthcare. Many in the international community have said hospitals must be protected in line with international law.¹¹
- Deliberately bombing or destroying places of worship. According to international humanitarian law, intentionally targeting religious buildings during conflict is a war crime. Of 117 religious sites which were reportedly damaged or destroyed between 7 October, when Israel's campaign began, and 31 December, the BBC has verified 74 cases.¹²

2. What is SOMA Collective for Palestine hoping to accomplish by organizing in the suburbs? Does SOMA have jurisdiction in addressing global issues?

Our rallies, vigils, and marches help build a powerful Palestine solidarity presence in our community, They show our community — and anyone else watching — that those who call for an immediate end

⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-opt-new-evidence-of-unlawful-israeli-attacks-in-gaza-causing-mass-civilian-casualties-amid-real-risk-of-genocide/>

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-as-israeli-attacks-wipe-out-entire-families-in-gaza/>

⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/12/israel-white-phosphorus-used-gaza-lebanon>

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/27/un-israel-food-starvation-palestinians-war-crime-genocide>

¹⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/24/how-israel-has-destroyed-gazas-schools-and-universities>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/19/gaza-nasser-hospital-out-of-service-who-israel-palestine-raid-hamas>

¹² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67983018>

to Israel's genocidal massacres in Gaza, and for justice and equality throughout historic Palestine, from the river to the sea, will not be intimidated into silence by smears of antisemitism.

Our goal is to pass a ceasefire resolution in SOMA to pressure our local and state elected officials to call for a ceasefire. We would also join 70+ cities across the country that passed a resolution to demand that the Biden Administration permanently end Israel's genocide of Palestinians.

3. Do you condemn Hamas' actions on October 7?

All human suffering and trauma is terrible to contemplate. With that in mind, it's vital to recognize that the events of October 7 were a byproduct of, and a direct response to, 75 years of systemic Israeli racism, ethnic cleansing, dehumanization, and brutality, including the genocide in Gaza unfolding before the world's eyes. This decades-long system of oppression — propped up by U.S. money, weapons, and political support — is what all people of conscience should be denouncing clearly, forcefully, and immediately.

As Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire says, "With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun. Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. How could they be the initiators, if they themselves are the result of violence? ... There would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation. Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons—not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognized."

4. I have heard Palestine supporters reject a two state solution, demand a free Palestine "from the river to the sea" or chant for an "intifada." Aren't these antisemitic statements?

Chants rejecting two states are a shorthand way for Palestinians to assert that ALL of historic Palestine is their homeland, and that they refuse to be consigned to an Israeli-controlled state — a reservation, really — on only a part of their homeland. It is also way for Palestinians to assert that a Zionist state, on any part of historic Palestine, in the words of BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti, "cannot but contravene the basic rights of the indigenous Palestinian population and perpetuate a system of racial discrimination that ought to be opposed categorically."

Intifada in this context simply means to rise up against — literally, to "shake off" — this system of racial discrimination. These chants draw attention to the ugly, brutal reality of over 75 years of Zionist rule. Reality can't be refuted, so these words and phrases are smeared as antisemitic or genocidal, hoping to stamp out all discussion, criticism, and questioning. But these slogans are neither anti-Jewish nor genocidal. On the contrary, they align with the call for a free Palestine, from the river to the sea, free from all racial, religious, and colonial domination, where any resident who embraces justice is

welcome, regardless of identity — the opposite of the values promoted by the Israeli state. Prior to 1948, Muslims, Jews, and Christians were living together on the land in relative peace.

But, “Intifada” is hate speech.

The term intifada has been deeply misinterpreted and used to silence or delegitimize the fight for an end to Israeli occupation and apartheid against Palestinians. The direct Arabic translation of the term “intifada” is a rebellion or uprising, or a resistance movement. It is a key concept in contemporary Arabic usage referring to an uprising against oppression – nonviolent or violent.¹³

Civil uprisings have regularly occurred throughout history against oppressors. One example is the Warsaw Uprising. On August 1, 1944, the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK), a non-Communist underground resistance movement, initiated the Warsaw uprising to liberate the city from the German occupation and reclaim Polish independence. By October 2, 1944, the Germans had suppressed the uprising, deporting civilians to concentration and forced-labor camps and reducing Warsaw to ruins.¹⁴

5. Is anti-Zionism antisemitic?

No, criticism of Israel and its founding ideology cannot be conflated with the hatred of the Jewish people. When Palestinians resist Israeli colonialism, it is not due to the religion or ethnicity of Israelis. Resistance to foreign domination has been a staple of oppressed and colonized people all across the globe. From the very beginning, the Zionist movement had the goal of establishing an exclusivist ethnic state at the expense of the natives already living there. Palestinians objecting to and resisting this endeavor cannot be compared to the odious, murderous antisemitism that plagued Europe throughout history.¹⁵

Additionally, there is a long recorded history of Israel amplifying antisemites such as John Hague¹⁶, Viktor Orbán¹⁷, and Donald Trump¹⁸.

It is important to mention that most Zionists today aren't even Jewish, and many anti-Zionists are.¹⁹

6. Is this really a genocide? Can we let the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decide?

¹³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intifada>

¹⁴ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-warsaw-polish-uprising>

¹⁵ <https://decolonizepalestine.com/faq/>

¹⁶ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/divisive-pastor-john-hagee-criticism-role-march-israel-rcna125346>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/18/hungarian-government-viktor-orban-campaign-renews-antisemitism-concerns>

¹⁸ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/17/trump-history-antisemitic-tropes/>

¹⁹ <https://decolonizepalestine.com/faq/>

On January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that a genocide in Gaza is plausible. Reaching a verdict on genocide through the court system may take several years; however, the answer is yes according to many genocide and human rights experts across the globe.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention) is a tool of international law that codified the crime of genocide. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the Genocide Convention was the first human rights treaty adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1948 and signified an international commitment to “never again.” The Genocide Convention marked a historical turning point that established modern international human rights and international criminal law.²⁰

The definition of genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (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.²¹

Raz Segal, the program director of genocide studies at Stockton University, concretely says it is a “textbook case of genocide.” Segal believes that Israeli forces are completing three genocidal acts, including, “killing, causing serious bodily harm, and measures calculated to bring about the destruction of the group.” He points to the mass levels of destruction and total siege of basic necessities—like water, food, fuel, and medical supplies—as evidence.²²²³

A top United Nations official in New York resigned and accused the United Nations of failing to address what he calls a “text-book case of genocide” unfolding in Gaza. Craig Mokhiber is a longtime international human rights lawyer who served as director of the New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. He had worked at the United Nations since 1992 and lived in Gaza in the 1990s.²⁴²⁵

In his letter of resignation to the High Commissioner of the United Nations, Mokhiber writes, “This is a text-book case of genocide. The European, ethno-nationalist, settler colonial project in Palestine has entered its final phase, toward the expedited destruction of the last remnants of indigenous

²⁰ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Genocide%20Convention%2C%20genocide%20is%20a.Rome%20Statute%20of%20the%20International%20Criminal%20Court%20%28ICC%29>

²¹ https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf

²² <https://time.com/6334409/is-whats-happening-gaza-genocide-experts/>

²³ <https://jewishcurrents.org/a-textbook-case-of-genocide>

²⁴ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/24103463-craig-mokhiber-resignation-letter>

²⁵ https://www.democracynow.org/2023/11/1/craig_mokhiber_un_resignation_israel_gaza

Palestinian life in Palestine. What's more, the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, and much of Europe, are wholly complicit in the horrific assault. Not only are these governments refusing to meet their treaty obligations "to ensure respect" for the Geneva Conventions, but they are in fact actively arming the assault, providing economic and intelligence support, and giving political and diplomatic cover for Israel's atrocities."