

International legal team seek prosecution of 10 Britons for war crimes while fighting for Israel in Gaza

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In a challenge to Sir Keir Starmer and his Labour government's collusion with Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, a team of legal experts are seeking the prosecution of 10 Britons for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the killing of civilians and aid workers, while fighting for Israel in Gaza.

The evidence supporting the accusations is set out in a 240-page report, prepared by a team of UK lawyers and researchers in The Hague over a six-month period on behalf of the Gaza-based Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) and the British-based Public Interest Law Centre (PILC). It was submitted on Monday to the Metropolitan Police's war crimes team at New Scotland Yard in London.

The report covers alleged offences committed at three sites in Gaza from October 2023 to May 2024. These include the targeted killing of civilians and aid workers, including by sniper fire, and indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas, including hospitals, as well as coordinated attacks on protected historic monuments and religious sites, and the forced transfer and displacement of civilians. The accusations are based on the military units involved and the Britons' unit affiliations and their roles in the armed conflict.

For legal reasons, the research team has not published the full report nor revealed the names of the 10 Britons, some of whom are officer level individuals and/or dual citizens. The Israeli military has recruited personnel from outside Israel, including British nationals, via—among other programmes—the Mahal volunteer programme to serve in both full combat and support roles.

The evidence includes open-source data and witness statements. One witness at a hospital saw corpses “scattered on the ground, especially in the middle of the hospital courtyard, where many dead bodies were buried

in a mass grave”. A bulldozer “ran over a dead body in a horrific and heart-wrenching scene desecrating the dead” and demolished part of the hospital.

Paul Heron, Legal Director at the Public Interest Law Centre and one of the members of the British legal and research team, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “As a law centre based in Britain, we have a duty to stand up. We’ve filed our report to make clear these war crimes are not in our name and encourage others do to the same. Our report is the tip of the iceberg and all those found to have participated in war crimes should be investigated and prosecuted.”

Michael Mansfield KC told the press, “If one of our nationals is committing an offence, we ought to be doing something about it. Even if we can’t stop the government of foreign countries behaving badly, we can at least stop our nationals from behaving badly. British nationals are under a legal obligation not to collude with crimes committed in Palestine. No one is above the law.”

Scores of legal and human rights experts have signed a letter of support urging the Metropolitan Police's war crimes team to investigate the complaints.

This attempt to prosecute Britons follows the launching of nearly 100 cases against Israeli soldiers by the Brussels-based Hind Rajab Foundation in 14 countries with universal jurisdiction: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Serbia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden and Thailand.

The Brussels-based organisation, named after a five year old Palestinian girl killed during the war on Gaza by the Israeli military along with six members of her family and two paramedics coming to her rescue, was set up in 2024 to address and challenge Israeli impunity concerning war crimes and human rights violations in Palestine, along the lines of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre that chased Nazi

criminals after World War II.

Last year, an Israeli soldier fled Brazil while under investigation for possible war crimes in Gaza, prompting the Israeli army to warn personnel they risked arrest if travelling abroad. This warning was particularly directed at reservists, as active-duty personnel cannot travel abroad without prior approval. The Hind Rajab Foundation condemned the soldier's escape, accusing Israel of orchestrating his departure to obstruct justice.

According to *Haaretz*, the Israeli government and military and intelligence agencies have prepared a plan to help evacuate reserve soldiers in the event of their arrest in foreign countries, including hiring local law firms. They were aware that several human rights organizations were creating a database of evidence, photos and video clips published by Israeli soldiers on social media platforms, often boasting of their abuse of Palestinians in Gaza.

Recently, the group Israel Exposed uploaded a massive database of videos posted to social media by Israeli soldiers, documenting their actions in Gaza and the West Bank. The database contains more than 350 gigabytes of information that can be shared on Telegram. Israel Exposed said it had handed the database over to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and to the Hind Rajab Foundation.

Starmer's Labour government has refused to acknowledge the criminal nature of Israel's war against the Palestinians. Speaking in Parliament last November when the Israeli bombardment of Gaza had already killed more than 44,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, Starmer said he was "well aware of the definition of genocide," which is why he had never described Israel's actions in Gaza as such.

In 2014 this former human rights lawyer was involved in prosecuting Serbia in the ICJ for committing genocide against Croatia during the 1991-95 Serbia-Croatia conflict that killed 20,000 people, mostly Croats, in a war far less deadly than Gaza. In doing so, he confirmed that only those who fall foul of the imperialist powers are prosecuted.

The government has refused to say whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence minister, Yoav Gallant, would be arrested if they set foot in the UK after the ICC issued warrants for their arrest for war crimes.

In opposition, Starmer backed Israel's genocidal blocking of food, water and electricity to Gaza, saying Israel "had that right" knowing that imposing a siege on a

civilian population violates Article 33 of the Geneva Convention prohibiting collective punishment, one of the crimes at the core of the ICC's arrest warrants.

His government has yet to publish a formal response to the ICJ's ruling in July last year that deemed Israel's decades-long occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza unlawful and highlighted the global community's responsibility to act accordingly. Despite formally recognising the occupation as illegal, the British government has done nothing to ban UK investment and trade with the settlements.

Instead, the government has branded opposition to Israel's war and expressions of support for the Palestinians as antisemitic, with mass arrests at January's March for Palestine demonstration in London and the persecution of its organisers in the Stop the War Coalition and Palestine Solidarity Campaign and a clampdown on student protests at university campuses.

This week, Labour MPs Yuan Yang and Abtisam Mohamed, part of a delegation to Israel and the West Bank visiting human rights groups organised by the Council for Arab-British Understanding and Medical Aid for Palestinians, were deported from Israel after being detained and interrogated, the first time British MPs have been banned from the country. UK foreign secretary David Lammy responded with a lame statement, saying "it is unacceptable, counterproductive, and deeply concerning."

The Israeli government said that the MPs had "accused Israel of false claims" in the House of Commons and were "actively involved in promoting sanctions against Israeli ministers". This references Mohamed's cross-party letter, signed by 61 MPs, calling for a ban on Israeli settlement goods in line with international law.

The next day the Royal Air Force followed its almost twice-daily routine, sending a Shadow R1 surveillance plane towards Gaza to collect intelligence for Israel. Arms trade continues unrestricted and bilateral trade negotiations are ongoing.



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