

Israeli human rights groups call Gaza *Our Genocide*, say Western leaders are also responsible

Jean Shaoul
29 July 2025

On Monday, two Israeli human rights groups, B'Tselem (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, published reports concluding that for nearly two years Israel has been committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza. They appeal for international intervention to prevent a further loss of life.

Their reports concur with those of other human rights groups, including Amnesty International, the European Center for Human Rights, the International Federation for Human Rights and Doctors Without Borders, as well as United Nations organisations, condemning Israel for carrying out acts prohibited under the Genocide Convention, with the specific intent to destroy the Palestinians in Gaza.

B'Tselem's report, *Our Genocide*, is written by Israeli Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. They say that as human rights defenders, "Together, we are fighting for the right to live here in a just society between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, in peace, safety, and justice for us all".

The report details the evidence—statements by leading politicians showing intent, data, and harrowing testimonies from Gazans—demonstrating Israel's systematic destruction of Palestinian society and the creation of catastrophic living conditions that render existence impossible, which "is precisely the definition of genocide".

B'Tselem says, "As Israelis and Palestinians who live here, and who are exposed daily to testimonies and lived reality, it is our duty to speak the honest and whole truth." Genocide "is not just killing en masse, but rather total destruction: erasing entire cities, forcibly displacing people, starving them—all of which Israel has done. From the outset, government officials and military commanders explicitly declared that these actions, this policy, were exactly what they intended to do: to starve, to eliminate, to raze Gaza to the ground".

The report states that the Israeli government exploited the October 7 attack and the existential fears it triggered "to

advance an agenda of Jewish supremacy, destruction, and expulsion. The lives of all Palestinians from the river to the sea have been rendered disposable, and the situation is only getting worse. People are being shot dead while trying to obtain food, and children are dying of hunger. We will not be able to say, 'We did not know'".

B'Tselem warned that the genocide is not confined to Gaza: "The same regime, the same army, and the same leaders and generals are implementing practices of extreme violence in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and within Israel. Israel is already replicating some of its destructive methods in the West Bank—for now, on a smaller scale—and there is grave and growing concern that the genocide may expand to other areas under Israeli control".

It holds the major powers responsible for the atrocities for failing to rein in Israel, pointing out that it is the responsibility of the "international community" to use every tool available under international law to stop genocide.

The Physicians for Human Rights-Israel's report, *Genocide in Gaza*, documents the Israeli assault as a deliberate, cumulative, and ongoing dismantling of the enclave's healthcare system and of the population's ability to survive and concludes that its meaning is genocide.

It says, "Israel's bombing of hospitals, destruction of medical equipment, and depletion of medications have made medical care—both immediate and long-term—virtually impossible. The system has collapsed under the weight of relentless attacks and blockade..."

"This is not a temporary crisis. It is a strategy to eliminate the conditions needed for life. Even if Israel stops the offensive today, the destruction it has inflicted guarantees that preventable deaths—from starvation, infection, and chronic illness—will continue for years. This is not collateral damage. This is not a side effect of war. It is the systematic creation of unliveable conditions. It is the denial of survivability. It is a genocide".

Israeli Holocaust and genocide experts Daniel Blatman,

Omar Bartov, Shmuel Lederman, Amos Goldberg, and Raz Segal, legal scholar Itamar Raz and historians Lee Mordechai and Adam Raz, and others, have reached the same conclusion.

While public opinion surveys have reported that the majority of Jewish Israelis were not very concerned about the horrifying humanitarian situation in Gaza—in part at least because of the barrage of lies and misinformation in the Israeli media that largely does not report the conditions in Gaza—there are signs, albeit small, that is this changing.

Last October, around 140 reservist soldiers signed a letter refusing to continue to serve if the government did not advance a hostage deal.

In April, hundreds of reservists and retired officers in Israel's air force signed an open letter calling on the Netanyahu government to agree a deal to return the hostages. It stated, "The continuation of the war doesn't advance any of the declared goals of the war, and will bring about the deaths of the hostages, of IDF soldiers and innocent civilians." According to Standing Together, a Jewish-Palestine NGO that was one of the first Israeli groups to organise protests calling for an end to the war, about 140,000 professionals have signed similar letters.

In May, several thousand people attended a two-day People's Peace Summit in Jerusalem, held under the auspices of It's Time, a coalition of dozens of Palestinian and Israeli peace and social justice organisations. Speakers denounced Israel's "ethnic cleansing," deliberate starvation in Gaza and brutal settler violence in the West Bank and called for a diplomatic solution to the war.

At the end of May, 1,200 Israeli university academics and administrators issued an open letter protesting the "war crimes and even crimes against humanity" committed by the Israeli military in Gaza. The letter appealed to "all the people of this land, Palestinians and Jews," declaring, "For the sake of the lives of innocents and the safety of all the people of this land, Palestinians and Jews; for the sake of the return of the hostages; if we do not call to halt the war immediately, history will not forgive us."

Last week, several hundred people gathered in Tel Aviv's Habima Square, holding photos of emaciated children from Gaza and sacks of flour, to protest the Netanyahu government. Alon-Lee Green, co-director of Standing Together, which organized the event, told *Haaretz*, "We cannot believe that we need to march against starvation of children and innocent people." Israelis were beginning to wake up to what was going on. "They're understanding that this is the reality, that it's not a [fake] campaign as some journalists or politicians say. There is starvation."

He added that the collapse of the ceasefire in March was a turning point. "People asked, 'why are we going back to

Gaza? Why are we sending our children to kill and be killed?' ... People understand [now] that it's killing for the sake of killing, that it's starvation for the sake of starvation. And yes, that what we do right now in Gaza is annihilation as a policy."

Although the Israeli military does not publish figures about conscription refusal, Yesh Gvul, an antiwar group, told CNN that on average, every year, 20 percent of youngsters required to serve are refusing to do so. This includes both refuseniks and "grey refuseniks"—people who claim mental or health exemptions to evade military service and avoid a prison sentence.

One of the first signs of opposition to the war came in the first letter of refusal signed by 41 reservists last summer. Max Kresch of Soldiers for Hostages, a group of reservists organising against the war and publicly refusing service to bring it to a stop, says there are more than 240 soldiers who have publicly declared their refusal to take part in the assaults on Gaza. Many more are doing so on social media.

There were unconfirmed reports in March that up to 50 percent of reservists, after continuous rounds of military service, were refusing to report for duty. In May, 1,200 officers, both reservists and those currently serving, wrote an open letter calling on the government and the military's chief of staff to stop the fighting in Gaza, saying it has become a political war that "doesn't serve Israel's national security and is therefore immoral."

On Monday, the *Jerusalem Post* reported, citing *Kan* public news, that four soldiers had refused to take part in any further fighting in Gaza. Three were tried in a military court and received sentences ranging from 7 to 12 days. The fourth has not been tried yet.

All four had taken part in multiple rounds of fighting in Gaza and lost friends in the war. One was injured on the Gaza border in 2024 and, following his recovery, returned to fight voluntarily. Although their refusal to fight was because of a "deep, internal crisis," the soldiers claimed they were immediately imprisoned instead of being offered treatment. The article said that this was not the first time this has happened.



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