

UN report warns of ethnic cleansing in Gaza, West Bank

Jean Shaoul
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Last week, the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said that Israel's attacks and forcible transfers of Palestinians "raise concerns over ethnic cleansing" in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The report examined the period of November 1, 2024, to October 31, 2025, shortly after the US-brokered Sharm el-Sheikh hostage-ceasefire deal that was supposed to end Israel's bombardment of the enclave. Its findings are based on information from government sources, the United Nations and NGOs, as Israel has long denied visas for OHCHR international staff or full access to Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Its evidence and conclusions are echoed in numerous other reports by UN agencies, Special Rapporteurs and international human rights organisations, including Israel's B'Tselem.

The UN human rights office said the cumulative impact of Israel's military conduct during its war against the Palestinians in Gaza, along with its blockade of the territory, had inflicted living conditions "increasingly incompatible with Palestinians' continued existence as a group in Gaza."

It condemned the continued killing and maiming of "unprecedented numbers of civilians," the spread of famine and the destruction of the "remaining civilian infrastructure" that have resulted in the displacement of "virtually the entire population of Gaza, often multiple times". Its destruction of residential buildings and civilian infrastructure, including attacks on makeshift tents, raised "serious concerns about the intentional targeting of civilians".

"Intensified attacks, the methodical destruction of entire neighbourhoods and the denial of humanitarian assistance appeared to aim at a permanent demographic shift in Gaza," the office said. "This, together with forcible transfers, which appear to aim at a permanent displacement, raise concerns over ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the West Bank," it continued.

During the 12 months covered in the report, at least 25,594 Palestinians were killed and another 68,837 injured in Gaza,

bringing the total to 68,858 killed and 170,664 injured since 7 October 2023, most of whom were women and children, which the report notes is "equivalent to an entire classroom of children killed every day for two years". This number did not include those still buried under the rubble or the "countless more" who had died as a result of "human-made humanitarian catastrophe". At least 463 Palestinians, including 157 children, had starved to death in Gaza.

The report heavily criticized the US- and Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, the militarised operation distributing aid in Gaza. It said, "Palestinians faced the inhumane choice of either starving to death or risking being killed while trying to get food". The UN charged, "The situation of famine and malnutrition was the direct result of actions taken by the Israeli government," with the deaths and suffering from hunger "foreseeable and repeatedly foretold".

It pointed out that Israel's "conduct indicates recurrent violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law and the commission of crimes under international law". It raised "serious concerns about the compliance of the International Court of Justice's binding orders" in its ruling in January 2024 that Israel might plausibly be committing genocide "and its obligations under the Genocide Convention".

The report said that Israel was committing multiple crimes under international law in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the "systematic" and "unlawful use of force", "widespread" arbitrary arrests, abuse, and "extensive unlawful demolitions of Palestinian homes" to "systematically discriminate, oppress, control and dominate the Palestinian people." These violations were "altering the character, status and demographic composition of the occupied West Bank, raising serious concerns of ethnic cleansing".

More than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces, supposedly rooting out "terrorists", and settlers in the West Bank since the war on Gaza started. In contrast, 65 civilians and Israeli security personnel have been killed in

attacks in Israel and the West Bank, with another eight soldiers killed in clashes during raids in Palestinian cities in the West Bank.

The brutality of the occupation was highlighted this week by the release of a video showing 14 IDF soldiers preventing assistance from reaching 14-year-old Jad Jadallah, who they had shot at close range in a West Bank refugee camp. He died of his wounds. The soldiers placed a stone near the boy's hand as "justification" for their use of lethal force.

Settler extremists have carried out a wave of attacks on Palestinians and their property across the West Bank. While the IDF had recorded 867 incidents of nationalistic crime and settler violence in 2025, up from 682 incidents in 2024, this was less than half the 1,828 recorded by the UN. Very few of these incidents led to arrests or indictments.

The UHCHR report that Israeli forces routinely carried out torture and abuse of security prisoners, "including the use of sexual and gender-based violence, repeated beatings, waterboarding, stress positions, starvation and medical negligence". It documented a brutal gang-rape by the Israeli Prison Service of a Palestinian prisoner, a Palestinian journalist, in the West Bank and said there was a pervasive climate of impunity for serious violations of international law by Israel in the Palestinian territories.

The report concluded that, taken together, Israeli practices "indicated a concerted and accelerating effort to consolidate annexation of large parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to deny Palestinians' right to self-determination."

This is all part of a declared policy. Far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich—who controls the West Bank's civil administration—has pledged to promote the "emigration" of Palestinians. He and other cabinet ministers have repeatedly stated that their policies are designed to achieve de facto annexation: transferring full civilian control of large parts of the West Bank to Israel. Smotrich's project is explicit—a massive land grab intended to bring a million Israeli settlers into the West Bank and "eliminate the threat of a Palestinian state."

In recent weeks, Israel has announced its intention to expel Palestinians from their land and convert territory occupied since 1967—never officially annexed—into "state land" belonging to Israel. Ethnic cleansing in Area C, the largest zone of the West Bank placed under exclusive Israeli military control by the Oslo Accords, is accelerating. Dozens of new Israeli outposts have been erected, and hundreds of Palestinians have been expelled from their land in the past month alone.

This takes place as the number of Palestinians in Israel/Palestine now substantially exceeds the number of Jews living in Israel.

None of this prevented Israel from denouncing the OHCHR, dismissing its report as lacking all credibility and accusing the Office of engaging in a "vicious campaign of demonization and disinformation against the State of Israel." The report has been almost entirely ignored by mainstream media. Meanwhile, the same European governments that recognised the state of Palestine and never miss an opportunity to condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin's violations of international humanitarian law have remained silent.

Instead, figures such as French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepful, and the Zionist lobby seized on a manipulated video circulated by UN Watch—a Geneva-based group notorious for attacking UN scrutiny of Israel's human rights violations—to smear UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese. They accused her of antisemitism and "disinformation" to discredit her and force her resignation.

The attack followed Albanese's presentation earlier this month, delivered via video link to a media forum organized by *Al Jazeera*. Speaking alongside Fatou Bensouda, former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, she condemned Israel's genocide in Gaza and highlighted the complicity of Western states and corporations that have armed, financed, and diplomatically shielded Israel throughout the assault. She criticised Western media for amplifying Israel's apartheid-era and genocidal narratives.

Albanese has been targeted by pro-Israeli organizations ever since the release of her comprehensive report to the UN on the genocide in Gaza in 2024 and, in a separate report, the naming of corporations including Microsoft and Amazon as potentially complicit in aiding Israel's atrocities and potentially liable to criminal prosecution at the International Criminal Court.

In 2024, Israel banned her from visiting the occupied territories. In July 2025, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio formally sanctioned her—in violation of international law—saying, "We will not tolerate these campaigns of political and economic warfare, which threaten our national interests and sovereignty."



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