

# Israel-Gaza: This Is Not Self-defence – It's a Massacre



October 7th

It is true that this particular conflict between Israel and Palestine was caused by the October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks orchestrated by Hamas. Armed fighters crossed the border from Gaza into southern Israeli, while thousands of rockets were fired into Israeli towns and cities. The attack led to the deaths of around 1,200 people, including many civilians who were attending a music festival. Hamas took 250 people hostage, both Israelis and foreign nationals, including men, women, children and the elderly. It is undeniable that the attack was horrific, devastating and inexcusable. However, this attack was not unprovoked.

The attack was a response to decades of Israeli occupation, blockades and military actions in Gaza and the West bank. The Israeli government had been taking land from the Palestinians for decades with their settlement expansions, Gaza had been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007, which heavily restricted the movement of the Palestinians, and in the months before the attack, Israeli military raids in the West Bank intensified, which resulted in many Palestinian deaths. While nothing justifies the actions of Hamas, which is undeniably a terrorist organisation, but it does help explain the deep-rooted tensions, and it makes it clear that Israel is not without blame.

Israel had every right to defend itself after the October 7th attack. But this should have been a fight against Hamas, a terrorist organisation. What the Israeli government is doing now isn't self-defence, it's collective punishment against a whole population, and it's the innocent, the children, who are paying the price.

This is a genocide

The UN's Genocide Convention Article 11 defines genocide as acts intended to "destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group", this includes killing, causing harm, or blocking food and water – exactly what the Israeli government is doing. The Israeli government has attacked numerous hospitals, schools and refugee camps, claiming that Hamas is operating beneath them, however this has been disputed by many humanitarian organisations. Even if

Hamas is there, the Israeli government doesn't seem to care that their actions are causing enormous civilian harm and death, all for the chance that there might be some Hamas fighters there, and UN officials have argued that the Israeli government's pattern of strikes could indicate genocidal intent, especially with them blocking food, water and medicine to Gaza. Under international humanitarian law, this amounts to collective punishment, which is strictly prohibited and classified as a serious war crime.

### Hamas or Palestinians

What Hamas did was horrifying and they deserve to be held accountable and be punished. While Hamas operates from Palestine, Palestine is not Hamas. However, the Israeli government likes to act as though they are one and the same. Instead of targeting Hamas, the Israeli government seem to be targeting any Palestinians, including children and the elderly. According to UNICEF, over 15,000 children have been killed in Gaza since October 2023, with more than 34,000 injured. Since the ceasefire ended in March 2025, at least 322 children were killed and 609 were injured in just 10 days. An estimated 17,000 children in Gaza have been orphaned or separated from their families, and a further 1 million have been displaced and are facing severe food, water, shelter and medical care shortages. Over 50,000 children in Gaza require immediate medical treatment for malnutrition due the blockades, which are leading to more deaths. This is collective punishment, which is illegal under international humanitarian law and is morally wrong.

### Netanyahu is prolonging the war

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu is prolonging this war for his own political survival. He is facing serious corruption charges, and support for him had been falling since before the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack. This war has helped him garner public support and shift attention away from Israel's domestic crises. There are also reports that some Israeli officials, that may well include Netanyahu want to use the war to push Palestinians out of Gaza altogether, which is a long-term goal of the far-right elements in his government. Dan Perry, Israeli Affairs Analyst suggested that Netanyahu is prolonging this war to delay the inquiry into the failures of October 7<sup>th</sup> and noted that the war is providing him with a way to regain his popularity had been waning.

The Israeli government should be targeting Hamas, not Palestine as a whole, and we should be criticising Netanyahu and his government, not Israel as a whole. Many Israeli voices have been criticising the war and Netanyahu's motives. The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* had been openly critical of Netanyahu's handling of the Gaza war, saying:

*"Netanyahu is trying to silence a critical, independent newspaper. Haaretz will not balk and will not morph into a government pamphlet that publishes messages approved by the government and its leader."*

### Returning the Hostages

There have been arguments that if Hamas simply returned all the Israeli hostages, the war would end, but in line with Israel's actions, this seems unlikely. Netanyahu and his government and said multiple times that their main goal is to destroy Hamas, not just to return the hostages. This was shown as even after several hostage releases during temporary ceasefires, Netanyahu resumed the war, this indicates that while the hostages are a concern, they are not the primary reason why this war is continuing. Furthermore, ending the war now, if all hostages were returned, will likely politically weaken Netanyahu, as prolonging the war is allowing him to avoid investigations into Israel's failure to prevent the October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks and maintain power amid corruption trials. Additionally, the war may have territorial or strategic goals that go beyond targeting Hamas. The Israeli government's continuous targeting of schools, hospitals, refugee camps, and the widespread killing of children and the elderly raises serious concerns about whether its actions reflect not just military objectives, but a potential genocidal intent.

## Ukraine vs. Gaza



When the war in Ukraine started, the Western world responded with compassion. The UK launched the "Homes for Ukraine" scheme, which allowed British citizens to host Ukrainian refugees in their homes and as a result, more than 100,000 Ukrainians came to the UK under this initiative and across Europe, many families voluntarily opened their homes to Ukrainian refugees, providing shelter and emotional support. Countries like Germany, Poland, France, Ireland, and others fast-tracked visas and waived many immigration rules to allow Ukrainians in quickly, and countries like Poland, Hungary, and Romania, volunteers greeted refugees at train stations with food, water, and warm clothing. This was absolutely the right thing to do – the Ukrainians needed and deserved that help.

But when it comes to Palestinians, there's silence. No countries welcoming them in with open arms, no protection, no solidarity, no support. Instead, countries like the UK are arming the Israeli government with weapons to continue the massacre. Why the difference? Because they're not white, they're Arab and Muslim. This same double standard is happening in Syria, and when the Syrians make the dangerous journey to seek asylum in a safe country, they get branded as 'illegal immigrants' or 'invaders', rather than refugees fleeing war, just like the Ukrainians were." It's evident that some lives are treated as more valuable than others.

Furthermore, there have been a lack of sanctions on Israel compared to Russia. When the Ukraine war broke out in 2022, Western countries rightfully imposed sanctions on Russia; cutting of banks, freezing assets, banning imports and exports, isolating Russia economically, politically and culturally, even in sports and entertainment, but no such sanctions have been imposed on Israel. A popular example is that Russia have been banned from the Eurovision Song Contest since its invasion in 2022, while Israel has been allowed to compete despite its war in Gaza.

When war broke out in Ukraine, global support was accepted and encouraged, there were also many acts of solidarity; and landmarks across the world, e.g. the Eiffel Tower were lit in blue and yellow, people changed profile pictures, flew Ukrainian flags, and joined pro-Ukraine marches and rallies and schools, artists, and local councils held solidarity events to raise awareness and support. In comparison, in many countries, peaceful protests calling for a ceasefire or an end to the bombing in Gaza have been restricted, demonised, or banned. In the UK, some officials tried to shut down demonstrations under the claim they might "glorify terrorism." In France and Germany, Palestinian flags or slogans like "From the river to the sea" have been labelled as dangerous or antisemitic, despite being used by many as a call for equality and justice.

This criminalisation of Palestinian support sends a message that some lives are worth standing up for, while others aren't, and erases the suffering of millions of men, women and children suffering in Gaza.

## Bottom Line

What happened on October 7<sup>th</sup> was horrific and Hamas must be held accountable, but the same can be said for the Israeli government and the war they are raging in Gaza. The Israeli government have gone far beyond self-defence and have crossed the line into collective punishment, war crimes, and genocide. This is not a criticism of the Israeli people or Jews. This is not about religion or ethnicity. This is about leadership and accountability. Innocent people on both sides are caught in the crossfire, and they deserve better. We lit buildings in blue and yellow — where are the red and black? If we could stand for Ukraine, we must also stand for Gaza. To remain silent or neutral in the face of such suffering is to side with the oppressor.

Children aren't collateral.

