



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on October 20, 2023

UN Warns of Gaza Genocide Risk as Israel Claims War Could “Last a Long Time”

Israel has been involved in crimes against humanity against Palestinians in Gaza, UN human-rights officials declared in a statement released on October 19, referencing Israeli airstrikes against Gaza and accusing Israeli officials of allegedly trying to decimate the entire Palestinian population.

“Considering statements made by Israeli political leaders and their allies, accompanied by military action in Gaza and escalation of arrests and killing in the West Bank, there is also a risk of genocide against the Palestine people,” the UN officials, who are members of the UN Human Rights Council’s independent Special Procedures body, proclaimed.

The officials claimed that Israel has breached international humanitarian and criminal law in depriving the Gaza population of drinking water, medicine, and food, highlighting that the UN Security Council has constantly denounced the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. They elaborated that Israel’s reported devastation of civilian homes and infrastructure were instances of “domicide,” or the destruction of homes.

Notably, the UN group castigated Tuesday’s strike on Al-Ahli Arab Hospital. Moreover, another strike that same day on a school operated by the UN’s Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA inside the al-Maghazi refugee camp killed at least six people and wounded several more.

Critics have slammed Israel for already being fully cognizant of the civilian population at both sites, given that Israel had twice threatened the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital with attack if those inside were not evacuated and had obtained the coordinates of the school from UNRWA daily.

In turn, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has disavowed claims that it was to blame for Tuesday’s hospital strike, claiming to have evidence that the fatal strike was the consequence of an aborted rocket launch by Palestinian militants.

Besides the fatal hospital strike, two more densely-populated refugee camps were targeted on October 17, as an increasing number of Palestinians are being internally displaced in Gaza.



AP Images
Gaza



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In light of the situation, the UN has singled out the need for humanitarian workers to be defended, citing the WHO's claim that healthcare services in Gaza have been targeted more than 136 times since Israel declared war on the terrorist group Hamas earlier in October, with at least 16 health workers having been killed.

Condemning the international community's "appalling" failure to strongly oppose Israel's bombings on Gaza, the aforesaid UN specialists has called for an immediate ceasefire; full access to food, water, fuel, electricity, medicine, and shelter; as well as "reparation, restitution, and reconstruction, towards full justice for Palestinians."

Likewise, various members of the Special Procedures group published similar warnings last week following Israel's evacuation order to north Gaza, cautioning that the forced transfer of 1.1 million Palestinians across a live warzone with no electricity and almost no food or water in the space of 24 hours was an effort at ethnic cleansing.

Meanwhile, Benny Gantz, a member of the country's emergency war cabinet and a former defense minister, said on Wednesday that Israel's war with Hamas is not likely to stop anytime soon. Gantz ominously stated that large-scale fighting could erupt beyond the confines of Gaza as well.

Addressing listeners at the funeral of Ofir Libstein, a regional council head who was reportedly killed by Hamas militants, Gantz warned that the Israeli-Hamas fighting "will take a long time."

"The war in the south — and if need be also in the north or anywhere else — might take months, and the rebuilding will take years. Only when [the rebuilding] is complete will we be victorious," he stated, as quoted by the *Times of Israel*.

Gantz referenced the chaotic situation on Israel's border with Lebanon, which has been the base of the militant group Hezbollah. Besides, Israel occupies a part of the Golan Heights, which is claimed by Syria.

According to Gantz, Israel's goal "is not just to defeat Hamas, but to promise that the south will be 100% paradise."

"After we win, on any front that we fight, we will be dedicated to this rebuilding," he declared.

Also, speaking to Israel's Channel 12, Gadi Shamni, a former commander of the IDF's Gaza Division, indicated that the United States, his country's key ally, "is expecting us to destroy Hamas." Shamni stated that he believes Israel's military will be able to complete the aforesaid mission within six to eight months.

Nevertheless, regarding the potential timeline of the conflict, ex-CIA chief David Petraeus cautioned that Israel's ground campaign in Gaza could eventually turn out to be "Mogadishu on steroids," alluding to the vicious 1993 battle involving U.S. troops in the Somali capital.

"You'll see suicide bombers, you'll see improvised explosive devices, there will be ambushes, booby traps, and the urban setting, again, could not be more challenging," Petraeus disclosed in statements to the news outlet Politico.

On the evening of October 19, an Israeli airstrike damaged the St. Porphyrios Greek Orthodox church in Gaza, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem claimed. Unverified reports from the location claimed that at least two people were killed and more were stuck under the rubble of the meeting hall adjacent to the site.



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In a statement on October 20, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem voiced “strongest condemnation of the Israeli airstrike [on] its church compound in the city of Gaza,” and lambasted Israel’s targeting of churches and church-run shelters as “a war crime that cannot be ignored.”

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also lashed out at “occupation warplanes” for the explosion, claiming Israeli aircraft pounded the church, which is situated in the Zaytoun neighborhood of Gaza City. A woman and a girl died and “dozens of people” were injured, the ministry declared in a post on X.

An unverified number of people were still buried under the rubble of the meeting hall, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Jordan announced on Facebook, quoting one of the parishioners.

“No sufficiently accurate information is clearly available yet, but expectations are there will be a large number of martyrs,” the Archdiocese continued.

“Archbishop Alexios appears to have been located and is alive, but we don’t know if he is injured,” the Orthodox Order of St. George said in a statement, adding that they have “no word on the condition of any other of the more than 500 people being housed at the church and monastery.”

According to the Order, “bombs hit the two church halls where the refugees, including children and babies, were sleeping. Presently, survivors are searching the rubble for other casualties.”

The Wall Street Journal reported that the IDF was “looking into the incident.” Significantly, the IDF has hitherto accused Hamas of using religious shrines as a pretext for its operatives.

St. Porphyrios is the oldest active church in Gaza. Originally built in the fifth century, the current structure was built in the mid-1100s, during the Crusades, and renovated in the 1800s.

Conflicting reports from Gaza indicated up to 800 Palestinians were taking refuge inside the church compound before the explosion. The premises were located a mere 250 meters away from the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital.

Israel and the Hamas terrorist group have been intensifying their attacks on each other since October 7 when Hamas staged a surprise missile and ground attack on Israel, leading to thousands killed, wounded, or taken hostage.

Subsequently, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that Israel was at war, vowing a harsh retaliation. Thus far, the Israeli-Hamas conflict has claimed the lives of over 3,700 Palestinians and 1,400 Israelis, based on figures by both sides.

While Hamas’ attacks on Israeli civilians constituted the very essence of terrorism — assaulting civilians for political or ideological purposes — many observers have declared that Israel should not indiscriminately target civilians in retaliation for Hamas’ cruelty.

Speaking to journalists at China’s Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the strike on Al-Ahli Arab Hospital as a “tragedy” and a “terrible incident.”

“Hundreds of dead and wounded, of course, this is a catastrophe ... especially in a humanitarian place. I expect this to be a signal that this conflict should end as soon as possible. In any case, it should lead to the start of some kind of contacts and negotiations,” Putin said.

Similarly, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said on October 18 that his country would not participate in another displacement of Palestinians from their homes.

Jordan was doing its best to halt the Israeli-Hamas conflict, but will treat any efforts to displace



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Palestinians as “a declaration of war,” Safadi declared, as cited by the Roya News outlet.

Amman would not permit “a new catastrophe” nor will it let Israel “shift the crisis created and exacerbated by the occupation to neighboring countries,” Safadi continued.

“There is no justification for what Israel is doing in Gaza,” the Jordanian foreign minister said. “We demand for the war to be stopped, to allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza Strip and to protect civilians.”

Additionally, in a report on October 18, the Financial Times (FT), quoting several officials, stated that efforts by the United States and its allies to “paint Moscow as a global pariah” have been “poisoned” by their rush to support Israeli actions against Hamas in Gaza.

While Western nations have long positioned the Russo-Ukrainian conflict as an “unprovoked aggression” by Moscow, these same countries have seemed hesitant to urge Israel to adopt restraint in its retaliation against Hamas in Gaza, the FT reported.

“We have definitely lost the battle in the Global South,” one senior G7 diplomat was cited by the FT as saying. “All the work we have done with the Global South [over Ukraine] has been lost.... Forget about rules, forget about world order. They won’t ever listen to us again.”

“What we said about Ukraine has to apply to Gaza. Otherwise we lose all our credibility,” the official added. “The Brazilians, the South Africans, the Indonesians: why should they ever believe what we say about human rights?”

The same FT article reported that an Arab official had pointed out a seeming contradiction, saying, “If you describe cutting off water, food and electricity in Ukraine as a war crime, then you should say the same thing about Gaza.”

On October 8, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen [tweeted](#) that “Israel has the right to defend itself — today and in the days to come. The European Union stands with Israel,”

Subsequently, Irish MEP Clare Daly [replied](#) to von der Leyen’s post, saying, “Who do you think you are? You’re unelected, and have no authority to determine EU foreign policy, which is set by @EUCouncil. Europe does NOT ‘stand with Israel’. We stand for peace. You do not speak for us. If you’ve nothing constructive to say, and you clearly don’t, shut up.”



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