

Gaza: Amnesty Calls on ICC to Investigate Israel for War Crimes

Rights group says Israeli strikes on Gaza last month could amount to 'crimes against humanity'

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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Amnesty International has accused [Israel](#) of "collective punishment against the civilian population" during last month's fighting between Israel and [Palestinian](#) fighters in the Gaza Strip, and called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate.

The new [report](#) concluded that Israel conducted "apparently disproportionate" strikes against men, women and children in Gaza over a five-day period in May, killing 33 Palestinians, including [six children](#).

One Israeli was also killed during the fighting.

During the attacks, the Israeli military damaged 2,943 housing units, including 103 homes which were completely destroyed. More than 1,244 Palestinians have also been displaced.

"Since the root cause of these recurrent unlawful attacks against civilians is Israel's apartheid system against Palestinians, therefore Amnesty International is renewing its call on the ICC to consider the applicability of the crime against humanity of apartheid within its current formal investigation into the Situation in the State of Palestine," said the report.

The fighting on 9 May began when the Israeli military killed 15 Palestinians, including three Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) commanders along with their wives and children, in air strikes.

"Those who planned and authorised the attacks anticipated – and likely disregarded – the disproportionate harm to civilians," said Amnesty, adding that "intentionally launching disproportionate attacks... is a war crime".

The PIJ responded to the Israeli attack by firing rockets into Israel.

Amnesty International went on to say that indiscriminate rocket fire by the PIJ killed both Israeli and Palestinian civilians and should also be subject to investigation.

PIJ rockets are “inherently inaccurate and their use against areas populated with civilians is indiscriminate, violates international humanitarian law and should be investigated as possible war crimes”, the report added.

Israeli impunity

The most significant portions of the report, however, were reserved for Israel.

“Israel’s impunity for the war crimes it repeatedly commits against Palestinians, and for its cruel ongoing 16-year illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, emboldens further violations and makes injustice chronic,” [said](#) Heba Morayef, the Middle East and North Africa regional director at Amnesty International.

“That we have been documenting the same patterns of unlawful killings and destruction over and over again is an indictment of the international community’s failure to hold Israel accountable.”

Speaking to AFP, the Israeli army responded to the report, saying that it “carried out attacks only after a real-time assessment before the attack that the expected collateral damage to civilians and civilian property will not be excessive in relation to the military advantage anticipated”.

Amnesty International has rejected such claims, citing a “pattern of extensive destruction of property” as a result of Israeli strikes that “failed to meet the exceptions under which attacking homes and other civilian objects would be justified”.

During its investigation, Amnesty documented at least three cases of “neighbourhood-wide property destruction”.

In one recorded incident on 13 May, Israel targeted a three-storey building in the neighbourhood of Beit Lahia, in northern Gaza.

The building, home to 22 civilians, including 12 children, was completely destroyed and several other homes in the area were severely damaged. The bombing resulted in the internal displacement of at least 41 civilians.

Amnesty said that it found no evidence that there was a military objective in destroying the buildings or that any members of the family had any military involvement.

“In our investigation, we heard vivid accounts of bombs obliterating homes, of fathers digging their little girls out from under rubble, of a teenager fatally injured as she lay in bed holding a teddy bear. More frightening than any of this is the near certainty that, unless perpetrators are held to account, these horrifying scenes will be repeated,” said Morayef.

A spokesperson for PIJ said the group “welcomes” the report.

"We are doing our part to defend ourselves against the crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people," it added in a statement.

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Featured image: Mourners comfort each other before the burial of 13 Palestinians killed by Israeli air strikes in Gaza City, 9 May 2023 (MEE/Mohammed al-Hajjar)

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