

War on Gaza: Complaint Filed Alleging UK Ministers' Complicity in Israeli War Crimes

Evidence handed to Metropolitan Police war crimes unit also includes details about British nationals fighting in the Israeli army

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A [UK](#)-based advocacy group has filed a criminal complaint against senior UK politicians, including ministers, alleging their complicity in war crimes committed in the [Gaza Strip](#).

The International Centre of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP) said on Tuesday it handed over hard drives and evidence dossiers to the Metropolitan Police's War Crimes Unit last week.

"This is just the first tranche of our evidence and the first list of suspects... we will add further offences and further categories of suspects including commentators who continue to support war crimes," Tayab Ali, director of the ICJP and head of international law at Bindmans LLP, told a press conference.

"Each account not only serves as evidence but also as a solemn reminder of the human cost of this conflict. We will accept nothing less than a thorough and impartial investigation into these allegations."

The complaint, shared after [a public request](#) from the police for evidence of war crimes in [Israel](#) and Gaza, also implicates Israeli politicians and private British citizens, including some who travelled abroad to fight for the Israeli army.

The Met has come under criticism from Conservative voices, including [former prime minister Boris Johnson](#), who have suggested their call for evidence is a politicisation of the force.

Ali said on Tuesday that Johnson's comments themselves amounted to unwelcome "political interference" in the work of the police.

The police have defended their efforts saying its war crimes team is obliged, under the [Rome Statute](#), to support any investigations opened by the International Criminal Court that could involve British subjects.

The 78-page ICJP complaint features photographic evidence as well as harrowing eyewitness accounts, including from British citizens who were either present in Gaza after 7 October or have family members there who have provided them with information and evidence. The ICJP said it has kept the names of the politicians and individuals confidential for legal reasons and as the police investigation proceeds.

One witness gave an account of his former primary school teacher who was killed alongside 20 relatives in their family home in northern Gaza, leaving no survivors.

Another reported that his friend's brother, who is a doctor at Al Shifa Hospital, only learned that his wife and three children had died when he found their bodies in the hospital's corridors.

A third told of his 91-year-old grandmother, suffering from dementia and largely bed-ridden, who was allegedly shot and killed by Israeli soldiers when they occupied the home where she was sheltering in Jabalia refugee camp.

The dossier also includes evidence supporting allegations that the Israeli army used white phosphorous against civilians in Gaza, contrary to international law.

Since the beginning of the war on 7 October – when Hamas killed around 1,140 people in an operation in southern Israel – at least 24,100 [Palestinians](#) have been killed, with at least 7,000 missing and more than 60,000 injured.

The complaint argues that the named British ministers are responsible for aiding and abetting war crimes through their continued military support of Israel and their moral encouragement.

Given evidence that UK weapons and intelligence are used in operations that “fail to respect the principles of distinction and proportionality and target civilians”, the complaint says the police should further investigate the culpability of listed UK lawmakers.

The majority of those named in the complaint live in Israel, but ICJP says many are officials who travel frequently and has requested that the police monitor their entry into the UK.

The filing of the complaint in the UK alleging complicity by British officials in Israeli war crimes comes after the International Court of Justice in The Hague began hearing a complaint brought by South Africa last week, accusing Israel of “genocidal conduct” in Gaza.

At Tuesday's press conference, Haydee Dijkstal, head of international law at 33 Bedford Row Chambers – who has been working on ICJP's submission of evidence to Scotland Yard – said its complaint did not assert the crime of genocide but covered a wide range of alleged war crimes.

Dijkstal said: “The complaint that was submitted, there are different legal principles from what's being addressed at the ICJ. A ruling from the ICJ wouldn't impact it but we'd certainly

analyse it.”

Speaking to Middle East Eye, she said that the ICJP would be continuing “conversations” with the police as they worked through the evidence submitted.

“There isn’t a particular timeframe that is required, but I believe the ICJP hopes to continue the conversations with the police to provide more information as the ICJP investigation continues, and to answer any questions that the police might have as well as they’re beginning that investigation and analysis of all the information submitted,” she explained.

British Support for Israel

The UK government has been a staunch supporter of Israel throughout the conflict and has resisted pressure to call for a ceasefire in the war.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak [told](#) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in October he was “proud to stand with you in Israel’s darkest hour as your friend, we will stand with you in solidarity, we will stand with your people, and we want you to win”.

Similarly, then-Foreign Secretary James Cleverly [said](#) he wanted to make it “clear to our Israeli friends that we stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their self-defence” and has stated that “calls for a ceasefire in the abstract aren’t going to help the situation”.

A Department for Business and Trade spokesperson told MEE that the UK “supports Israel’s legitimate right to defend itself and take action against terrorism, provided it is within the bounds of International Humanitarian Law”.

“All our export licences are kept under careful and continual review and we are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences, or refuse new licence applications, where they are inconsistent with the UK’s Strategic Export Licensing Criteria,” they said.

With its complaint, ICJP has requested that a referral is made to the Metropolitan Police’s war crimes team to conduct a scoping exercise. This will allow the unit to decide whether to proceed with an investigation.

Dijkstal said the individuals named in the complaint had not been pre-emptively singled out and that it was led by the evidence.

“The process of submitting evidence and submitting a complaint to the war crimes unit at Scotland Yard is one that’s been around for a while... I think often times it’s not known publicly, because many times these complaints are submitted on a confidential basis,” she explained.

“But I do know that it has been utilised in regards to other conflicts... complaints have been submitted in regards to Yemen, to the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, so I do think it is a process that victims of war crimes look to and have historically engaged with in order to utilise [the] universal jurisdiction principle that’s available in the UK.”

A Metropolitan police spokesperson told Middle East Eye that specialist officers are currently assessing the information in such an exercise.

“At this time, there is no UK-based investigation into this matter, or any other matters

relating to this particular conflict,” the spokesperson said.

Commander Dominic Murphy, who leads the Counter Terrorism Command which hosts the war crimes team, told MEE:

“The ongoing conflict in the Middle East continues to impact communities in the UK and internationally, and we recognise the strength of feeling on all sides.”

“We remain focused on supporting victims and witnesses who report core international crimes, as well as supporting the UK families of those directly affected by the terrorist attacks in Israel on 7 October last year,” he said.

“I also want to reassure the public that we have a very clear set of guidelines which we use when assessing all war crimes referrals made to us and we will ensure that these are followed here.”

The police also shared [their website](#) for members of the public who wish to report war crime-related matters.

MEE also contacted the Home Office, but had received no response at time of publication.

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Featured image: Tayab Ali said each account submitted by the ICJP served as ‘a solemn reminder of the human cost of this conflict’ (Alex MacDonald/MEE)

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