

Israel's actions “may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity”

United Nations' (UN) Independent International Commission of Inquiry
March 2019

The Siege of Gaza

By the end of March 2018 Israel's siege of Gaza had lasted for eleven years. This had led to: crossings in and out of Gaza being closed, access to the sea being restricted, 96% of water being undrinkable, four to six hours of electricity per day and the strangulation of the economy.

The Great March of Return

On March 30th - Land Day - civil rights organisations in Gaza, supported by all political factions, organised the first, unarmed, peaceful protests demanding their right to return to the homes and land their families were expelled from 70 years ago and for an end to the blockade. Two thirds of Gazans are of refugee families.

They were met by Israeli snipers who fatally shot 19 Palestinians and wounded hundreds. As the protests continued so did the deaths, peaking on May 14th when 68 people died. By the end of 2018 more than 220 Palestinians had been killed and over 20,000 injured. Amongst the dead were journalists, paramedics, farmers, people with disabilities and children. The aid Group Medecins Sans Frontieres said that the injuries sustained “will leave many patients with serious, long-term physical disabilities.”

Israel, as usual lied, and claimed that

the protests were “an attempt to carry out terror attacks under the guise of riots”. Others disagreed.



Palestinian journalist shot during Gaza protest.

Condemned by the world

According to Amnesty International it was “premeditated violence, illegal under international law, ordered at the highest level with no credible evidence presented of threat that justified the violence.”

The Israeli Human Rights organisation, B'Tselem, denounced the orders to fire on unarmed demonstrators, before the massacre. They stated that Israel was “completely ignoring the humanitarian disaster in Gaza and Israel's responsibility for it, (Israeli officials) couching the planned protest in terms of a security risk, framing the demonstrators as terrorists and referring to Gaza as a ‘combat’ zone.” Michael Lynx, UN Special Rapporteur

condemned Israel's excessive use of force which "may amount to wilful killing, a grave breach of the *Fourth Geneva Convention*, as well as a war crime." Israel's use of deadly force was also condemned on 13 June 2018 in a United Nations General Assembly resolution.

The USA, the European Union and Great Britain

Attempts to call for an inquiry through the UN Security Council were blocked by the USA. The EU and the British Tory government refused to condemn Israel or support a resolution calling for an independent enquiry at the UN General Assembly.

On 14 May, Shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry, declared "We condemn unreservedly the Israeli Government for their brutal, lethal and utterly unjustified actions on the Gaza border.

...the culmination of six weeks of an apparently systematic and deliberate policy of killing and maiming unarmed protesters many hundreds of metres from the border, and many of them children."

In Liverpool, Israel's actions were equally condemned by Liverpool and Merseyside TUCs and Dan Carden, Labour MP for Walton.

Anti Palestinian Racism

However, anti Palestinian racism also appeared. The secretary of Labour Friends of Israel - Chair (ex) Labour MP Joan Ryan, Vice Chair Labour MP

Louise Ellman - tweeted blaming Hamas. This was widely condemned. In parliament Louise Ellman refused to condemn the Israeli army and did not endorse the statement by Emily Thornberry.

Land Day

Forty-two years ago today, Israeli police shot and killed six Palestinian citizens of Israel as they were protesting the Israeli government's mass expropriation of Palestinian land. Since then, March 30 has been known as Land Day.



Planting an olive tree in Palestine to commemorate Land Day

Violence in Gaza continues

On the 51st Friday of protest, March 22nd, 2019, Israeli forces killed two Palestinian civilians and wounded 181, including 53 children, 5 women, 1 Paramedic and 3 journalists.

Today, Liverpool Friends of Palestine commemorate Land day, which we do every year. We commemorate the massacre of March 30th 2018 and protest the ongoing anti-Palestinian violence.