

The UN Independent Commission's report on Israel's actions in Gaza and the impact of their conclusion.

On the 16th of September 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel released a report detailing their investigations into Israel's actions in Gaza since October 7th, 2023. The Human Rights Council established the commission back in May of 2021 to investigate other alleged 'violations of international humanitarian law'¹ and 'alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law'² before its creation, specifically since April 13th of that same year. The report from September 2025 is the first time that a UN commission has concluded that Israel's actions in Gaza can be classed as a genocide, although it is an independent commission and does not speak entirely for the UN.³ The report found that of the five underlying acts decided in the 1948 Genocide convention, where one or more must be committed to make a conclusion of genocide, Israel had committed four of them.⁴ This is not the first UN report to investigate the conflict between Israel and Gaza⁵, nor is it the first international organization to call out Israel's actions. ICC arrest warrants were issued to prominent members of the Israeli government on the 21st of November 2024,⁶ and South Africa started proceedings against Israel at the ICJ back in December of 2023.⁷ While there are limitations to what impact this report can make in solving the conflict, there is also merit in such a prominent international organization making a conclusion of this level, and both are worth discussing.

Referring to the 1948 Genocide convention, each underlying act of genocide must be committed with intention of destroying 'a national, ethnical, racial or religious group,'⁸ otherwise it cannot be classed as Genocide.⁹ Within the UN report from the 16th of September 2025, the commission found that since the 7th of October 2023, Israel

¹Human rights council, *legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza Pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, (The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and Israel, 2025), p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 3.

³Luke, Taylor, 'Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, UN commission finds.', *BMJ: British Medical Journal (Online)*, vol 390 (London: BMJ Publishing Group, 2025) p. 1.

⁴Human rights council, *legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza Pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, p. 6.

⁵ United Nations, *The question of Palestine*, (2025), <https://www.un.org/unispa/document-category/report/?wpv_view_count=4164> [Accessed 13 December 2025]

⁶ International Criminal Court, *Netanyahu*, (2024), <<https://www.icc-cpi.int/defendant/netanyahu>> [Accessed 13 December 2025]

⁷ Mia, Swart, 'South Africa v Israel: South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice', *The Round Table*, vol 114, (2025) p. 687.

⁸ Human rights council, *legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza Pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, p. 6.

⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

had committed four of the five underlying acts of genocide in Gaza, including 'killing members of the group', 'causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group', 'deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part', and 'imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group'.¹⁰ For each underlying act, the report includes evidence to support its claims of Israel's actions in Gaza.

It is clear that the conflict in Gaza, brought in part by Israel's military campaign, has resulted in a large loss of life among those living in the area. With both the use of militarized airstrikes and ground operations, Israel has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, including large numbers of women and children.¹¹ After the first 12 months of the war, the overall life expectancy of people living in Gaza decreased by nearly half of what it was before the war, dropping from 75.5 years to 40.5 years,¹² although it does not take into account any indirect threats to life, meaning the life expectancy could be lower than stated.¹³ International organizations such as the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Save the Children have published statistics proving that Israel had targeted civilian populations, which included striking residential buildings and tents for the displaced, and killing high numbers of children.¹⁴ According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the amount of child amputees in Gaza is the largest of anywhere in the world, and that of modern history.¹⁵ Israel has been proven to target health services in Gaza and medical professionals have reported that the type of gunshot and sniper wounds inflicted on children had proven they were being targeted directly by Israeli forces.¹⁶ About 545,000 women of reproductive age in Gaza will have been affected by Israel's attack on healthcare facilities.¹⁷ Attacks on maternity wards have left them unable to operate and many maternal health facilities have been forced to close, including IVF facilities.¹⁸ Israel's military conquest of Gaza has also caused severe environmental concerns for the land. The 50,773,494 tonnes of estimated debris reported by the United Nations Environmental Programme as of December 2024, would take 21 years to fully dispose of.¹⁹ Thousands of buildings have been destroyed by the conflict and the weapons used by Israel have left behind long-term health threats for those living there.²⁰ Toxic remnants and chemical reactions from the explosions, along with smoke and ash from the destruction, will lead to long-term health effects and lifelong

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹² Ibid., p. 7.

¹³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

health conditions.²¹ For Palestinians detained and held in facilities in Israel, their quality of life hasn't proved much better. The Commission reported that threats of sexual assault and death were highly likely, alongside dehumanizing acts of being stripped naked, blindfolded and beaten.²² In some of these facilities, detainees were denied access to the toilet, and in some cases forced to wear diapers.²³ Other such offenses that have been reported by detainees include attacks by dogs, being beaten with batons and electric shocks.²⁴ Sexual violence is another punishment used in these facilities for both men and women, with groping and other forms of inappropriate touching overly common, and more brutal assaults including the insertion of objects into a detainee's anus.²⁵ In summary, the report covers a wide range of evidence proving Israel has done vast damage to that of life in Gaza for the people living there now and for those in the future.

At the end of the report, the commission listed recommendations for the State of Israel to follow moving forward. One of those recommendations included implementing a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.²⁶ On the 29th of September 2025, a ceasefire agreement was brought forward by the United States and signed on the 9th of October that same year.²⁷ Since then, Israel has repeatedly violated the ceasefire agreement,²⁸ as they have done for other ceasefires they have agreed to in the past.²⁹ It is not certain if this report has had, or ever will have, a real impact on Israel's actions. It is also important to take into consideration that the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, who is one of the Israeli officials named in the ICC arrest warrants, was allowed to speak at the UN General Assembly on the 26th of September 2025,³⁰ just shy of two weeks after the independent report was released. This displays a disconnect between the different commissions at the UN, and that not all will agree on the same conclusions, meaning it can be difficult to see real impact based on a single report. As well as the ICC having limited capabilities in the action they can take. In November of 2024, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for

²¹ Ibid., p. 17.

²² Ibid., p. 20.

²³ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁷ Ian, Aikman, and James, Chater, *Israel and Hamas agree first phase of Gaza ceasefire deal*, (2025), <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce80rmq3g5qo>> [Accessed 14 December 2025]

²⁸ United Nations, *UN experts urge States to act as Israeli violations threaten fragile Gaza ceasefire*, (2025) <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/un-experts-urge-states-act-israeli-violations-threaten-fragile-gaza>> [Accessed 14 December 2025]

²⁹ Noam, Chomsky, *Ceasefires in which violations never cease: what's next for Israel, Hamas, and Gaza?*, (London: OpenDemocracy, 2014) pp. 1-6.

³⁰ United Nations, *Netanyahu hails Israel's 'stunning comeback' after 7 October attacks, vows to 'finish the job'*, (2025) <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165963>> [Accessed 14 December 2025]

Yoav Gallant, the former Defence Minister of Israel, alongside Netanyahu's.³¹ The ICC works under the Rome Statute, and its authority is determined by consenting member states.³² As Israel has not signed the treaty to accept the court's jurisdiction, the ICC isn't easily able to go forward with those arrests, despite Palestine being a state party.³³ When separating individual actors from the state, reaching a conclusion for an accusation of genocide in international court is an extremely lengthy process. In December of 2023, South Africa brought Israel to the ICJ, and in January of 2024, the ICJ found that there was a plausible case of genocide Israel needed to answer to.³⁴ From there, the court ordered specific measures Israel must comply to, including allowing humanitarian assistance for those in Gaza.³⁵ Controversially, the ICJ did not call for a ceasefire, even though the court showed concern for life in Gaza and the hostages held by Hamas at the time.³⁶ Instead, they focused on stopping Israel's actions that conflicted with the Genocide Convention.³⁷ By South Africa raising this issue, it has brought more eyes to what is occurring in Gaza, however, there is no set timeframe in which justice, in whatever form is deemed appropriate, is guaranteed to be delivered. This is similar to the lack of immediate impact of the UN report, as though its release brings awareness to Israel's actions now and over the course of these last two years, there is no forceable action that can be taken to stop Israel, when they continuously violate ceasefire agreements.

To conclude, the impact of the UN's independent report on Israel's actions can be debated easily. The UN's status as a well-known organization across the world can have influence on current global conflicts, although, there are still limitations to what can fully be done to achieve peace in the Middle East. The report will bring further awareness to the actions of Israel in Gaza, but just as the ICC arrest warrants and the ICJ court case against Israel cannot immediately end the civilian targeting or bombing of infrastructure in Gaza, there is no guarantee this report will impact Israel's actions in any meaningful capacity.

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³¹ S, Soni, 'The ICC takes action: The Gaza arrest warrants and the international obligations of states', *South African Journal of Bioethics and Law*, vol 17 (South African Medical Association NPC, 2024) p. 1.

³² Ibid., p. 1.

³³ Ibid., p. 1.

³⁴ Swart, *The Round Table*, p. 687.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 687.

³⁶ Ibid., p.687.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 687.

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