



HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY INSTITUTION OF TÜRKİYE

Date: 10.12.2024
Ref No: 45056

I am writing in my official capacity as the Chairman of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye, established on April 20, 2016, with the mandate to function as the national human rights institution, the national preventive mechanism, and the equality body.

A humanitarian crisis in Gaza has persisted for more than a year that is difficult to describe in words. This tragedy constitutes one of the greatest atrocities of the 21st century occurring under the scrutiny of the entire world.

Unfortunately, the current situation in Palestine extend beyond prevailing events alone. Israel has perpetuated institutionalized systematic oppression and domination of Palestinians through discriminatory laws, policies, and practices since the day it was founded.¹ Nearly every facet of Palestinians' lives is controlled by Israel's *apartheid* regime, and resulting in constant violations of their human rights.

While using numbers is one method to convey the cruelty of the past year, it is important to recognize that each and every individual who has been lost transcends mere numerical representation. Still, it is essential to utilize numerical data in order to illustrate the severity of the situation.

Since October 2023 a reported 44,758 people have been killed and 106,134 injured as a result of Israeli attacks.² Among those killed, 17,210 were children and 11,742 were women. Unfortunately, these numbers are escalating on a daily basis. Gaza has turned into a graveyard for children before the eyes of the entire world.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has announced that the number of children killed in Gaza in recent months exceeds the number of children killed in four years of conflict around the world.³

It is not only vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the elderly who are subjected to severe human rights violations in Gaza. The number of journalists killed in Palestine in the past

¹<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>

²<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/gaza-death-toll-nears-44-800-as-israel-kills-50-more-palestinians/3419082>

³<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147512>

year has doubled the annual global total of journalist killings.⁴ The preceding year also witnessed the murder of 243 UNRWA employees⁵, and more than 1000 healthcare professionals.⁶ All these statistics reveal the severity of the situation. By systematically targeting civilians and civilian objects in Gaza, Israel has violated fundamental prohibitions of humanitarian law and perpetrated atrocities consistent with genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Along with the most fundamental right, the right to life, all human rights imaginable continue to be violated in Gaza. Israel arbitrarily and systematically deprives Palestinians of their right to life and subjects them to “unlivable conditions” that reflect its genocidal intent. The imposition of unbearable living conditions on Gazans, the blockade by land and sea, the existence of the apartheid regime, the systematic targeting of civilians and civilian objects, and the actions intended to expel Palestinians collectively indicate that the crime of genocide has been committed *prima facie* under international criminal law.⁷

In fact, in its provisional measures dated January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice ruled that Israel must avoid actions that constitute genocide, to take measures to prevent genocide, and penalize those who incite genocide.⁸

The situation in Gaza, however, persists under severe conditions for the survivors despite all these appeals. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) hundreds of aid convoys have been denied entry into Gaza in the past year, where the delivery of humanitarian assistance is essential, resulting in only a minimal amount of aid reaching the region.⁹ Israel employs hunger as a weapon in violation of international regulations and obligations. Israel's arbitrary denial to grant permission for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and for the activities of humanitarian organizations amid the armed conflict is a clear violation of the Geneva Convention (IV) and Additional Protocol No. II of 1977.

This marks the second consecutive year that the Gazan children have been deprived of their fundamental right to education. An entire generation will be lost as a result of this tragic scenario.

The following remarks are included in the report that was issued by the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs in the Occupied Territories, on September 20, 2024, includes:

⁴<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/journalists-killed-in-gaza-by-israel-more-than-double-annual-global-average-press-union/3382593>

⁵<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/remarks-unrwa-commissioner-general-philippe-lazzarini-united-nations-general-assembly-fourth-committee>

⁶<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/over-1-000-doctors-nurses-killed-in-israeli-attacks-in-gaza-local-authorities-say/3402871>

⁷<https://www.tihek.gov.tr/public/editor/uploads/5NDPLgEB.pdf>

⁸International Court of Justice, *South Africa v. Israel*, Request for the Indication of Provisional Measures, 26 January 2024, <https://icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf> para. 86.

⁹<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/israel-blocks-humanitarian-aid-to-northern-gaza-un/3371429>

"Through its siege over Gaza, obstruction of humanitarian aid, alongside targeted attacks and killing of civilians and aid workers, despite repeated UN appeals, binding orders from the International Court of Justice and resolutions of the Security Council, Israel is intentionally causing death, starvation, and serious injury, using starvation as a method of war and inflicting collective punishment on the Palestinian population,"¹⁰

Every one of us, from the United Nations on the global stage to regional human rights organizations and national institutions, have a responsibility to put an end to this tragedy. We are currently living in a time where the concept of human rights is under intense scrutiny, and no one can escape their responsibilities; on the contrary remaining silent is complicity. At this critical juncture in history, our first and foremost duty as human rights advocates is to stand on the side of humanity and justice.

My call is for human rights defenders who do not wish to be a part of this atrocity and massacre. In fact, Gaza and the entire Palestine serve as a litmus test for human rights advocacy.

I would like to conclude my letter by expressing my desire for a ceasefire be implemented without delay, my sincere condolences for the Palestinians who have lost their families, and my hope that everyone will do their utmost to ensure the freedom of the Palestinian people.

Respectfully yours,


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¹⁰<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a79363-report-special-committee-investigate-israeli-practices-affecting>