

**Israel and the Gaza Strip | Sadaka-the Ireland Palestine Alliance**  
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**As the humanitarian catastrophe worsens in the Gaza Strip, Palestinians fear a repetition of previous mass displacements.**

*“Israel has already carried out mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians under the fog of war. Again, in the name of self-defence, Israel is seeking to justify what would amount to ethnic cleansing.”*

Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967.

Since 7 October, the Israeli military has been bombarding one of the most densely populated territories in the world, an area less than half the size of Louth, Ireland’s smallest county. An estimated [3,000 Palestinians](#) have been killed, a third of them children, and over 12,000 have been injured. Entire residential neighbourhoods have been razed, obliterating extended families. Morgues are overflowing and hundreds are still missing, feared trapped under rubble. With electricity, food, fuel, water and medicines blocked, sewage and solid waste are accumulating in the streets, posing an additional hazard, as health facilities and intensive care units are overwhelmed with the severely wounded.

Even prior to yesterday’s horrendous loss of life resulting from the attack on Al Ahli Hospital, the World Health Organization had documented 57 attacks on healthcare, resulting in 16 fatalities and 28 injuries, and damage to 26 hospitals and other healthcare facilities. Some 167 educational facilities have been hit by airstrikes, including at least 20 UNRWA schools, two of which were designated as safe shelters for the one million internally displaced. On 7 October, a UNRWA school in Al Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza, sheltering some 4,000 IDPs, was struck during an Israeli airstrike, with at least six people killed and dozens injured, including UN staff.

This catastrophe is unfolding against the background of Israel’s 16-year land, sea and air siege of what has been described as the ‘largest open-air prison in the world.’ Prior to the current escalation, unemployment was already nearly 50 per cent in Gaza and about 1 million people were severely food insecure. The civilian population of Gaza has also borne the brunt of recurring hostilities that have resulted in huge loss of life and injury. Over [4,000 Palestinians](#) have been killed in previous Israeli hostilities, including over 1,000 children. The toll in the current escalation has already surpassed the total number of 2,250 fatalities during the 2014 escalation, which lasted for 50 days.

An already desperate humanitarian situation is set to deteriorate. Israeli officials are warning of an open-ended offensive and have mobilised hundreds of thousands of troops on Gaza's borders for an expected ground invasion. The Israeli military has ordered all residents of northern Gaza, including those staying in emergency shelters, to relocate south of Wadi Gaza. These include vulnerable people – children, the disabled, pregnant women, the elderly, and those requiring medical attention. Tánaiste Micheál Martin has described the order as “deeply dangerous” and “[impossible to implement](#)”, while the World Health Organization has categorised the evacuation of hospitals as [tantamount to a death sentence](#).

The current mass displacement is evoking historic trauma among the residents of in Gaza, where the majority of the population are descendants of refugees who fled or were expelled in 1948 from the area that became Israel, with their right to return still rejected. Many Palestinians in Gaza believe that the order to evacuate is in anticipation of a massive destruction of housing and infrastructure that will render the north of Gaza uninhabitable. They also fear that the Israeli military will extend the operation to central and southern Gaza, forcing the population to choose between their personal security or flight across the border to Egypt, and that their displacement risks becoming permanent.

The international community has rightly condemned the killing of Israeli citizens and the taking of others as hostages. It is now imperative that all parties exert equal efforts to prevent the ongoing loss of life in Gaza where the death toll is already at more than 3,000, including at least 1,000 children. Indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilians and attacks on residential homes and civilian infrastructure are prohibited and represent grave violations of international humanitarian law. The international community must also call on Israel to rescind its order for the mass evacuation of the residents of northern Gaza. Failure to do so, the UN Special Rapporteur [warns](#), “*there is a grave danger that what we are witnessing may be a repeat of the 1948 Nakba, and the 1967 Naksa, yet on a larger scale.*”

## **2. Sadaka asks of Government, political parties and individual politicians.**

1. An appalling humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Gaza. Call for an immediate cessation of all military action by all sides, including bombardment, rocket-fire, and preparation for a ground invasion of Gaza. The international community must now urgently work to bring about a ceasefire.
2. What is now happening in Gaza is unprecedented. Hospitals, schools, apartment buildings and civilian infrastructure have been attacked and destroyed. These acts may amount to war crimes. All civilian infrastructure, including spaces where displaced people are congregating, must be protected and not be targeted.
3. Israel's order to the civilian population of Gaza, already living under occupation, to move south of Wadi Gaza, must be rescinded as this is a forcible transfer and a grave breach of international law.

4. According to UNRWA, nothing has been allowed into Gaza for the last eleven days. A humanitarian corridor must be opened as a matter of urgency to bring water, food, medicines, and other humanitarian needs to the people of Gaza who are in the midst of a humanitarian disaster; electricity and water supplies to Gaza's population must be restored immediately. Cutting off the means of life to civilians is a grave breach of international law.
5. The people of Gaza must not be removed from Gaza to the Sinai. Most Gazans are already refugees forced from their homes in what is now Israel in 1948 in the Nakba. There must be no new Nakba.
6. Recognise that Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory, the transfer of more than 700,000 settlers into occupied territory, the constant displacement of Palestinians, the destruction of their homes and confiscation of land, the fragmentation and isolation of Palestinian communities, and the failure to ensure equality and justice for millions of Palestinians, are the root causes of violence, and demand urgent and persistent attention until resolved.
7. Recognise, as clearly identified by the UN, Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organisations, and some governments, that Israel has created a regime of Apartheid in all the territory under its effective control.
8. Seek the enactment of the Occupied Territories Bill to show that Ireland does not accept Israel's ongoing assaults on Palestinian lands, homes and people, and that the ongoing establishment and expansion of settlements is unacceptable. It is clear that neither Israelis nor Palestinians will live in peace while the decades-long occupation continues.
9. Call on Ireland to use its undoubted influence with the EU and the US to initiate, as a matter of urgency, a peace process based on the principle of ensuring a sustainable peace for both Palestinians and Israelis, built on the fundamental principle of a settlement which meets the just and long-denied right of Palestinians to justice, equality and self-determination. Continuing to act as "Israel's lawyer" is no longer an acceptable position for the US and EU, and is a significant contributor to violence.
10. Underline the importance of investigating and ensuring accountability for international crimes and refer the situation in Palestine to the International Criminal Court, together with like-minded States.

### **3. Motion before Dáil Éireann.**

In relation to the **motion** before Dáil Éireann today, we ask that you consider the following amendments:

- underline the importance of investigating and ensuring accountability for international crimes and commits to referring the situation in Palestine to the International Criminal Court, together with like-minded States;
- expresses its concern at the use of dehumanising language towards Palestinians by senior Israeli officials and the attendant risks of genocide as has been highlighted by

human rights organisations, and reminds all States of their duty to prevent genocide in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide in 1948;

- condemns as unacceptable any plans for the displacement of the population of Gaza into the Sinai;
- calls on Israel to provide immediate and unimpeded access to Gaza for vital humanitarian aid and to fully restore water and electricity to the population, and notes that cutting off water and electricity is collective punishment and is unacceptable.