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TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY
PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

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Cover illustration: Relatives of Israeli hostages and demonstrators raise pictures and placards during a protest calling for action to secure the release of hostages held in Gaza since 7 October 2023, outside the Israeli Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv, Israel, on 6 August 2025. © Jack Guez / AFP via Getty Images

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than two years after the Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel on 7 October 2023 and in the wake of the release of all those seized alive on that day, accounts of the actions of Palestinian armed groups during the attacks and their subsequent treatment of those held in captivity in Gaza are still emerging. Survivors of the attacks, including those released from captivity, as well as the families of victims, continue to shed light on their own experiences, while seeking justice and redress. Amnesty International hopes that the findings of its investigation into the attacks and the treatment of those held in captivity, as well as its legal determination of the crimes committed, can support their efforts and contribute to the establishment of the truth.

The attacks of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent holding of individuals in captivity were part of a non-international armed conflict between Palestinian armed groups and Israel. They took place against the backdrop of Israel's prolonged occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and the widespread human rights violations perpetrated by Israeli forces against Palestinians, including the imposition of a system of apartheid on Palestinians and the long-standing illegal blockade of Gaza since 2007.

In the wake of the 7 October 2023 attacks, Israel embarked on a military offensive on Gaza unprecedented in magnitude, scale and duration, and intensified its illegal blockade on this part of the OPT. In December 2024, Amnesty International concluded that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza. Its forces carried out acts prohibited under the Genocide Convention, with the specific intent to physically destroy Palestinians in Gaza. These acts included killings, causing serious bodily or mental harm and deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction.

Hamas has claimed that its forces were not involved in the targeted killing, abduction or mistreatment of civilians during the 7 October 2023 attacks, that many civilians were killed by Israeli fire and that it did not plan to take civilians hostage. However, based on extensive video, testimonial and other evidence, Amnesty International has concluded that, while some civilians were indeed killed by Israeli forces, the vast majority of those who died were killed by Palestinian fighters. It considers that all those taken to Gaza were unlawfully detained as hostages and that all were subjected to psychological abuse. It has documented evidence that some of those captured on 7 October 2023 – both soldiers and civilians – were subjected to physical and sexual violence, either in Israel or in Gaza. It could not reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the sexual violence.

Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that many of these violations were carried out by members of Palestinian armed groups and constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder and torture. To date, no one has been brought to justice for them.

Around 1,200 people were killed during the attacks of 7 October 2023. They included more than 800 civilians, among them at least 36 children, and around 300 Israeli soldiers. The victims were primarily Jewish Israelis, but also included Bedouin citizens of Israel, and scores of foreign national migrant workers, students and asylum seekers. More than 4,000 people were injured, and hundreds of homes and civilian structures were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable.

Another 251 people – mostly civilians – were forcibly taken to Gaza on 7 October 2023. The majority of these 251 people were seized alive and held in captivity, but, in 36 cases, reportedly, they were already dead when captured. They were held for weeks, months or, in some cases, over two years.

Tens of thousands of residents from the attacked areas, as well as other parts of southern Israel, were displaced from their homes on 7 October 2023. Thousands remain displaced, having lost their loved ones and their homes, and face ongoing trauma.

Evidence including hundreds of videos and testimonies collected by Amnesty International and other investigators indicates that the majority of fighters taking part in the attacks were from the Izz al-Din Al-Qassam (Al-Qassam) Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, but also included fighters from the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, formerly the military wing of the Fatah political movement, as well as possibly other armed groups. Whether responding to calls made by Hamas leaders or acting spontaneously, hundreds of Palestinians in civilian clothing entered Israel from Gaza through the breached fence to join the attacks in what appeared to be a largely uncoordinated manner. The assailants in civilian clothing carried out widespread looting of homes and property in residential communities in Israel. Some also participated in killings, the destruction of property, abductions and other serious abuses.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

In this investigation, Amnesty International focused on the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in southern Israel beginning on 7 October 2023, as well as the treatment of civilians and soldiers seized during the attacks and held in Gaza. It assessed them within the framework of international humanitarian law. It also sought to establish whether there is sufficient evidence to support a conclusion that the conduct of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups amounts to crimes under international law and to identify crimes that were committed.

The scope does not include Israeli policies and actions against Palestinians in Israel and the OPT following the attacks, except where relevant to the analysis of investigations of violations by Palestinian armed groups, nor does it address repressive measures by Hamas against Palestinians in Gaza. Amnesty International has extensively documented crimes and violations by Israeli forces in Gaza and the rest of the OPT, as well as violations by Hamas against Palestinians in Gaza, in other outputs.

Amnesty International's research drew on a combination of remote and in-person interviews, photographs and videos that it verified, as well as other open-source evidence. It conducted interviews with 70 people. They included 17 people who survived the 7 October 2023 attacks, three of whom had been taken hostage. They also included nine family members of individuals who were killed in the attacks or taken into captivity, two forensic experts who were involved in examining bodies of people killed, seven medical professionals or therapists who treated people affected by the attacks, as well as lawyers representing survivors, journalists, researchers and academics.

Amnesty International reviewed 354 open-source videos and photographs of scenes from the 7 October 2023 attacks and of people held in captivity in Gaza. It also received and analysed several dozen images directly from survivors of the 7 October 2023 attacks and first responders. It carried out an extensive search and analysis of statements by representatives of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in relation to the 7 October 2023 attacks, rocket and mortar fire into Israel and the treatment of individuals held captive in Gaza. As part of the interviews it conducted, the organization consulted two independent forensic pathologists and benefited from their expertise in analysing over 45 images.

Significant challenges affected the investigation, including the refusal of Israeli authorities to cooperate with Amnesty International's requests for information, the reluctance of many survivors and witnesses to speak to Amnesty International researchers and the limited forensic evidence collected by Israeli authorities. However, Amnesty International was still able to collect a large amount of evidence that informed its analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

Amnesty International wrote to Hamas on 20 June 2025 to set out its findings, to ask for any comments on them and to request responses to detailed questions. It had not received a response as of 4 December 2025.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

The attacks of 7 October 2023 began at around 6.30am with a barrage of thousands of unguided rockets and mortars fired from Gaza into Israeli territory, striking small residential communities in the areas in Israel surrounding Gaza as well as nearby cities such as Sderot, Ofakim and Ashkelon. The rocket fire killed and injured several civilians, most of them children. Under the cover of this barrage, more than 3,000 Palestinian fighters breached the Gaza perimeter fence at multiple locations and entered Israeli territory by land, air and sea.

GROUND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

Amnesty International documented attacks by hundreds of fighters from the military wings of Palestinian armed groups on the kibbutzim of Be'eri, Holit, Kfar Azza, Magen, Nahal Oz, Re'im and Sufa, the moshav of Netiv HaAsara, the cities of Ofakim and Sderot, Zikim beach and the site of the Nova music festival and surrounding areas and escape routes. Over 650 civilians were killed in these attacks. Most of the assailants crossed into Israel in vehicles such as pickup trucks and motorcycles, driving through breaches in the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza, while a small number arrived by air using motorized paragliders or by sea using inflatable rubber boats.

Heavily armed fighters carrying assault rifles, machine guns, grenades and rocket-propelled grenades carried out systematic and deliberate attacks targeting civilians. They shot and threw grenades into family homes, safe rooms and public bomb shelters where civilians had taken refuge and hunted down those trying to flee across fields and on roads. In several instances, they summarily killed civilians after abducting them. In one kibbutz, Be'eri, fighters used civilians as human shields when holding them inside a house during a battle with Israeli military forces.

Contrary to claims by Hamas leaders that their fighters only targeted military objectives, the overwhelming majority of those killed were civilians and most of the locations targeted were residential communities or other places in which civilians were gathered, namely two music festivals and a beach. In the attacks documented by Amnesty International, the victims were generally residents of the civilian communities targeted, including, in some cases, members of the local emergency response squads, or festival-goers.

Hamas has claimed that many Israeli civilians were killed by Israeli fire in application of the Hannibal Directive, an Israeli military protocol that puts Israeli forces at risk to prevent them from being captured. In some cases, Israeli civilians were indeed killed by Israeli forces in cases of mistaken identification and/or in application of the Hannibal Directive. In the context of two of the attacks documented by Amnesty International, those on Be'eri and Nahal Oz, up to 12 people and three people, respectively, were killed by Israeli military fire, according to Israeli military investigations.

However, in the vast majority of cases, those responsible for the killings in the attacks documented by Amnesty International were Palestinian fighters. The organization investigated in detail incidents in which around 100 people who were confirmed as civilians or presumed to be civilians died, concluding that they were killed by fighters. It reviewed and cross-checked evidence that fighters were responsible for killing the vast majority of the remaining civilians who died in the attacks it documented, including the fact that the Israeli military was not present when most killings happened.

In the incidents it investigated, Amnesty International concluded that the fighters most often were, or appeared to be, from the Al-Qassam Brigades. It also found evidence of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the National Resistance Brigades, the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, being present at the scene of at least one killing and evidence of the Al-Quds Brigades being involved in another.

In Be'eri, 101 civilians were killed, including 10 children, the youngest of whom was nine-month-old Mila Cohen, shot dead in her mother's arms in the family's safe room. In many attacks, multiple family members were killed. Among them were two sisters, Yahel and Noiya Sharabi, aged 13 and 16, who were shot dead with their mother, Lianne Brisley-Sharabi, 48, in their home in the north-west of the kibbutz, after witnessing the abduction of their father, Eli Sharabi, 51, by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. Eli was held hostage in Gaza for 16 months and, upon his release in February 2025, learnt that his wife and daughters had been killed. Some of the attacks were captured by closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, dashboard cameras in vehicles and body-worn cameras used by assailants. Amnesty International verified 25 videos related to the attack on Be'eri, including footage showing armed assailants wearing green Al-Qassam Brigades headbands seen carrying out killings and abductions. Among the civilian residents who were abducted and paraded through the streets of the kibbutz with their hands bound and later killed at the end of the road were Marcel Kaplun and Dror Kaplun, aged 64 and 68, respectively, a couple who had lived in Be'eri for the previous two decades, and Kinneret Gat, a 67-year-old teacher.

In Holit, one of the smallest kibbutzim in the area, armed assailants killed 16 civilians, including a member of the kibbutz's emergency response squad and three migrant workers from Cambodia, Moldova and Thailand. One of the assailants who can be seen on video footage verified by Amnesty International was wearing a green Al-Qassam Brigades headband.

Sixteen-year-old Rotem Matthias told Amnesty International that assailants threw a grenade into his family home's safe room, killing his mother, Schahar Matthias, 50, and his father, Sholmi Matthias, aged 47, who

were both musicians, and severely injuring him. Rotem said that his mother made him lie on the floor in a small space between the bed and the wall and lay on top of him, shielding him and saving his life.

In Kfar Azza, less than 2km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza, assailants arrived from Gaza by motorized paragliders and on foot, with residents describing fighters attacking homes and shooting through safe room doors. Sixty-two residents were killed, including 57 civilians. Among the victims were Hadar Rosenfeld, a 30-year-old accountant, and her husband, Itay Berdichesky, an electrical engineer also aged 30, who were shot dead in their home, leaving behind their 10-month-old twin boys. Hadar's cousin, Yahav Winner, a 36-year-old actor and filmmaker, was killed in his home while his wife escaped with their three-week-old baby girl and hid nearby for hours until they were rescued.

In Magen, CCTV footage verified by Amnesty International shows fighters on six motorcycles opening fire multiple times at a passing civilian vehicle, which slows to a stop near the Maon Junction on Road 232. The attack killed Fatima al-Talqat, a Bedouin resident of the town of Ar'ara in the Negev/Naqab region and mother of nine children. Her husband and infant son survived by hiding in an electricity junction box for six hours.

In Nahal Oz, where 13 civilians were killed, assailants targeted a row of houses on the northern outskirts, killing and abducting residents. Joshua Mollel, a Tanzanian agricultural student, was beaten and shot by fighters who appeared to be from the National Resistance Brigades and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. His body was desecrated and subsequently taken to Gaza, where it remained held until it was released on 5 November 2025.

Numerous other civilians of other nationalities, mostly Asian and African migrant workers, students and asylum seekers, were killed in the ground attacks on kibbutzim on 7 October 2023. Thai nationals, mostly agricultural workers, made up the largest group of foreign nationals killed on that day. Amnesty International documented the murder of two Thai agricultural workers in Re'im. Other notable cases include that of 12 Thai agricultural workers, as well as 10 Nepalese agricultural students, who were killed in the workers' living quarters of Alumim, and that of 11 Thai agricultural workers who were killed in Nir Oz.

In Netiv HaAsara, where Palestinian assailants arrived by paragliders at around 6.30am, 17 civilians were killed. Gil Taasa, a 45-year-old firefighter, was killed by a grenade thrown by an assailant into a safe room where he was sheltering with his two youngest sons, Shai, nine, and Koren, 13. Shai lost his right eye and Koren sustained multiple shrapnel injuries. The children's mother, Sabine Taasa, recounted that, after murdering her ex-husband Gil, the fighters tried to enter the main house, where she and her 15-year-old son Zohar were. In security camera footage verified by Amnesty International, there are images of the grenade being thrown and of two fighters armed with rifles, one wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades headband, walking around the yard of the family home shortly after. One of the fighters is seen confining the injured boys to a room of the house.

The Nova festival, north of Re'im, became the site of mass killings, where the largest number of people were killed on 7 October 2023. More than 3,000 people were attending the overnight outdoor trance music festival and 378 were killed at the festival site and a small section of Road 232 adjacent to the parking lot. They included 344 civilians attending the festival. They also included 34 members of military or security forces. Sixteen of them were soldiers: 12 of them were off-duty and attending the festival, while four were killed while fighting the assailants. Another 16 were police officers, 15 of whom were killed fighting the assailants; and two were agents of the Israel Security Agency (also known as Shabak or Shin Bet), one of whom was attending the festival. The figures do not include other festival-goers who were killed in other areas close to Gaza that day, including in bomb shelters and other locations where they sought shelter and on sections of Road 232 further from the festival site along which they were fleeing.

There is a broad consensus that the attack on the festival was not planned, as Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups did not know that the festival was taking place. Rather, fighters stumbled upon the Nova festival site as they drove along Road 232 on their way to attack kibbutzim and other localities. They fired into areas full of civilians, targeted terrified civilians who were trying to flee and hunted down others where they were trying to hide – in bomb shelters, public toilets, ditches and bushes. Fighters armed with rifles, machine guns, grenades and RPGs set up roadblocks to prevent festival-goers from fleeing and to intercept military and security forces coming to their rescue. Survivors described scenes of bodies strewn along Road 232, cars riddled with bullets and festival-goers hunted as they fled. CCTV and dashboard camera footage verified by Amnesty International documented the deliberate killing of civilians along escape routes.

Dashboard camera footage verified by Amnesty International shows three armed fighters, two of them wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades patch or headband, abducting one civilian and shooting at close range another apparent civilian hiding behind a car. Other footage from the same dashboard camera shows several assailants searching the body of the civilian who was shot in the previous video and abducting a woman who

was hiding inside the vehicle. The woman raises her hands and crouches down as bullets hit the ground nearby.

Older people were not spared and were among the civilians deliberately targeted. Sderot, a city of about 31,000 residents located less than 1km from Gaza at the closest point, was attacked by dozens of assailants, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, on 7 October 2023. Among those killed were a group of 13 civilians, most of them retirees from nearby areas, who were gunned down at and around a bus stop in the early morning, while they were starting a day trip to the Dead Sea.

According to an Israeli military investigation, 53 people were killed in Sderot, including two firefighters and 37 other civilians, as well as three soldiers. Two of the soldiers were killed in rocket attacks on Sderot in the days following the ground attack. Also among the 53 killed were 11 police officers; some were members of the local police, who were killed in an attack on a police station, while others were from units from outside the city who arrived later in the day in an attempt to rescue them.

At Zikim beach, a popular destination for fishing and other recreational activities, 3km north of Gaza, Palestinian assailants who arrived on inflatable rubber boats killed 17 civilians. Among them was Or Taasa, a 17-year-old boy whose father was killed the same morning in an attack on the family home in Netiv HaAsara that also gravely injured two of his younger brothers. His mother, Sabine Taasa, told Amnesty International that when she managed to reach him by phone, minutes before he was shot dead, he told her that he and his friends were under attack by Palestinian fighters in the public toilet where they were sheltering.

The armed groups who killed and injured civilians not directly taking part in hostilities in southern Israel violated, under international humanitarian law, the prohibition of murder and of direct attacks on civilians, in some cases, and of indiscriminate attacks, in others. In cases where they attacked homes and other civilian buildings, they also violated the prohibition of direct attacks on civilian objects.

INDISCRIMINATE ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE

On 7 October 2023, the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups launched some 3,000-5,000 unguided rockets and mortars towards populated areas in Israel. This was a barrage of unprecedented intensity in the context of repeated such attacks since 2001. Some 2,200 rockets and mortars were fired in the first four hours, according to the Israeli military.

The rocket attacks killed at least 10 civilians. The death toll would have been much higher were it not for Israel's air raid warning systems and public and private shelters. Seven of those killed were Bedouin citizens of Israel living in the Negev/Naqab region of southern Israel in communities which lack air raid warning systems and bomb shelters and have poor access to emergency medical services. Six of them were children aged between five and 15. Mai Abu Sabah, aged 13, as well as her grandmother Fayza Abu Sabah, aged 57, and four children from the Al-Kra'an family – brothers Malik Ibrahim Al-Kra'an and Jawad Ibrahim Al-Kra'an, aged 14 and 15, and their cousins Amin Akal Al-Kra'an, aged 11, and Mahmoud Diab Al-Kra'an, aged 12 – were killed when rockets landed on or near their homes in Al-Ba'at, an unrecognized Bedouin village. Yazan Zakaria Abu Juma'a, aged five, was killed by a rocket which struck the ground next to his home in Ar'ara, a Bedouin town located further south.

Another rocket killed three members of the same Jewish Israeli family, including one child, in the city of Netivot: Refael Meir Maskalchi, aged 12, his father, Netanel Maskalchi, aged 36, and his grandfather, Refael Fahimi, aged 63.

Palestinian armed groups continued to launch rockets into Israel at regular intervals, though at a gradually diminishing pace, apparently as a result of Israel's offensive on Gaza, which grew in scale and scope. According to the Israeli military, between 7 October 2023 and May 2024, some 12,500 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel from Gaza. Media reports indicated that rockets had killed another five civilians in Israel by the end of 2023, bringing the total to 15 civilians since 7 October 2023.

The armed groups who carried out these attacks violated the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks under international humanitarian law. As in many cases, there were no discernible military targets, they may have violated the prohibition of direct attacks on civilians and on civilian objects.

HOSTAGE-TAKING AND SEIZURE OF BODIES

Palestinian assailants, consisting of fighters in military-style clothing and armed or unarmed men in civilian clothing, seized 251 people during the Hamas-led attacks on 7 October 2023 and forcibly brought them to Gaza. The majority of these 251 people were seized alive, but, in 36 cases, reportedly, Palestinian assailants seized the bodies of people who were killed during the attacks.

Of the 251 people, 27 were soldiers on active duty at their assigned positions. The vast majority of the remaining 224 people were civilians. They comprised 124 men, 64 women and 36 children. Most of the 251 people seized were Jewish Israelis, including some with dual nationality. Seven were Bedouin citizens of Israel. At least 35 were foreign nationals.

Shoshan Haran, the founder and president of Fair Planet, an Israeli development NGO, and a member of Women Wage Peace, a grassroots peace movement, was abducted with six other members of her family, including three children (two of whom were her grandchildren). Shoshan, who lived in Be’eri and was aged 67 at the time, told Amnesty International that, after receiving a WhatsApp message warning of “an infiltration of terrorists” into the kibbutz at 6.29am, she sheltered in her safe room with members of her family who were visiting for the Jewish holidays.

Shoshan told Amnesty International that armed men forced them out of the safe room. One of them shouted at them in English, “Women, children, take. Men, boom-boom.” They were then taken out of the kibbutz, to Gaza. It was only when she and five members of her family were released from what she described as the “horrific 50 days of captivity” that she learnt the fate of her husband, Avshalom Haran, and other family members. She said: “My husband was murdered after we were forced out of the safe room, as were my sister, my brother-in-law and his [Filipino] carer, who also lived in my kibbutz.” Her son-in-law, Tal Shoham, who had also been abducted from her safe room but held separately in captivity, endured over 500 days in captivity before he was released.

Similar patterns of terrified individuals, couples and families being dragged or otherwise forced from their safe rooms occurred repeatedly across Be’eri, where 30 people were abducted, and multiple other kibbutzim. Palestinian assailants likewise abducted tens of young people from the Nova music festival and surrounding areas, after hunting them across fields or forcing them out of rocket shelters where they had taken cover.

Among those abducted were 16 children under the age of 10, and nine people aged over 80, according to a database produced by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. Some of the victims were clearly very badly injured, such as Hersh Goldberg-Polin, aged 22, who was abducted from Road 232 near the Nova festival site after fleeing the festival and seeking refuge in a rocket shelter. A video verified by Amnesty International shows Hersh being loaded onto a white pickup truck by armed men, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, while his left arm is freshly severed below the elbow and bleeding profusely, likely following an explosion. Four other hostages, all in civilian clothing, are seen in the same video, some being taken from the shelter, and one being dragged by the hair and beaten as he is loaded onto the truck. Hersh was killed in August 2024 with five other hostages while in captivity. Amnesty International has concluded, based on all available evidence, that they were killed by the Al-Qassam Brigades.

Amnesty International also documented evidence that Palestinian fighters, likely including fighters from both the Al-Qassam Brigades and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, took to Gaza the bodies of people who had been killed or mortally wounded during attacks in southern Israel. This practice denied families the opportunity to bury their loved ones, created further uncertainty and suffering, leaving families not knowing, sometimes for months or longer, if their loved ones had been killed on 7 October 2023. According to a database produced by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Palestinian fighters brought 36 bodies of civilians and soldiers they killed to Gaza.

Hamas has claimed that it did not plan to take civilians hostage and that its forces were not involved in abducting civilians in southern Israel, while appearing to blame the abduction of civilians on unaffiliated civilians who crossed over from Gaza during the attacks. However, Amnesty International documented a wealth of evidence that refutes Hamas’s claims. While some unaffiliated civilians from Gaza may have been involved in abducting civilians, video footage, images and other evidence collected by Amnesty International identify a clear pattern in which the Al-Qassam Brigades abducted civilians, including children and older people, in multiple civilian locations.

Following the 7 October 2023 attacks, statements and actions by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad made clear they were holding both civilians and soldiers as bargaining chips to compel Israeli authorities to take specific actions, such as releasing Palestinian prisoners, or refrain from others. There is also some evidence

that the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement held hostages in Gaza. Amnesty International could not determine whether other Palestinian armed groups held hostages.

As of 4 December 2025, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups had released 158 living hostages and 34 bodies of people seized on 7 October 2023, mostly in the context of negotiated deals, the last of which was concluded in early October 2025. Eight living hostages and 50 bodies had been rescued or retrieved through Israeli military operations. This left one body held in Gaza. Of those recorded as taken into captivity alive, 48 died in Gaza; at least six were killed by their captors, while others died as a result of Israeli military operations. Hamas claimed it faced challenges in reaching the remains of some people because they were buried under rubble.

The abduction and holding of civilians as hostages, as well as the holding of soldiers as hostages, constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law. The seizure and ill-treatment of dead bodies is likewise a violation of international humanitarian law.

PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Palestinian assailants, consisting of fighters in military-style clothing and armed or unarmed men in civilian clothing, subjected people they captured on 7 October 2023 to physical, sexual or psychological abuse either in Israel or in Gaza. They also abused the bodies of people killed.

Amnesty International documented the physical abuse of 16 people: seven individuals – six men and one woman – during the 7 October 2023 attacks in southern Israel and nine individuals – all men – while they were being transported to captivity in Gaza. Most of those responsible were clearly identifiable as members of armed groups and some specifically as fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades.

A Bedouin citizen of Israel, Salem Naif, described to Amnesty International being beaten by Palestinian assailants in front of his children. He said fighters attacked Holit, where he had been working, and captured him and his children at around 11.30am. He said that the assailants took his money, wallet and car keys, and then decided to take him and his children hostage to Gaza, but that they were able to escape.

Video evidence shows fighters in military-style clothing, who are sometimes identifiable as members of the Al-Qassam Brigades, dragging unarmed men in civilian clothing from shelters, beating them with rifle butts, kicking and insulting them.

A Thai agricultural worker told Amnesty International that he was taken hostage with four others from Re'im by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. He said they were taken to an abandoned warehouse in Gaza, where they were handed over to a different group of men, who beat them with their hands and weapons "and fired warning shots to intimidate" them. He said the abuse lasted for about 20 minutes, before the same group of armed men put them back into a vehicle and took them to a tunnel.

Amnesty International also documented evidence that armed or unarmed Palestinian assailants committed sexual assault during the 7 October 2023 attacks. However, Amnesty International was not able to reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the sexual violence or, for the most part, to determine the affiliation, if any, of the perpetrators. It also found no evidence that Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups gave orders to their fighters to commit acts of sexual violence during the attacks.

Amnesty International spoke to one individual who had reported in the media being subjected to rape at the Nova festival. He chose to remain anonymous but confirmed the testimony he had provided to the media, in which he said that, at the Nova festival site, armed men pinned him down, stripped him and raped him. Amnesty International also spoke to his lawyer, who had twice accompanied him to speak to the police, first in June 2024 to report the assault and again in July 2024 for a follow-up visit, and viewed his medical records.

Two returned hostages have said publicly that assailants touched them in intimate areas during the attacks, a form of sexual assault. One of these women, Ilana Gritzewsky, told the UN Security Council in August 2025 that she was subjected to physical and sexual violence while being abducted from Nir Oz. She said that, when she was captured, gunmen "beat me, humiliated me, touched me all over, and threw me on a motorcycle and took me to Gaza... On the way to Gaza, when they started to touch me and sexually abuse me, I passed out; physically and mentally, I couldn't take it anymore." She described regaining consciousness in Gaza, partially naked on the floor and surrounded by gunmen.

Amnesty International spoke to a therapist with long-standing experience treating survivors of sexual violence who reported providing intensive treatment and support to three survivors of rape during the 7 October 2023

attacks. The therapist said that these assaults were carried out at the Nova festival site and in kibbutzim, by multiple perpetrators.

The organization reviewed media articles in which another woman, who chose to remain anonymous, reported she was raped during the 7 October 2023 attacks, five named people said they saw rape and five other people reported hearing what they understood to be sexual assault during the attacks, including, in one case, a woman shouting that she was being stripped of her clothes. Most of these reports related to the Nova festival site, surrounding areas or escape routes from it. Amnesty International also spoke to another three mental health professionals who reported that at least 13 of their clients said they witnessed rape or other sexual assault at or after fleeing the Nova festival site. Amnesty International could not determine the extent of any possible overlap between the clients of different practitioners or between those clients and individuals who spoke to the media.

Amnesty International faced challenges investigating sexual violence. Except for one case referred to above, it was not able to interview people reporting they had survived or witnessed sexual violence, despite efforts to do so. In seeking instead to collect information from a broad range of sources, Amnesty International worked in line with international guidance on documenting conflict-related sexual violence, which recognizes the value of testimony by medical professionals and therapists, among others, in sexual violence investigations, or of relying on pre-existing statements made by survivors where possible as an alternative to re-interviewing them.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel (UN Commission of Inquiry) concluded in June 2024 that, regarding the 7 October 2023 attacks, it had “identified a pattern of sexual violence” and that “these were not isolated incidents but perpetrated in similar ways in several locations primarily against Israeli women.” It also said it had found indications that members of the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups had committed acts of gender-based violence. It said it was not able to reach any conclusions about rape, noting limitations to its investigation, including a lack of access to victims and witnesses and obstruction by the Israeli authorities.

Amnesty International documented evidence that, on 7 October 2023, Palestinian assailants mutilated, burnt, beat or otherwise mistreated the bodies of 19 victims who were either confirmed as dead or may have been dead at the time, in Israel or in Gaza. In some cases, the perpetrators were identifiably from the Al-Qassam Brigades, the Al-Quds Brigades or the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades.

In one example that gained international attention, the unresponsive body of a German-Israeli woman, Shani Louk, is seen in a video verified by Amnesty International lying face down in a pickup truck, wearing only boots, black underpants or shorts and a bra that appears raised above her breasts and is surrounded by four men, one armed with a rifle and one carrying an RPG, while she is paraded through cheering crowds in Gaza. Shani’s mother, Ricarda Louk, told Amnesty International how she and her family learnt about Shani’s abduction from seeing this video. “We recognized her immediately. We were in shock. How could it be that she was on the back of a pickup truck in this humiliating way?” she said.

Amnesty International has concluded that members of Hamas or its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, committed physical and sexual violence against hostages in captivity, amounting to torture or other ill-treatment. It was not able to determine whether other armed groups also did so.

The Thai agricultural worker mentioned earlier told Amnesty International that he and three other Thai hostages and one Israeli hostage with whom he was held were beaten and denied adequate provisions in captivity. He described how, after being taken to a tunnel in Gaza, fighters tied them up and beat them on multiple occasions over three days. He identified himself in a photograph showing five men held, with their arms restrained, at gunpoint by a fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades; he said the photograph was taken within the first few days of their arrival in the tunnel. He was released on 25 November 2023.

At least 18 other named hostages – 12 men, four women and two girls – reported publicly, after their release, that they were subjected to abuse in captivity that amounted to torture or other ill-treatment. Eleven of the men and one of the women described being subjected to beatings.

One of the 12 men, Eli Sharabi, who was abducted from Be’eri and released on 8 February 2025, told Israeli media that he was chained for the duration of his more than 15 months of captivity and subjected to multiple beatings, but that none of these beatings compared to the pain of the hunger to which he was also subjected. He also recounted that captors beat him and other hostages with whom he was held, denied them food and justified such ill-treatment by saying that it was what Palestinian detainees experienced in Israeli detention facilities.

The four women and two girls described in public forums or in the media that they were subjected to sexual violence, including sexual assault and threats of forced marriage. One of these women, Amit Soussana, said, to the UN Security Council, in interviews with a newspaper and in a documentary film, that the man guarding her forced her to perform a sexual act on him at gunpoint. Two named Israeli doctors and a social worker confirmed to the same newspaper that Amit reported the sexual violence to them after she was returned to Israel. Amit said she was held for the duration of her captivity by “armed Hamas guards”.

Five of the 12 men also described in media recordings being subjected to sexual assault, forced nudity and/or forcible shaving of body hair that constituted sexual violence. Four were held by Hamas; the other was held by Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Several other released hostages said they saw or heard the accounts of other hostages subjected to sexual violence.

Renana Eitan, a psychiatrist involved in treating hostages released in November 2023 in her then position as chair of psychiatry at Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, told Amnesty International that some hostages reported being beaten, forced to witness or participate in violent acts, confined in isolation or total darkness and deprived of basic needs, leading to serious and long-term mental and physical health implications. She also said that some returned hostages were subjected to sexual violence, including forced nudity and sexual assault. Acts of sexual violence committed in such circumstances amount to a form of torture or other ill-treatment.

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad subjected all hostages they held, as well as their family members, to psychological abuse. They held all hostages incommunicado, sought to humiliate them through non-consensual videos and public parading. They denied the hostages’ families information about their loved ones.

Videos released by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad showed hostages in captivity, often weeping or pleading for release. The filming and broadcasting of such videos violates the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. Some of the content of the videos also indicates the victim was subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. A video of Eyyatar David, which was released by the Al-Qassam Brigades on 2 August 2025, shows him in a tunnel, emaciated, and being forced to dig what he says he believes is his own grave. He describes going days without food. Being forced to dig one’s own grave in these circumstances amounts to torture, as would intentional denial of food over extended periods of time in captivity.

In committing these acts of physical, sexual and psychological abuse during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages subsequently held in Gaza, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, as well as, in some cases, people whose affiliation Amnesty International could not identify, breached one or more of the following international humanitarian law prohibitions: the prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment; the prohibition on mutilation; and the prohibition on rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Hamas has acknowledged that mistakes occurred during the 7 October 2023 attacks, although in very general terms. However, it has denied that Palestinian fighters mistreated civilians. There is, however, a wealth of evidence that conclusively refutes this, including digital images circulated by the Al-Qassam Brigades, and other Palestinian armed groups, that show their own fighters perpetrating abuses. Some statements by Hamas spokespeople claimed that its forces treated hostages humanely, while other statements by spokespeople for the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups suggested otherwise and included threats of execution.

Hamas specifically denied that Palestinian fighters perpetrated rape or other sexual violence during the 7 October 2023 attacks or against hostages. As already noted, Amnesty International found no evidence that Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups gave orders to their fighters to commit acts of sexual violence during the attacks. However, it documented evidence that sexual violence was perpetrated during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages.

UN bodies and NGOs have, on the one hand, expressed concern that widespread scepticism surrounding reports of sexual violence may contribute to the silencing of survivors and, on the other, cautioned against the instrumentalization of reports of sexual violence to justify Israel’s military attacks against Palestinians in Gaza.

CRIMES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Many of the serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations documented by Amnesty International constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, for which individuals bear personal criminal responsibility.

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War crimes applicable to non-international armed conflicts are listed in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), in the study on customary international humanitarian law of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other sources. Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that many of the violations of international humanitarian law it documented amount to war crimes. They include the war crimes of: “murder”; “cruel treatment and torture”; “committing outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment”; “taking of hostages”; “making the civilian population or individual civilians, not taking a direct part in hostilities, the object of attack”; “pillage”; “committing rape... or any other form of sexual violence”; “making civilian objects the object of attack”; “destroying or seizing ‘property of the adverse party not required by military necessity’”; “launching an indiscriminate attack resulting in death or injury to civilians”; “using human shields”; and “enforced disappearance”.

Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the ICC sets out a list of prohibited, inhumane acts and the contextual elements that need to be established for such an act to constitute a crime against humanity. Accordingly, a prohibited act must be “committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.” The article further specifies that “[a]ttack directed against any civilian population’ means a course of conduct involving the multiple commission of [listed prohibited, inhumane] acts... against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy to commit such attack.”

Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that many of the violations documented in this report that were carried out by members of Palestinian armed groups and unaffiliated civilians who joined the attack meet the contextual, material and mental elements required by Article 7 of the Rome Statute and therefore constitute crimes against humanity.

The overwhelming number of civilian locations targeted, statements from Hamas leaders and other organized armed groups, the repeated pattern of attacks deliberately targeting civilians, and the fact that most of those killed, injured or abducted in the attack were civilians, all point to the conclusion that the attack was directed against a civilian population. The scale, timing, coordination and spatial patterns further indicate objectives and organization.

Evidence collected and analysed by Amnesty International, including statements by Hamas leaders and the actions of fighters, points to Hamas leaders intending to carry out an attack on civilians, as well as on military targets, in Israel and to take hostages. Fighters from its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, and the military wings of other Palestinian armed groups acted accordingly when they attacked civilian locations on 7 October 2023 and took people into captivity.

The attack directed against the civilian population was widespread. Prohibited acts were committed during it in civilian communities throughout the areas surrounding Gaza, as well as the city of Ofakim, which lies further east. These communities are home to tens of thousands of people.

In addition to being widespread, the attack was also systematic. Amnesty International’s research documented patterns of identical or comparable prohibited acts committed in a similar manner. Perpetrators repeatedly treated victims in a similar way across many locations.

Prohibited acts documented by Amnesty International were committed “as part of” an attack directed against the civilian population, which was both widespread and systematic. Many inhumane acts, including murder, were committed as part of the attack on the civilian population. The temporal and geographical proximity of these inhumane acts is a clear indication of their nexus with such an attack.

Amnesty International’s findings indicate that, in many cases, perpetrators of inhumane acts knew that their conduct was part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population. In statements made on 7 October 2023 and its aftermath, Hamas leaders announced the attack and included civilian communities among the intended targets. Leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups invited Palestinians across the OPT to join the attack and commit acts of violence, including at civilian locations, with limited instructions to refrain from killing or harming civilians (and with no apparent instruction to limit their violence to military targets). Even if assailants had not known in advance that the communities they were attacking were civilian, it would have soon become obvious.

The organization’s findings strongly indicate that members of Palestinian armed groups, and, to a lesser extent, unaffiliated civilians committed the following inhumane acts as part of a widespread and systematic attack directed against a civilian population: “murder”; “extermination”; “imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law”; “enforced disappearance”; “torture”; “rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity”; and “other inhumane acts”.

MURDER

Hundreds of civilians were deliberately and unlawfully killed during the 7 October 2023 attacks. Based on the evidence Amnesty International has analysed, most of the fighters who deliberately killed civilians were members of the Al-Qassam Brigades. Amnesty International found evidence of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the National Resistance Brigades being present at the scene of one killing and evidence of the Al-Quds Brigades being involved in another. It has concluded that at least six hostages were killed by the Al-Qassam Brigades.

EXTERMINATION

The acts of murder perpetrated as part of the 7 October 2023 attacks “were constituted, or took place as part of, a mass killing of members of a civilian population” and therefore amount to the crime against humanity of extermination.

IMPRISONMENT

Scores of civilians were systematically taken and/or held hostage in southern Israel and imprisoned in Gaza in violation of fundamental rules of international law. The holding of hostages was done as part of an explicitly stated plan explained by the leadership of Hamas and of other Palestinian armed groups. Based on the evidence Amnesty International has analysed, the Palestinian armed groups responsible for abducting civilians or holding civilians or soldiers hostage are Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and likely also the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement.

TORTURE

Scores of people who were held under the power of Hamas – both civilians and soldiers – were subjected to severe physical or mental pain, including psychological abuse against all hostages and physical abuse against some of them.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and likely also the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement failed to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those they abducted or captured from southern Israel and imprisoned in Gaza as hostages. While in some cases, hostages were shown alive in videos that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad released to exert pressure on Israeli authorities, in many instances, families of hostages reported having no information as to whether their loved ones were alive or dead.

RAPE, SEXUAL SLAVERY, ENFORCED PROSTITUTION, FORCED PREGNANCY, ENFORCED STERILIZATION, OR ANY OTHER FORM OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE OF COMPARABLE GRAVITY

Amnesty International documented evidence that Palestinian assailants committed, in both Israel and in Gaza, sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence against people in their power. However, except for one case, it was unable to interview people who reported surviving or witnessing sexual violence during the attacks in Israel or while held hostage. It therefore could not reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the violence. It has concluded that members of Hamas or its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, committed sexual violence against hostages in captivity, based on credible indications of their responsibility in several cases. It also documented evidence that Palestinian Islamic Jihad committed sexual violence in the case of one hostage. However, in other cases where Amnesty International documented evidence of sexual violence against hostages in captivity and during the 7 October 2023 attacks, it could not determine the affiliation of the perpetrators. In most cases, it also could not determine whether the perpetrators were fighters or unaffiliated civilians.

Amnesty International collected evidence that indicated that rape was likely committed as part of the 7 October 2023 attacks. This included the testimonies of one person who told the organization he was raped and of a therapist who told the organization she provided intensive treatment to three other survivors of rape.

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UN entities also reported finding evidence of rape during the attacks and against at least one hostage. Nonetheless, Amnesty International did not consider that it had collected enough evidence to definitively conclude that rape, as opposed to sexual assault more broadly, was committed.

OTHER INHUMANE ACTS

Through subjecting civilian hostages, as well as captured soldiers held as hostages, to inhuman conditions, including denial of adequate food and medical care, during their unlawful imprisonment, Hamas and possibly other Palestinian armed groups inflicted on them great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

INVESTIGATIONS

Despite the scale and gravity of the violations committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages, accountability has remained elusive.

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups have generally failed to carry out investigations into crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages. Hamas's political as well as military leadership have failed to publicly recognize or condemn crimes committed and blamed wrongful acts on unaffiliated Palestinians from Gaza. They have even boasted about some acts that amount to crimes, such as the firing of unguided rockets into Israel.

Amnesty International is aware of one instance in which the Al-Qassam Brigades announced they had carried out an investigation into the killing of a hostage in Gaza. However, they issued few details about it.

Hamas has claimed that, following the end of the conflict, it will look into allegations of any “transgressions” that might have been perpetrated during it and will establish “accountability mechanisms” to address them. However, it failed to take such measures in the aftermath of previous Israeli offensives.

The authorities of the State of Palestine have also failed to take steps to investigate or bring perpetrators to justice. While President Mahmoud Abbas has called for the release of hostages and condemned the killing of civilians, Amnesty International is not aware of any recognition or condemnation by him or any other senior leader of the State of Palestine of the scope and scale of violations committed by Palestinian armed groups.

The Israeli authorities have taken steps to investigate the crimes committed by Palestinian assailants during the 7 October 2023 attacks, but crucial evidence was not collected. In many cases, in the rush to collect the bodies of people killed, the crime scenes were not effectively secured, bodies were moved by civilian volunteers before any documentation could occur, and information about the location and circumstances of the deaths was not recorded. While the Israeli authorities focused on the identification of the dead and timely burial, forensic examinations were limited and autopsies were not always carried out. In some cases, this has meant that family members of victims have been left without information about how their loved ones died.

Feminist groups have raised concerns regarding the shortcomings in the investigation and prosecution of gender-based violence crimes at all stages of the process. They include the lack of evidence collection and inadequate training for first responders in identifying signs of sexual violence in bodies. The Israel Women's Network and Women and War Collective criticized the government for prioritizing the “appropriation of CRSV [conflict-related sexual violence] crimes in service of national advocacy aims [which] diverted resources from efforts to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators and secure the return of the hostages.”

As of August 2025, Israeli authorities were reportedly detaining at least 200 Palestinians in detention accused of crimes committed during the attacks, but had not charged or brought any to trial. No decision had been made as to which legal system – civilian or military – the accused would be tried in or what the charges would be. They have not been able to receive visits by the ICRC. Amnesty International is also concerned about reports that Palestinians detained in Israel in connection with crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. This would be a serious violation of the rights of those detained and undermine the possibility of a fair trial and ensuring truth, justice and reparation for the victims, survivors and their families.

International mechanisms have also faced obstacles. The UN Commission of Inquiry and other bodies have been denied access to sites in Israel and cooperation from Israeli authorities. Despite these challenges, the UN Commission of Inquiry documented extensive evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Palestinian armed groups.

The Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC confirmed that an investigation it had opened before October 2023 into the situation in the State of Palestine was ongoing and included the escalation of violence and hostilities since 7 October 2023. It sought – and in one case the Pre-Trial Chamber issued – arrest warrants for senior Hamas leaders on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, but these individuals have all been killed in Israeli attacks.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through its research findings and legal analysis, Amnesty International has concluded that Palestinian armed groups committed violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity during their attacks in southern Israel that started on 7 October 2023 and continued to commit violations and crimes under international law in their holding and mistreatment of hostages and the withholding of bodies seized. It considers that Hamas, including its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, was chiefly responsible for these violations and crimes. Other Palestinian armed groups, notably Palestinian Islamic Jihad, including its military wing, the Al-Quds Brigades, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, formerly the military wing of the Fatah political movement, were responsible to a lesser extent, as were unaffiliated Palestinian civilians from Gaza in some instances.

In light of these conclusions, Amnesty International makes a number of recommendations to secure justice and reparation for victims and survivors of crimes committed. Amnesty International has presented its recommendations in relation to the genocide and other crimes under international law committed by Israel in Gaza, specifically, and in Israel and the OPT, more generally, in other publications.

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups must unconditionally return the body of Ran Gvili, seized from Israel on 7 October 2023, as soon as it is located. They should seek international assistance if needed to locate it. They must investigate serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes under international law, committed by their forces during the 7 October 2023 attacks and since, including with respect to hostages. They must publicly acknowledge, denounce and halt the serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes under international law, that have been and continue to be perpetrated, and commit to non-repetition of such violations. Amnesty International also calls on Hamas, as the de facto authority in Gaza, to ensure that all those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law and crimes under international law committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks and since then, including with respect to hostages, are brought to justice in fair proceedings conducted by an independent and impartial judicial mechanism.

Amnesty International calls on the Israeli authorities to end violations of international law against Palestinians in the OPT and Palestinian citizens of Israel. The authorities should continue criminal investigations into the 7 October 2023 attacks, hostage-taking and seizure and holding of bodies. Where there is sufficient admissible evidence, the authorities must bring those reasonably suspected of responsibility for crimes under international law to justice. The accused should be tried in civilian courts, in open proceedings that respect international human rights law and do not apply the death penalty. The Israeli authorities should take a survivor-centred approach to pursuing justice and accountability.

Israel, Hamas – as the de facto authority in Gaza – and the authorities of the State of Palestine should all engage with, cooperate fully with and provide access to all international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms investigating or monitoring violations of international law in Israel and the OPT, including the ICC, the UN Commission of Inquiry, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory Occupied Since 1967. All parties should share with these international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms all evidence they have collected that is relevant to the investigation of such violations, including those committed by Palestinian armed groups, for the purpose of pursuing accountability and redress.

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TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

On 7 October 2023, southern Israel was the scene of devastating attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups that has left lasting scars. Based on extensive video, testimonial and other evidence, Amnesty International has documented abuses by Palestinian assailants during the attacks and the treatment of those seized and held captive in the occupied Gaza Strip.

Hamas has claimed that its forces were not involved in the targeted killing, abduction or mistreatment of civilians during the attacks and that many civilians were killed by Israeli fire. However, Amnesty International has concluded that the vast majority of civilians who died were killed by Palestinian fighters and that all held in Gaza were unlawfully detained as hostages. It presents evidence that some of those captured were subjected to physical and sexual violence and others were killed by their captors.

The organization has determined that many of these violations constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder and torture. It highlights obstacles to accountability for these crimes and the need for redress for survivors and families of victims. It also provides the context of Israel's crimes against Palestinians, including genocide in Gaza and apartheid, and Hamas's violations against Palestinians.