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Israel must lift illegal and inhumane blockade on Gaza

The shutdown of Gaza's only power plant will exacerbate an already desperate humanitarian crisis for more than 2.2 million people trapped in the Gaza Strip, amid a massive bombing campaign by Israel that has killed at least 1,350 people and injured more than 6,000 people.

The airstrikes were launched in retaliation to the attack on 7 October by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups from Gaza who fired indiscriminate rockets and sent fighters into southern Israel, killing more than 1,200 people and injuring more than 2,700 and taking hostages, including many civilians.

"The Israeli authorities must immediately restore Gaza's electricity supply and suspend the increased restrictions imposed as a result of the Minister of Defence's order of 9 October 2023 and lift its illegal 16-year blockade on the Gaza Strip. The collective punishment of Gaza's civilian population amounts to a war crime – it is cruel and inhumane. As the occupying power, Israel has a clear obligation under international law to ensure the basic needs of Gaza's civilian population are met," said Amnesty International's Secretary General Agnès Callamard.

The blackout has plunged the Gaza strip into darkness and will exacerbate an ongoing humanitarian catastrophe. It will further limit communications and access to the internet. The power cuts will have a severe impact on essential services, access to clean water and will cause a public health disaster leaving Gaza's already depleted hospitals without vital medical equipment at a time when medics are struggling to treat thousands gravely wounded in Israeli attacks. It will also endanger the lives of

hospital patients, including people with chronic conditions or those in intensive care, including newborn babies on life support.

An Israeli minister said today that the authorities will not restore power or allow water or fuel to enter until Hamas releases hostages. This is an explicit confirmation that these acts have been taken to punish civilians in Gaza for the actions of Palestinian armed groups. Amnesty reiterates that Palestinian civilians are not responsible for the crimes of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups and Israel must not, under international law, make them suffer for acts they play no role in and cannot control.

“Palestinian armed groups’ horrific mass killing of Israeli civilians and other serious violations do not absolve Israel from upholding its obligations to respect international humanitarian law and to protect civilians. The collective punishment of civilians in Gaza will not bring justice to the victims of war crimes by Hamas and other armed groups or security to civilians in Israel,” said Agnes Callamard.

Amnesty International is also concerned by the repeated attacks on the Rafah border crossing. It calls on Israel to facilitate the establishment of humanitarian corridors for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, and to allow safe passage for those in need of medical care outside the Gaza Strip. It urges the international community to work towards an agreement over humanitarian corridors.

Israeli authorities must refrain from committing unlawful attacks that kill or injure civilians and destroy civilian homes and infrastructure. Israeli officials must refrain from incitement to violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem and ensure the safety of all civilians living under its control. All Palestinian armed groups in Gaza must release all civilian hostages unconditionally and immediately.

Amnesty International is currently investigating Israeli air strikes in Gaza, including the air strike on a residential building in al-Zeitoun neighbourhood, which killed 15 members of the same family, including seven children – five siblings and their two cousins, in addition to their elderly grandparents; the destruction of Burj Palestine, a high-rise building in al-Rimal neighbourhood in Gaza; and the bombing of a crowded market street in Jabalia refugee camp, which killed at least 69 people, including at least 15 Children.

Amnesty International is calling on Israel and Palestinian armed groups to take all feasible precautions to spare civilians, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

This output is part of a series of articles by Amnesty International into the escalating violence and human rights violations in Israel, Gaza and elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Amnesty International has published its initial findings on war crimes committed by Hamas and

Palestinian armed groups including mass summary executions, hostage-taking, and the firing of inherently indiscriminate rockets. With evidence still emerging of the violations committed in southern Israel, Amnesty International will continue its investigations to determine the full range of crimes committed under international law.

Background

Since 2007, Israel has imposed an air, land and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip collectively punishing its entire population. The current fighting is the sixth major military operation Israel and Gaza-based armed groups since then. On 9 October Israel's minister of defence Yoav Gallant announced a "complete siege on Gaza... No electricity, no food, no water, no gas – it's all closed," as part of the Israeli retaliatory attack following the attack by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups that killed 1,200 people.

In June, Amnesty International published its [investigation](#) into the May 2023 offensive on the Gaza strip, finding that Israel had unlawfully destroyed Palestinian homes, often without military necessity in what amounts to a form of collective punishment against the civilian population.

In its February 2022 report, Amnesty International set out how Israeli forces have committed in Gaza (as well as in the West Bank and Israel) acts prohibited by the Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Apartheid Convention, as part of a widespread and systemic attack against the civilian population with the aim of maintaining a system of oppression and domination over Palestinians, thereby constituting the crime against humanity of apartheid.

Previous reports by Amnesty International on violations and crimes committed in the context of fighting between Israel and Palestinian armed groups can be found [here](#).

Amnesty International is an impartial human rights organization and seeks to ensure that all parties to an armed conflict comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Accordingly, in future briefings, Amnesty International will be investigating Israel's military action in the Gaza Strip to determine whether it is complying with the rules of international humanitarian law, including by taking necessary precautions to minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects and refraining from unlawful attacks and from collective punishment of the civilian population, as required under international law. Amnesty International will also continue to monitor the activities of Hamas and Palestinian armed groups.

Associated documents

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12 October 2023 | [AI – Amnesty International](#) (Author)

State of Palestine

Gaza Strip: Humanitarian situation of more than 2.2 million people further deteriorates due to shutdown of the territory's only powerplant and constant air strikes by the Israeli air force; at least 1,350 people killed and more than 6,000 injured

[Die israelische Regierung muss die illegale Blockade des Gazastreifens aufheben](#) (Appeal or News Release, German)

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Gaza Strip: Humanitarian situation of more than 2.2 million people further deteriorates due to shutdown of the territory's only powerplant and constant air strikes by the Israeli air force; at least 1,350 people killed and more than 6,000 injured

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