

Spring 2026

# PALESTINE News

# WELCOME TO HELL



Dozens of Palestinians stripped and bound in Gaza before being transported to prison in Israel, December 2023  
Moti Milrod/Haaretz

## ‘They beat me senseless’

Faoud Hassan, 45-year-old father of five, was dragged from his bed by Israeli troops at two o'clock in the morning. They took him to a jail they called ‘hell’.

Israeli forces round up thousands of Palestinians every year and hold them in what an Israeli human rights group calls ‘a network of torture camps’.

There are close to 10,000 Palestinians – mainly men but also women and approximately 350 children – in Israeli prisons, held in shocking conditions, beaten, starved and deprived of

medical or legal help. Nearly 3,000 of them are from Gaza.

Few are charged and convicted of recognised criminal offences. Most are held as administrative detainees or ‘illegal combatants’, without trial, charge or even having committed an offense.

Those who are charged are tried in military not civil courts, applying harsher laws, with conviction rates of 99 per cent.

Hassan is a date picker from the village of Qusra, near the West Bank city of Nablus. He was one of 55 men interviewed for a report by B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights.

The report titled *Welcome to Hell – The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps* reveals abuse as policy.

This is Hassan’s testimony: I woke up, looked through the bedroom window and saw soldiers breaking open the front door.

There were more than 15 of them. They handcuffed and blindfolded me, and then one of the soldiers hit me on the back with his gun and pushed me towards the jeep.

There were about 11 soldiers in

the jeep, punching, hitting and kicking me with their guns during the ride.

We were transferred to Megiddo prison [in Israel]. As we got off the bus, a soldier said to us: ‘Welcome to hell.’

We were strip-searched again, fully naked. They took us into the Shin Bet [Israel security service] one by one. There was a huge Israeli flag on the wall. He ordered me to kiss it while I was being filmed.

There were about 20 soldiers in the room. I told the officer I wouldn’t, and he said, ‘You have to kiss the flag.’ I told him ‘No, I don’t want to.’

Suddenly, the 20 soldiers in the room started beating me. They hit me all over my body with whatever they could find. One of them kicked me in the head, and I passed out. They were still beating me when I came around.

They made me stand and took pictures of me with the flag behind me. I was taken out of the room and beaten again until I passed out again.

They sat me in the next room, and I kept hearing other detainees

“ *They hit me all over my body with whatever they could find* ”

being beaten and screaming. All the detainees came out of there bleeding and injured.

The cells had terrible conditions. They were small, we were 12 detainees in a cell that only had four beds. We suffered terribly from the cold. The windows were open, and there were not enough blankets, clothes or pillows. I couldn’t sleep because they would turn on the light all night. The food was terrible and there wasn’t enough of it to live, just not to die.

### Who we are

Palestine News is an independent publication produced by a group of journalists with decades of commitment to the Palestine movement. Our group is not allied to any political or religious organisation and is funded by voluntary contributions

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# Trump's Board of Peace ignores Gaza

Not one Palestinian, not one woman. Nearly all the original members of the proposed Board of Peace (BoP) tasked with supervision of the so-called ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians and the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip have a distinct bias towards Israeli interests.

US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, for example, has long invested in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and presented his 'Gaza Riviera' vision at the Davos World Economic Forum.

Previous UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and Russian President Vladimir Putin, men who are no strangers to illegal invasions following their takeovers of Iraq and Ukraine respectively, were also invited to join.

Trump seems to intend his brainchild to rival the United Nations on the world stage with its charter stating its objectives are 'to promote stability, restore dependable and lawful governance, and secure peace in areas affected or threatened by con-

flict'. A remit wider than just reconstructing Gaza.

Since the UN's authorisation in November last year, Trump has invited 60 national leaders with almost 30 accepting. A small number of invitees have refused, including France, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Spain and Ukraine. Others including China, UK, Australia, India, Japan and His Holiness the Pope, have yet to accept.

Trump as chair will have absolute power for life and be able to veto all policy proposals.

Mica Nava, Emerita Professor of the University of East London and a member of the Jewish Voice for Peace council, highlights the thrust of the BoP's current charter.

'Despite its name, [it] does not address the issue of peace in Gaza,' she said.

'It does not propose ways of developing and supporting humanitarian relief for Gaza's surviving population. There is no mention of mediation or justice or the right of return [of Palestinian refugees or discussion about the West Bank or the Rafah crossing [into Egypt].

'The 500 killed, injured and tortured by Israel since the ceasefire of October 2025 are not a concern. Palestinians are erased from the BoP Charter.

'It is clear that the BoP sees the devastated territory of Gaza as a real estate opportunity. Peace is not what the BoP is pursuing.

'The BoP is actually an unashamed, predatory, colonial-style landgrab, fuelled by unprecedented greed and maniacal self-aggrandisement,' she added.

## MPS WITH VESTED INTERESTS

Around 180 of Britain's 650 MPs in the last parliament accepted funding from pro-Israel lobby groups, individuals or Israeli state institutions during their political career.

The list published by Declassified UK reveals 130 Conservative MPs, 41 Labour, three Liberal Democrats, three DUP, two Independents and one Reform MP have received a total of over £1-million in donations.

Between them, there were 240 paid-for trips to Israel, at a cost of half a million pounds. Remarkably, 15 MPs accepted funding to travel to Israel during

the Gaza genocide.

Trevor Chinn, a multi-millionaire businessman and long-time pro-Israel lobbyist made donations totalling £200,000 to eight members of Keir Starmer's front bench when they were in opposition, including Angela Rayner, Rachel Reeves (now Chancellor), David Lammy (now Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Justice) and Wes Streeting (now Secretary of State for Health).

Chinn also gave £50,000 to Starmer's Labour leadership campaign, a donation only disclosed after Starmer had won.

## STOP FLYING ARMS TO ISRAEL

MPs fear the government is about to step up its support for the genocide in Gaza by resuming the full supply of weapons it cut back 16 months ago.

As a small concession to the public wave of horror at the UK's arming of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), in September 2024 the government suspended 29 of 350 arms licenses for the supply of weapons. It said these were the most directly deployable in the slaughter.

But they did not include components for the deadly F-35 stealth Lightning warplane, widely used for bombing and missile fire in Gaza.

The UK has not only supplied parts but also arranged the delivery of the planes. In January three new F-35s flew to Israel from RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk.

Trade Secretary Peter Kyle has now said he would review the suspension to facilitate trade talks with Israel because they were inextricably linked'.

In response, 58 MPs have written to tell him they were extremely concerned'.

Labour MP Steve Witherden said: 'If the government were to weaken its commitment to international law in order to secure a trade deal, that would be frankly shameful'

# Oil, the US dollar and the war on Gaza

The speed with which US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace (BoP) developed from a committee to deal with Gaza to a club for the countries of the

world with a billion-dollar membership fee offers a key to why Palestine is not only a regional issue, but central to world politics.

Trump has already kidnapped

Nicolas Maduro, the president of Venezuela – a country that holds one-fifth of the world's known oil reserves – and last year carried out airstrikes against Iran, another major oil producer.

Before the US invaded Iraq in 2003, Iraq sold its oil in Euros. Now it's in dollars.

Running through the violence in the Middle East and Venezuela is a sticky stream of oil.

The largely US-based oil sector has made profits of \$3 billion a day for the past 50 years.

Oil is central to the US because most world oil is bought and sold using the dollar. So countries buying oil have to buy dollars.

This creates a big demand for dollars, which keeps the value of the currency high. Companies selling oil accumulate gigantic piles of dollars. They spend these on US government bonds (interest-bearing loans to the government), property, and shares in major companies.

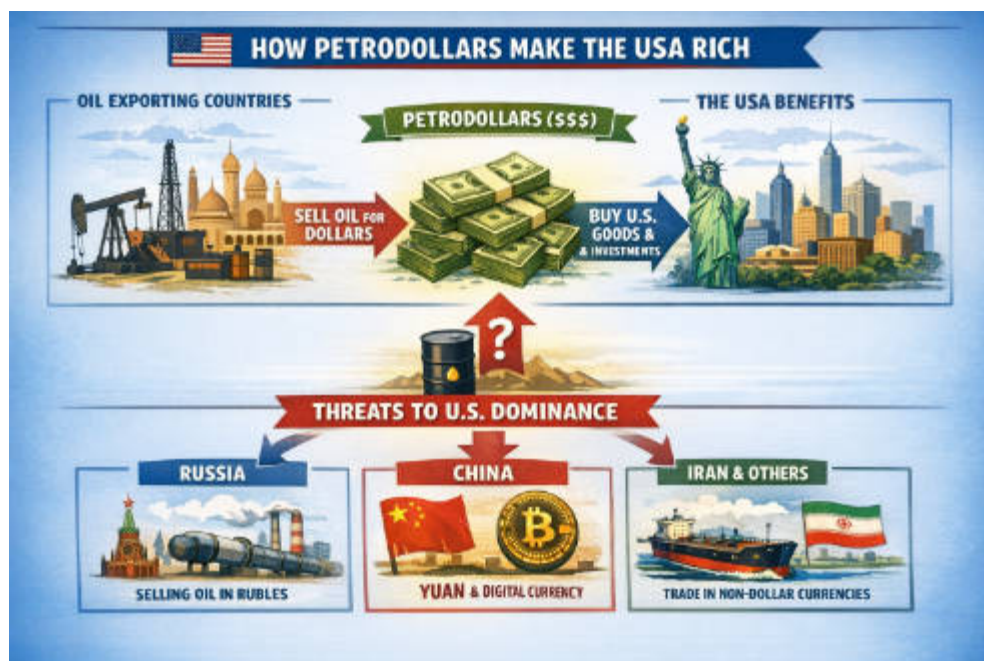
This flow of wealth into the US means its government can spend more than it gets from taxes. This keeps US taxes low, especially for the wealthy.

The dollar also finances US government spending on the military, creating the biggest armed forces in the world,

And it finances its billion-dollar supply of weapons to Israel – its agent and base in the Middle East, securing its watchdog role in the region. The Palestinian resistance threatens Israeli power, and its importance for the US.

Venezuela and Iran do not sell oil in dollars – a threat to the US.

Hence Trump's attack on Venezuela, his stronghold sanctions on Iran, and his total support for Israel's war on Gaza, not to mention his backing for sanctions on Russian oil and enthusiasm for seizing on the high seas vessels trying to evade them, all to protect the dollar.



# Israel bars 37 agencies from the strip

‘When aid stops, how am I supposed to survive?’ asks 35-year-old Abdul-Karim Al-Shawwa, sole caregiver for his elderly parents and the children of his brother, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike last August while attempting to get flour at an aid centre.

Israel has cancelled the licences of 37 international aid organisations operating in Gaza, saying they failed to meet new requirements.

Israeli rights groups, including B’Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, said the requirements ‘violate core humanitarian principles of independ-

ence and neutrality.’

Groups affected include Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders and the International Rescue Committee.

Under the Trump peace deal, international agencies were meant to replace the notorious US- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF).

The foundation’s distribution of food saw gunmen (Israeli army and others) shoot into desperate crowds.

After the peace deal GHF was obliged to leave. It is now making moves to return.

The ban also means stopping banking transfers through the Bank of Palestine, the only body authorised to make transfers in Gaza.

Without these transfers, aid organisations are unable to pay for desalination plants, operate water trucks, or provide even minimal local assistance.

Combined with limited health services, inadequate water supplies, and poor sanitation, UNICEF says that all 320,000 children under the age of five are still at risk of acute malnutrition.



Children who desperately need aid are being denied basic human rights by Israel  
Wikipedia

# ‘We are living through another war’

As part of the so-called peace deal negotiated by US President Donald Trump, Israeli forces were due to withdraw behind a yellow line running the length of the Gaza Strip.

After 60 days, they would pull back further to a red line boundary nearer the Israeli border (see diagram, right).

An international peacekeeping force was to be in place, and reconstruction of the whole of Gaza would start.

People who lived or farmed along the border with Israel would be able to return to their homes. Or so was the plan.

At the start, these boundaries were invisible so any Palestinian who strayed into the area was shot by Israeli forces. In 44 days following the agreement, 342 civilians, including children, were

killed in Gaza, many in this zone.

Israel started to mark a line with massive yellow concrete blocks. But they were often placed hundreds of metres beyond the line on the map, effectively seizing more land and expelling more people from their homes.

Israeli Chief of Staff, Eyal Zamir, announced the yellow line would become the new border.

This has reduced Gaza to less than half its size. Already one of the most densely populated areas in the world, two million people are now packed between rough seas and wet sands on one side and vast piles of rubble, rubbish and open sewage on the other.

Haj Abu Imad lives in a tent with his family in Al-Mawasi, southern Gaza, after being displaced by Israeli forces from their home in Jabalia camp, which was

the wrong side of the yellow line.

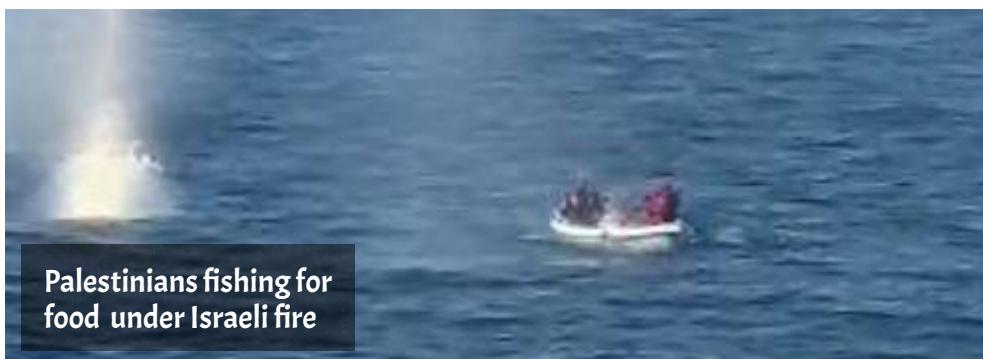
‘We don’t feel that the war has ended,’ says the 55-year-old.

‘They haven’t allowed us to return to our areas or even check on our homes’.

‘We are still living through another war, the war of displacement and suffering, especially with the arrival of winter.’

In northern Gaza, just two streets away from the yellow line in Beit Lahia, 28-year-old Zeina Kalab lives with her family in a partially destroyed house that barely protects them from the winter cold.

‘By five in the evening, no one dares to leave the house,’ she says. It feels like an unofficial curfew. At night, quadcopter drones fly over the area, and the sounds of explosions and blasts continue nonstop.’



Palestinians fishing for food under Israeli fire

## FISHERMEN TARGETED BY ISRAELI FORCES

The number of fishermen killed since the beginning of the war on Gaza has reached 232, including 67 who were targeted while fishing. ‘The situation is tragic...the sea is completely closed, and death pursues fishermen with every attempt to go out to seek a livelihood,’ said Zakaria Bakr, coordinator of the Palestinian fishermen’s committee at the Union of Agricultural Work. *Scan QR code for video*



# West Bank: Villages stormed and bulldozed, hundreds

## 'THIS WAS OUR HOME'

The systematic campaign of settler violence that has displaced entire Palestinian communities in the Jordan Valley continues, violating international law. Since October 2023, the Israeli military has accelerated demolition operations.

All 371 settlements with a population of 738,000 settlers in the West Bank are illegal.

The latest victims of escalating settler aggression are around 135 families from Ras Ein al Auja in January 2026.

Residents of neighbouring Mu'arrajat fled in July, leaving the once-thriving area deserted.

The bedouin communities who lived there represent a double displacement – they are descendants of refugees forced out of the Naqab, or Negev, in what is now Israel, in 1948.

Meanwhile Israeli military operations continue to demolish Palestinian homes under various pretexts. On February 5, forces destroyed homes in Beit Awa southwest of Hebron, claiming a security risk, despite the area's building permits being controlled by the Palestinian Authority. Israeli authorities proceed with demolitions.

Just days later, a three-storey house in Tarqumiya was demolished, displacing three

Palestinian families, including children and elderly. The demolition was justified as an 'unpermitted structure'.

The Palestinian National Bureau for Defending Land and Resisting Settlement has highlighted an increase in Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes in the West Bank.

Human rights organisations warn that the combination of settler violence with military demolition points to a coordinated strategy to alter the demographic makeup of the Occupied Territories.

On February 8, Israel's security cabinet approved a series of measures set to deepen Israeli control over the occupied West Bank.

The measures, announced by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Defence Minister Israel Katz, include the removal of old regulations barring Jewish citizens from purchasing land in the West Bank, according to a joint statement by the two ministers.

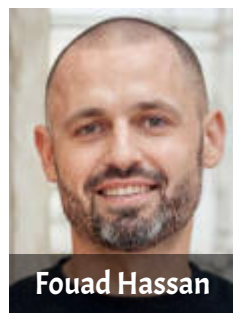
Smotrich said the move aimed at 'deepening our roots in all regions of the Land of Israel and burying the idea of a Palestinian state'.

The West Bank is well on the way to full Israeli control.



## WELCOME TO HELL

### FROM FRONT PAGE



Fouad Hassan

We got no visits, either from lawyers or the Red Crescent [Palestinian Red Cross].

The B'tselem report says 'Assaults were a fixture of everyday life in prison, with the use of sprays, stun grenades, metal batons, gun butts, brass knuckles, tasers, and attack dogs – often leading to severe injuries, loss of consciousness, broken bones, and death.'

The testimony of Sami Khalili, 41, from Nablus, who had been serving a prison sentence since 2003 and was held in the Negev Prison, tells of a similarly harrowing experience.

'We were taken to a room. They forced us to spread our legs and then sit half crouching. Then they started hitting us on our private parts with the metal detector.'

Several testimonies describe sexual abuse, including anal rape, and humiliation of Palestinian detainees by prison guards.

## ARMS HANDOUT FOR ILLEGAL SETTLERS

Israel's Minister for National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir in January approved the issue of gun licences to Israelis in 18 more illegal settlements

in the West Bank where Israelis have access to military grade weapons and drones. He said the move was to enhance self-defence and increase security'.



Ben-Gvir hands out assault rifles to settler guards  
Menahem Kahana/AFP/Getty

Israel launched a wide-scale armament programme at the start of its attack on the Gaza Strips.

In a statement, Ben-Gvir said that more than 240,000 Israelis have received gun permits since the expansion of the policy, compared with about 8,000 permits issued annually in previous years.

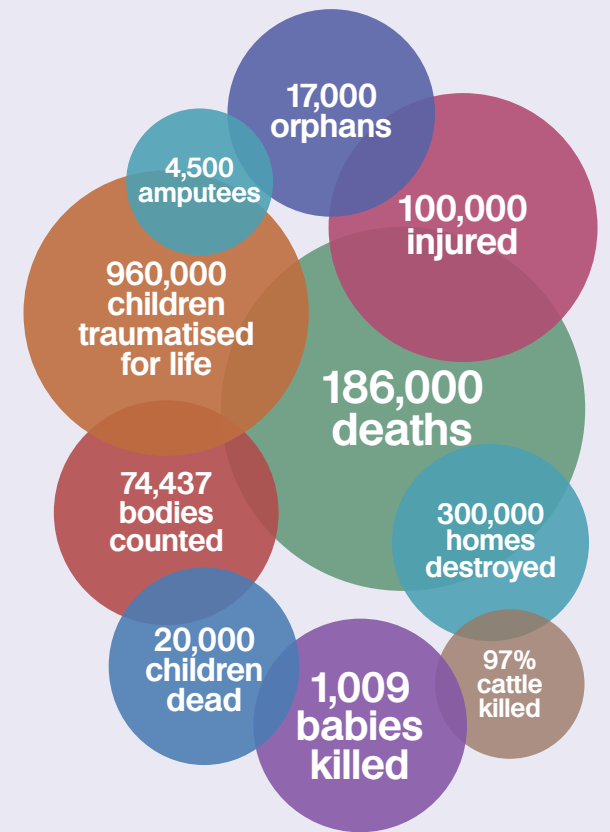
According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 1,800 settler attacks against Palestinians – about five per day – were documented in 2025

# s terrorised, dozens arrested



A young boy stands on the ruins of a family house Tarqumiya near Hebron in January. Three families were left homeless after Israel demolished it  
Mosab Shaver/ActiveStills

## Gaza genocide numbers

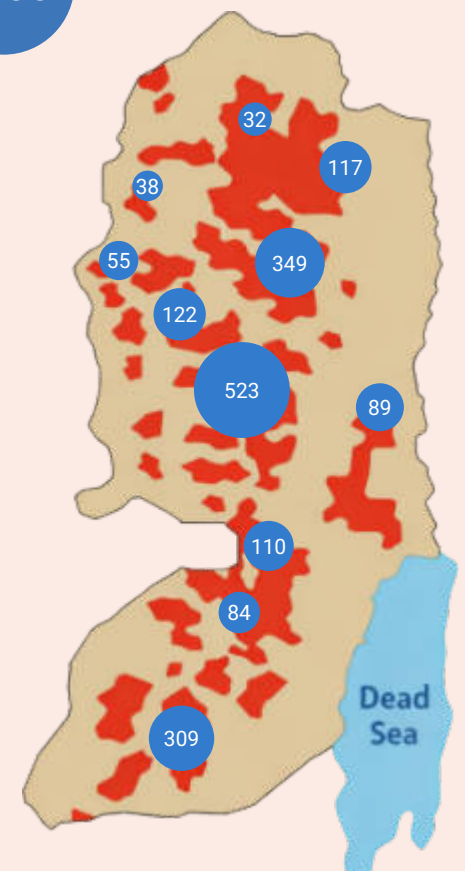


Despite the so-called ceasefire the death toll continues to rise  
Scan QR code for sources



## Israeli settler violence In the west bank

1860 Attacks since Oct 2023



- West Bank land illegally controlled by Israeli settlers
- Settler attacks on Palestinians since Oct 7th 2023

## WEST BANK TERROR DRIVES OUT VILLAGERS

The village of Yanoun in the northern West Bank is now empty of Palestinians.

It is among 45 villages whose inhabitants have been expelled since October 2023. Israeli settlers are stepping up their attacks and seizing more land.

Yanoun's troubles became critical in the late 1990s when an illegal Israeli settlement set up its first outpost overlooking the village.

Violent masked settlers repeatedly invaded Yanoun, killing sheep, uprooting olive trees and preventing the villagers from moving around freely.

Things got so bad that in 2002 the whole population was chased out.

Community leader Rashid Murrar told journalist Majad Jawad: 'Life became unbearable. They came with dogs and guns. They beat residents.'

The villagers only came back over a year later when an Israeli peace group accompanied them and stayed there 24/7.

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) took over that role, maintaining a protective presence for nearly 20 years so the villagers were never

alone with settlers.

Murrar told British companion Jan Sutch Pickard that his grandfather had grazed his large flocks right down into the Jordan Valley but his father could not because it became a closed military zone.

Murrar's flocks needed to be even smaller and could only graze along the roadside. Now he cannot even do that.

EAPPI spokesperson Iskandar Majlaton said: For nearly two decades, EAPPI stood alongside the people of Yanoun, documenting their suffering and offering protective presence as they resisted systematic settler violence.

'We grieve deeply for those we once walked with, now displaced and homeless.'

But the story is not over. Murrar expressed the famous Palestinian sumud – steadfastness.

'We were forced to leave once, then we returned. Now I live in an old house that I consider temporary. My wife lives far away. We will reunite very soon.'

## A LEADER FACING LIFE OR DEATH IN JAIL

Last August Israel's Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir barged his way into the cell of Palestinian prisoner Marwan Barghouti, often spoken of as a future leader.

'You won't win,' Ben-Gvir said. 'Whoever messes with the nation of Israel, whoever murders our children and women, we will wipe them out.'

This emerged in a 13-second video released by Ben-Gvir himself from his visit to Barghouti, who is in solitary confinement in Israel's brutal Ganot prison.

The video was the first public sighting of Barghouti for 10 years. He looked frail and thin; his wife Fadwa said she could not recognise him.

Barghouti was sentenced in 2002 to five life terms plus 40 years in prison, accused of involvement in a series of murders during

the Second Intifada (2000-05), a mass uprising by Palestinians against the Israeli occupation.

Barghouti had refused to acknowledge or cooperate with the Israeli court, but stated that he had no connection to the killings.

Over the 23 years there have been frequent reports of torture, resulting in blood clots, fractured ribs, a shoulder injury, and an ear infection.

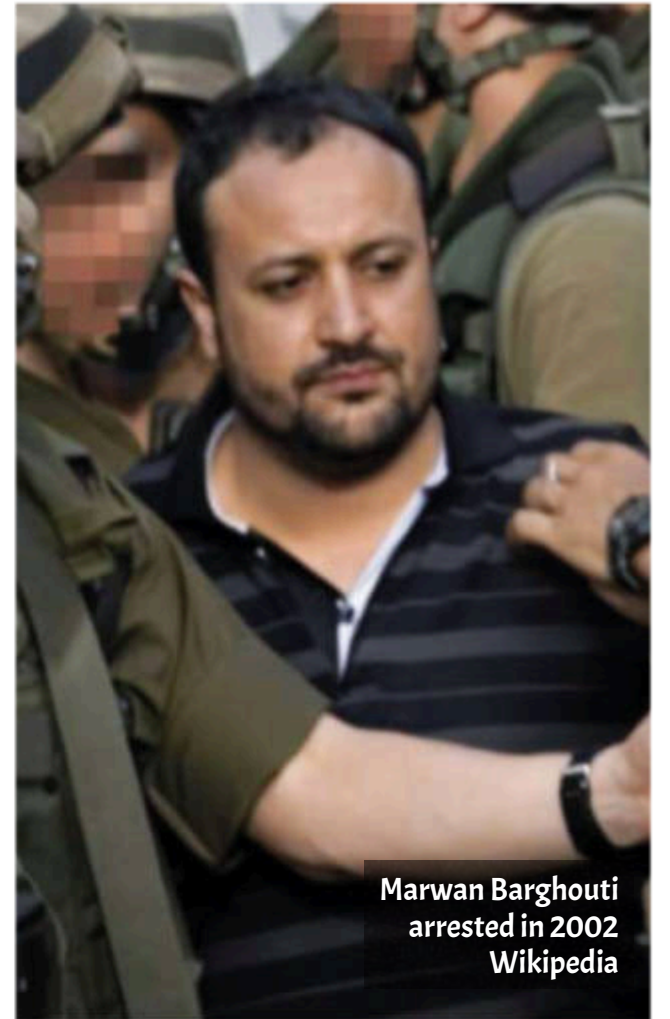
Barghouti is a charismatic figure who regularly comes top in polls on opinions for the future of Palestinian leadership.

He has support across the spectrum of Palestinian politics, since he rose to prominence in the nationalist party Fatah, which founded the PLO and controls the Palestinian Authority, and enjoys the support of Hamas which governed Gaza, and of other more radical groups.

In the negotiations towards the supposed ceasefire last October, Hamas placed Barghouti at the top of the list of prisoners to be freed in the hostage exchange.

Israel refused, as it has for years. In response to one appeal in January, Ben-Gvir said he should rather be executed: 'Marwan Barghouti should be taken out. He is a murderer, he is a terrorist.'

A bill to impose the death penalty on convicted terrorists is currently progressing through the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset.



Marwan Barghouti arrested in 2002  
Wikipedia

## Gaza war surgeon defeats Lawyers For Israel

An eye witness to the genocide in Gaza who has been hounded by a pro-Israel pressure group has been completely vindicated by his professional body.

UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI) tried to get British-Palestinian surgeon Ghassan Abu-Sittah struck off the medical register.

They took him to the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service (MPTS), accusing him of antisemitism and supporting terrorism.

The General Medical Council (GMC) joined forces with UKLFI but the tribunal found there was no evidence.

The MPTS found that the two bodies had misrepresented two X posts and had not provided accurate translations of an article published in a Lebanese newspaper.

Professor Abu-Sittah has worked with many humanitarian organisations all over the Middle East and went to Gaza within days of Israel's attacks on Gaza in October 2023.

He then gave evidence to the International

Criminal Court, which has issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The UKLFI is currently under investigation by the Charity Commission.

Speaking to Palestine News, Abu-Sittah said: 'I was targeted because I was the first eyewitness doctor to come out of Gaza. I saw the massacre at the Al-Ahli hospital.'

UKLFI and the GMC tried – and failed – to have him struck off.

His wife and children were harassed by the Metropolitan Police, his Harley Street clinic was targeted. The UKLFI tried to stop him becoming rector of Glasgow University.

The GMC had joined forces with the UKLFI to have him struck off because the pro-Israeli group had threatened the GMC with legal action if they didn't, he said.

His legal costs came to more than a quarter of a million pounds because of 'political interference from the Israeli embassy'.

'It's the [medical] institutions which have

allowed themselves to be weaponised over two years.'

They've been forced to align with with government's support for Israel, he said, or be faced with legal action by UKLFI.

“ *I saw the massacre at the Al-Ahli hospital* ”

But the doctors coming back from Gaza completely shattered the narrative. The public trust doctors much more than politicians.'

He said all the members of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice had been sanctioned by the United States.

'I gave evidence to the ICC over five days. But members have had their bank accounts frozen and their Microsoft email accounts cancelled.'

Abu-Sittah will not be returning to Gaza.

'I've been rejected twice [by Israel, which controls all the borders],' he said, adding that 92 per cent of doctors are not allowed in.

But he will return to the American University of Beirut in Lebanon where he is Chair of Conflict Medicine.

'I will keep treating the kids injured by war and I will keep doing it as long as I possibly can', he said.



Al-Ahli hospital courtyard after an Israeli strike October 2023  
Tansim News Agency



British officer in Palestine, from Palestine 36

## History lessons on screen

Life for Palestinians under occupation has always been precarious and vexing, cursed with oppressive officialdom, inspections, round-ups and raids. Not just now, but 90 years ago too.

Now the tormentors are Israeli. Then they were British. This is the setting for the award-winning film *Palestine 36*, by Palestinian film maker An-nemarie Jacir.

After the First World War, the former middle eastern territories of the defeated Turkish Ottoman Empire were grabbed by Britain and France, which were granted a mandate to govern them by the League of Nations, forerunner to the UN.

These mandates were effectively colonies. But where others were eventually steered to independence, Palestine was set up to be ruled by others – Jewish settlers from Europe, who changed the name to Israel.

Jews feature only subtly in the film. There are glimpses of their hilltop settlements, and scenes of Palestinians being terrorised on their land. But the villains of the film are the British – the originators of the conflict.

The main narrative of the film is the Palestine uprising of 1936-39, which was brutally put down. There are violent scenes. But the film focuses as well on the internal conflicts among Palestinians over how best to resist, from cooperation to revolution. That is drama too.

*Palestine 36* is bilingual in English and Arabic and the actors play their native nationalities. It has won a bucketful of awards – though has not been nominated for an Oscar.

Another powerful film, released in January, is *The Voice of Hind Rajab* directed by Kaouther Ben Hania. The actual voice of the five-year-old Gazan whose murder outraged and distressed the world is used in the film.

She's stranded and trapped in the family car after all others in it – her aunt, uncle and cousin – were killed by Israeli tank fire

Over a mobile she calls to be rescued by the Palestine Red Crescent ambulance service, for hours pleading with increasing desperation with the call handlers who are based in the West Bank's Ramallah and are bound by an unbearably convoluted Israeli-controlled system for dispatching emergency services.

Ambulances require permission from layers of Israeli bureaucracy to move – without that they would just be shot. The call handlers know this and Rajab tells them there is a tank sitting next to the car.

It takes five excruciating hours to get clearance from less than a kilometre away. We see the GPS route. The crew sees the car. Then, as the ambulance pulls alongside, we hear over Rajab's phone the actual explosion of tank fire. The phone goes dead

The workers in the call centre freeze. The bodies of Hind and her family were found along with the burnt-out ambulance nearby and two paramedics killed inside.

As the film closed, the 200-strong audience were stunned into silence. People sat motionless through the credits.

Even as the director came on stage for a Q&A it felt impossible to applaud the story we had just witnessed, and which would haunt us for years.

## Save their pitch, say 357,000

Young footballers at a Bethlehem refugee camp are taking on the might of the IDF, and winning.

The pitch at the Aida camp is the only place where young people can play, but in December Israel ordered it to be destroyed. They said it was a security risk, being next to the concrete separation wall, which goes past the camp.

It was also constructed without planning consent – a common problem on the West Bank where permits are almost impossible to acquire.

The Aida community was ordered to destroy the pitch themselves; if they failed to do so the Israeli authorities would make them pay the cost.

Instead the community started a campaign. A petition abroad raised 357,000 names, and the Palestine Football Association secured the support of UEFA, the

global football body.

UEFA is based in Switzerland, where it enjoys tax-free status. Local councillors in Nyon threatened to bring a case against UEFA for a breach of international law in supporting the Israeli Football Federation.

And Swiss government officials put pressure on its leaders to order the Israeli Football Federation to intervene with the IDF, and in January it was announced the pitch could stay.

UEFA said: 'We hope the pitch can continue to serve the local community as a safe place for children and youth.'

By early February however there had been no confirmation from the Israelis. The Aida community is ready to fight on if it needs to.



Palestinian footballer Nour Abu Ghneim at Aida pitch  
Mosab Shawer/Activestills

## 'Palestinian Pele' killed

Suleiman al-Obeid, the 'Palestinian Pele', was killed last August while queuing for humanitarian aid.

He had played football for the Palestine national team since 2007 and scored more than 100 goals. The Palestine Football Association (PFA) said the number of footballers killed or who died from starvation has reached 421, adding that 288 sports facilities, from stadiums and training grounds to gyms and clubhouses, have been made rubble across the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Palestine's football team, the Fedayeen – holy warriors – plays above its weight. Currently it stands 95 out of 210 in world rankings; in 2017-18 it rose to 78th – higher than Israel.

Palestine was on the verge of playing to qualify for this year's world cup when

Israel's onslaught began. The team could not use its West Bank stadium but had to play home games in Amman, Jordan – without its Gaza teammates, whom Israel prevented from leaving.

Palestine plays in the Asian division of world football division, unlike Israel which plays in the European.

They still did well, beating Qatar, the Asian division champions, and reaching the third of five elimination rounds of matches.

It was only by one goal that Palestine did not reach the fourth round.

They were winning 1-0 in the seventh minute of extra time, when opponents Oman were awarded a controversial penalty. The 1-1 final score put Palestine out.



## School still going in Khan Younis

Brave students and teachers in Gaza are keeping their schools going despite the failure of Trump's supposed ceasefire.

Children wrap up against the cold at the Wahaj school in Khan Younis, just 200 metres from the notorious 'Yellow Line' that designates the border between the areas controlled by Hamas or Israel.

Forbidding anyone to cross the line, knowingly or not, the Israeli military shoots dead people on the spot, and a number have been killed in recent months, including children.

There are 650 pupils in the school, aged 5 to 14, and 20 volunteer teachers in 18 classrooms working in two daily shifts.

Despite continued Israeli shelling, bomb blasts and airstrikes, they endure constant fear and danger, yet persist in their belief that education remains a weapon of hope in the face of devastation.



School in Khan Younis surrounded by signs of shelling and gunfire  
Doaa Albaaz/ActiveStills

## KEEP ISRAEL OUT OF SHOPS, THE FOOTY AND THE TELLY

Boycott, divestment, sanctions (BDS) puts pressure on Israel to comply with international laws is growing rapidly across the world.  
Scan the QR code to see the brands to avoid



### The boycott is biting

Farmers in Israel are warning that the country's agricultural exports face collapse because of international outrage over the Gaza genocide.

'They don't want our mangos,' a mango farmer told Israeli TV Channel Kan11.

Retired general and military spokesperson Moti Almoz said the season is one of the hardest experienced by the mango growers in Israel'. The narrator

“ They don't want our mangos ”

on the state broadcaster said they are talking about an actual collapse'.

With 25% of the crop rotting on the ground, Almoz said: The fridge is full, the merchants have taken what they've ordered'. He is losing hundreds of thousands of shekels [4.27 shekels to the pound]. Larger farms are losing millions.

Because of the war in Gaza, they are reducing the scale of purchase from Israel. 'They don't want our mangos.'



Mangos that Israeli farmers cannot sell

### Football: Euro stars shooting for Palestine

The campaign to kick Israel out of world football was set back last October when the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) called off discussions of a move from the Palestine Football Association and others.

Ireland, Turkey and 12 middle eastern federations support the call, but UEFA dropped it when the supposed ceasefire in Gaza was agreed.

Football fans across Europe have backed a Show Israel the Red Card' campaign, in which blocks of fans hold large red cards above their heads.

Some of the first fans to do so were at Glasgow's Celtic in 2023. According to the group Sporting Palestine, 72 other teams across 25 countries and six continents have seen similar protests.

Footballers are strongly discouraged from political statements but in Britain in recent times they have included: Liverpool striker Mohamed Salah, who called on world leaders 'to make sure the violence and killing of innocent people stops immediately'. He also made donations to Gaza and has been joined by club col-

leagues Ibrahims Konate and Jeremie Frimpong and former player Sadio Mane.

Salah's Egyptian teammate Mohamed Elneny, who played for Arsenal, changed his social media profile picture to the Palestinian flag, and his former Arsenal teammate and German international Mesut Ozil has worn a 'Free Palestine' t-shirt on the pitch.

Last year's winner of the Golden Ball and UEFA Champions League Player of the Season, Ousmane Dembele of Paris Saint-Germain, is a public supporter of Palestine.

### Song contest: Winners want Israel out

Winners of the past two Eurovision Song Contests say they want Israel to be barred from this year's event.

Nemo, the Swiss singer who won in 2024, said the country's actions in Gaza were fundamentally at odds with the values that Eurovision claims to uphold — 'peace, unity, and respect for human rights'.

JJ, the Austrian singer who won last year, felt it was very disappointing to see Israel still participating — 'I would like the next Eurovision to be held in Vienna and without Israel', he said.

This year's contest, staged by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) but including Israel, will be in Vienna with the final on May 16.

Five nations have withdrawn in protest: Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, Slovenia and Iceland.

The pair of winners are far from the only artists to support the global campaign to exclude Israel from international cultural and sporting events.

Last May, 72 previous contestants signed an open letter calling for the EBU to ban Israel from taking part.

All have argued that to

permit Israeli participation is inconsistent with the decision to expel Russia indefinitely in February 2022, the day after the invasion of Ukraine.

For Israel, Eurovision is war by other means.

Part of the case against it is an accusation that the Israeli government used media unfairly to boost its entrant, who came second with a huge public vote.

