



Red Flag Alert for Genocide

Israel

Update #3

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The Lemkin Institute of Genocide Prevention condemns the recent surge of violence that has occurred in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. In particular, we are deeply concerned about the ongoing Israeli military aggression in Jenin, especially in the context of advancing Israeli settlements in the West Bank. We reiterate our concern that Israel is dangerously vulnerable to the mass murder form of genocide against Palestinians.

The current Israeli attack in Jenin is one of the many examples of the downward spiral in which Israel now finds itself. On July 3, Israel began the largest military operation in the West Bank since 2002. Drone strikes and a missile attack were carried out on the Jenin refugee camp (a densely populated area with approximately 14,000 residents) in addition to massive military activities on ground, killing at least eleven and injuring about 100 Palestinians. Five of the killed were teenagers, the Palestinian Health Ministry reported. According to the Palestinian Red Crescent, more than 500 families had to leave the refugee camp due to the ongoing military actions and risks to civilians. The situation continues to escalate.

This is not the first assault of the camp in this short period of time. On June 19, there was another significant episode of the Israeli Armed Forces attacking the Jenin refugee camp, which, according to Al-Jazeera, resulted in at least five murders of Palestinians and hundreds of wounded, among them children. It was also reported that Israeli forces shot at several journalists and targeted four ambulances during the attack. In response, two Hamas gunmen killed four Israelis at a restaurant near the settlement of Eli on June 20, after which Israeli settlers launched retaliatory rampages against neighboring Palestinian villages, killing one person and setting 30 homes and 60 cars alight.

In Gaza, Israel conducted airstrikes from May 2-3 and May 9-13 (the latter also known as the “Shield and Arrow” military operation). The representative of the United Kingdom at the UN Security Council reported more than twelve civilian deaths, including six children. The airstrikes were provoked by the death of a leader of the Islamic Jihad, Khader Adnan, who died in an

Israeli jail after an 86-day hunger strike. In response to his death, the Islamic Jihad fired over 100 rockets towards Israel. In retaliation, the Israeli military conducted airstrikes on the Gaza Strip, killing a Palestinian and causing structural damage. Encouraged by the United Nations, Egypt brokered a short-lived ceasefire after Israel's initial air strikes. Nevertheless, Israel resumed its airstrikes on the Gaza Strip on May 9 (the "Shield and Arrow" military operation).

As Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, reported, over five days, Israel conducted 323 airstrikes against what it said were Palestinian Islamic Jihad military targets in Gaza. Nearly 100 housing units were destroyed, more than 125 were left uninhabitable, and more than 1,100 Palestinians were displaced. Israeli authorities closed both crossings between Gaza and Israel, preventing the entry of food, medical supplies, and fuel. We condemn Israel's disproportionate use of force that has worsened the already challenging humanitarian situation in Gaza in violation of international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, the Lemkin Institute is alarmed by the increase in tensions between the Israeli authorities and the Druze community at the occupied Golan Heights. Violent clashes between the Israeli police and Golan residents were reported on June 21. The Druze community opposed the establishment of the new wind farm near the Syrian Druze towns of Majdal Shams and Masada in the northern Golan Heights, as this act was viewed as an encroachment from Israel's side. Israeli police responded to demonstrations and blocked roads with tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons. As a result, several residents were injured. We urge Israeli authorities to refrain from the use of violence against protesters. We further urge Israel not only to stop the further expansion into the Golan Heights, but also to abide by UN Resolution 497, which demands Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights.

Finally, the Lemkin Institute condemns the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements and the Israeli state's support for settler violence against Palestinians. Since the new government took office at the start of 2023, 13,000 new West Bank settlements have been approved, making 2023 already the year with the highest number of settlement approvals on record. Most recently, the Israeli state authorized the establishment of an Israeli settlement in Homesh, in the north of the occupied West Bank. In addition to that, in response to the June escalation in the West Bank, the Israeli Defence Ministry committee approved the establishment of more than 5,000 new settlement housing units in the occupied West Bank, Al-Jazeera reported. This decision is contrary to international law (for instance, UN Security Council Resolution 2334) and contradicts the commitment that Israel made during the meeting in Aqaba on February 23 – and reaffirmed on March 19 during the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting – "to stop discussion of any new settlement units for 4 months and to stop authorization of any outposts for 6 months." We call upon Israel to withdraw the illegal settlements.

In support of Israel's final expansion into remaining Palestinian lands, on May 21 the new Israeli National Security Minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, went to the Temple Mount (Al-Haram al-Sharif) for a second time since taking office, which was both a provocation and a humiliation for Palestinians. His actions continue to fan the flames of anti-Palstinian racism and appear to be gaining ever greater numbers of supporters within Israeli society for what could amount to the total genocide of the Palestinians.

The spiral violence in the West Bank, particularly in the cities of Nablus and Jenin, could easily create the conditions for radicalization of Israeli society into mass murder. In 2023, the Israeli far-right government conducted an unprecedented number of military raids in the West Bank, which always resulted in civilian casualties. According to the UN Representative of the United Kingdom, Israeli security forces have killed 110 Palestinians in the West Bank since the beginning of 2023, including civilians. "If this alarming rate of casualties continues, 2023 will be the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since the United Nations records began in 2004," the UN Representative of the United Kingdom said.

The Lemkin Institute of Genocide Prevention hopes that the world will respond appropriately to the escalating violence of the Israeli state and society towards Palestinians by forcing Israeli authorities to pull back from their brinksmanship through the use of diplomatic pressure, including sanctions. A renewed peace process must be placed back on the agenda by Israel's strong allies, particularly the United States.