



**Lemkin Institute**

*for Genocide Prevention  
and Human Security*

## **Four Facts about Israel's Genocide**

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security welcomes the scholars, NGOs, media outlets, and large human rights organizations who have spoken out in the past week, some of which have even used the correct term – genocide – to describe the horror that Israel is inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza. We believe that correctly diagnosing the problem is critical to the creation of a long-term and sustainable peace. We also believe that the consistent and correct use of this term will help guide genocide prevention efforts in the future.

An eleventh-hour decision to use the word 'genocide' to describe the events in Gaza can be seen as self-serving, of course, a rush to be on the right side of history before it is too late to deny one's complicity. The lateness of the effort is certainly the consequence of a disappointing lack of courage in professions supposedly filled with brave defenders of humanity. It is also the result of imperial Western arrogance in the human rights and international legal industries. These industries have for far too long ignored the voices of threatened communities and engaged in gatekeeping of the term 'genocide' to the extent that it can only 'correctly' be used by lawyers who graduated from elite European universities and who are involved in expensive trials decades after the violence has concluded.

Whatever the reasons for the sudden change of heart, we are concerned about the confusion it will create in perceptions of the crime of genocide. Given that many of the people suddenly recognizing genocide — or “extermination” — in Gaza are connected with large, respected institutions, such as [Human Rights Watch](#), some observers may

assume that it was impossible to responsibly use the term before the present exterminationist pattern. Others may assume that the only genocidal crime committed by Israel is the current man-made famine.

We wish to counter these two false impressions with four facts.

### **Fact 1: Genocide is not only mass murder**

A common misunderstanding about genocide is that it is a synonym for mass murder and hence the word can only be used when we witness many people dying at once from a single cause, like starvation, that the perpetrators could easily stop. This would mean that genocide cannot be called out before we reach the extermination pattern and before we have an abundance of irrefutable evidence of perpetrator intent. If we wait until this point to begin discussing genocide, it will always be too late.

States, organizations, and the media should know — and many of them certainly do know — that genocide is a process that takes many shapes and patterns throughout its lifespan and can be committed via various acts as recognized in the 1948 Genocide Convention, only one of which is direct killing. It is important to recognize genocide early because it is not self-limiting and will always radicalize from small acts to massive ones. Amnesty International, an organization that is known for being very conservative about the use of the term genocide, [recognized](#) in December 2024 that Israel was committing genocide.

While Israel's current cruelly orchestrated starvation of a captive civilian population is indeed very convincing evidence of genocide, and may make any ICJ or ICC cases slam dunks, as much as that is possible in international law, the refusal by institutions to acknowledge the genocidal process in Gaza until it has reached its most intense and lethal form is one of the primary reasons that Gazans are suffering this concentrated man-made famine now. The absence of an organized resistance to genocide from the media, NGOs, and world leaders over the last 20 months has allowed Israel to operate with impunity, using ever more radical means to eliminate Palestinians.

If these voices had spoken out specifically against genocide earlier, if the press and human rights organizations had actively pursued genocide prevention, the clear indicators of the Israeli state's genocidal intent that existed before October 7, 2023 would have been evident. Governments could have been pressured to

prevent Israel from escalating to the mass murder form of genocide once Hamas's October 7 attack provided the tripwire for a intensified genocidal process.

Imagine the lives that could have been spared, the suffering that could have been prevented, if all of these well-resourced bodies had taken the Genocide Convention seriously!

### **Fact Two: Israel is Committing Genocide Across Palestine**

When people and institutions misrepresent genocide as mass murder, they end up concealing ongoing genocides. We believe that one of the reasons that so many well-appointed voices in the global West have chosen to represent genocide as 'mass murder' – or focus on the 'special intent' requirement (which is not even in the original Genocide Convention) and use it as a weapon to prevent the application of the term – is precisely to hide Israel's genocide against Palestinians.

We are concerned that the voices who are only now raising the alarm for Gaza do not understand, or will not recognize, that Israel's other crimes, apart from the man-made famine, are also part of the enormous, overarching genocidal process against Palestinians. If the genocide is only the man-made famine, then the displacement, the humiliation, the murders, the detentions, the sexual violence, the property damage, and all the other insidious acts being committed by the Israeli state in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem are something else.

Such a position is wrong. Israel's genocide against Palestinians involves the planned and entirely intentional murder and forced displacement of all Palestinians from their ancestral homes across historical Palestine using all available means. It has been going on since Israel's founding, but sped up significantly first after Netanyahu assumed power in 2022 and again after October 7, 2023. The vast majority of Israelis agree with this plan and clearly will support anything to see it realized – from apartheid to extermination. The goal is to create a Greater Israel that is completely cleansed of Palestinian life. The monstrous nature of this goal has been evidenced every day by the statements of Israel's leadership and civil society, by the unrelenting destruction of Palestinian life, including resources necessary for life, and by the grotesque behavior of Israeli soldiers. It has not been hidden.

Many voices have expressed a fear that Israel was planning “[ethnic cleansing](#)” of Palestinians, especially after U.S. President Trump took office. This term has unfortunately deflected from that fact that Israel has already been pursuing a full-blown ‘root and branch’ genocide against Palestinians. Whether it uses forced displacement or man-made famine to achieve its goals is a matter of tactics and practical concerns. The goal has always been to rid Palestine of Palestinians. This would have been much more clear if more people had been willing to face the facts and use the right word.

As we have said before, Israel is committing a vast genocide against Palestinians across Palestine and will not stop on its own until the entirety of Palestine is empty of Palestinians.

### **Fact Three: Elite, Western Arrogance is to Blame for Much of the Confusion about Genocide**

If anything will change after these pathetic two years of hand-wringing and lack of action in the Western world, may it be the domination of global knowledge and policy by Western leaders and Western academics.

For years, Western scholars and international jurists have worked very hard to gatekeep the term genocide even from survivors of genocide, electing themselves arbiters of what is and is not this terrible crime. Victim groups, threatened groups, and thinkers who dared to challenge them have been dismissed, marginalized and mocked.

Sometimes Western scholars and international jurists engage in counterproductive gatekeeping because of their blind allegiance to Israel, because they are under the sway of Israeli propaganda, and/or because their funders (North American and European governments, large foundations) are blindly pro-Israel.

And sometimes they have engaged in gatekeeping because they are arrogant and believe themselves to be superior in intellect and reason to the vast majority of human beings, especially outside of Europe.

These people have had the ears of government officials and UN agencies. They have marginalized Palestinians along with all other groups affected by

genocide, some of them even while stating that they support Palestinians and these other groups.

It is time for people outside of the West to take control of genocide prevention and knowledge production, and pursue policy agendas that are free from Western funding and meddling. Palestinian academics will be an important part of this new movement.

It is very important in this respect to take note of the fact that a great deal of Western NGO funding has benefited genocidal regimes by weakening opposition to genocide, compelling complicity in genocide, or directly contributing to genocidal ideology. Today's state-sponsored "civil society" globally is utterly captured by Western states and agendas, which unfortunately include genocide.

#### **Fact Four: The World's Peoples Have Shown Themselves to Be Better at Genocide Prevention than Any Organization or Political Entity**

Throughout the horror in Gaza, it is only the people of the world who have consistently viewed the situation clearly and have shown the courage to speak out against genocide. These demonstrations of anti-genocide mettle have resulted in a powerful de facto alliance between the 'Global South' (everyone outside of Western Europe and North America) and the youth in Western Europe and North America. In the West, this means young people have been subjected to police brutality, infringements on their human and civil rights, job loss, expulsion from universities, and other serious consequences. Their solidarity with the 1948 Genocide Convention has put the power classes in the West to shame.

The Lemkin Institute hopes that the people of the world will stand strong in their understanding of genocide and their demonstrated superior ability to call out red flags. Your understanding is based on your willingness to listen to Palestinians and to observe the behavior of Israeli leaders and armed forces with clear eyes. We have found great strength in the fact that ordinary human beings have been calling out genocide in Palestine consistently and with courage for almost 20 months, often at great threat to their own safety and while the established institutions have remained not only silent but hostile.

These four facts bring us to an important lesson for the world, though one that comes at a price that is far too high and that should never have been necessary: *Genocide prevention involves having the courage to call out every red flag at every moment of a potentially genocidal process and demand preventative measures.* One should not wait until it is easy or convenient to call out genocide. It is far better to err in favor of too much prevention than too little or none at all. The time to take to the streets to demand governments act to prevent the worst is every time a red flag is identified.

The failure of Western institutions is in large measure due to their leaders' unwillingness to take appropriate legal and diplomatic actions in the face of genocide. The venality and cowardice of Western leaders has been reflected in the silence of almost every single 'civil society' institution in the Western world.

An enormous reckoning is necessary, and it is coming. We need new genocide prevention institutions and mechanisms, ones that exist outside of the hands of the UN, most of its member states, and Western elites.

Until then, the Lemkin Institute commits itself to ensuring that the world neither forgets nor gets away with the 2023-2025 genocide against the Palestinians.