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'Indefensible': Reform Movement Joins Jewish-American Voices Warning About Starvation in Gaza

Just hours after the American Jewish Committee issued a statement expressing deep concern about acute food shortages in Gaza, the Reform movement put out its own response, saying Israel was 'culpable'



A Palestinian boy carries a bag on his shoulders in the al-Mawasi camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, after picking it up from the Rafah corridor on Sunday. Credit: AFP/-



Judy Maltz

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Jul 28, 2025 9:11 am
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The Reform movement in North America on Monday issued a statement saying that the Israeli government was "culpable" in the spread of hunger in the Gaza Strip.

The largest Jewish denomination in the United States, the Reform movement, issued its statement just hours after the [American Jewish Committee](#) became the first

major legacy organization in the Jewish community to express deep concerns about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

"No one should be unaffected by the pervasive hunger experienced by thousands of Gazans," the Reform movement said. "No one should spend the bulk of their time arguing technical definitions between starvation and pervasive hunger. The situation is dire, and it is deadly."

American Jewish leaders must speak up against Israel's inhumane war in Gaza

Gaza war sparks growing polarization for U.S. Reform Jews

Israel caused the hunger in Gaza, however much it tries to blame the UN

"Nor should we accept arguments that because Hamas is the primary reason many Gazans are either starving or on the verge of starving, that the Jewish State is not also culpable in this human disaster," they added.

"The primary moral response must begin with anguished hearts in the face of such a large-scale human tragedy."



Reform movement President Rabbi Rick Jacobs. Credit: Courtesy URJ

The statement was signed by leaders of the Union for Reform Judaism (the congregational arm of the movement), the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the American Conference of Cantors. The latter two come under the auspices of the Reform movement.

As reports of mass starvation in Gaza have spread, [sparking international condemnation](#), mainstream Jewish organizations and movements – usually quick to respond to any major news developments pertaining to Israel – have kept silent. Other Jewish groups, more closely aligned with the left and progressive causes, have already spoken out.

In its statement, the Reform movement warned that Israel was crossing a "moral line."

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"Blocking food, water, medicine, and power – especially for children – is indefensible," it said. "Let us not allow our grief to harden into indifference, nor our love for Israel to blind us to the cries of the vulnerable. Let us rise to the moral challenge of this moment."



A mourner carries a body during the funeral of Palestinians, who were killed by Israeli fire while trying to receive aid on Saturday, and Palestinians who were killed in an overnight Israeli strike, according to medics, at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, Sunday. Credit: Ramadan Abed/Reuters

At the same time, the Reform movement said it was "encouraged" by the weekend announcement that the Israeli army would revive the [practice of dropping aid](#) from airplanes and make it easier for aid convoys to move through Gaza along designated humanitarian corridors.

"Our tradition teaches that all people are created *b'tzelem Elohim* – in the image of God," said the statement. "One consequence of this is the moral priority, which is affirmed throughout the Bible and rabbinic tradition, of feeding the hungry – both for the individual and for the self-governing Jewish community."

Divisions within Reform Judaism over support for Israel have deepened over the war in Gaza, with young Jewish Americans who grew up within the movement increasingly distancing themselves from Israel. Its actions in Gaza, they often say, do not reflect the values of social justice upon which they were raised.

"Starving Gazan civilians neither will bring Israel the 'total victory' over Hamas it seeks, nor can it be justified by Jewish values or humanitarian law," the movement's statement said, addressing such concerns. "

The AJC, among the [oldest Jewish organizations](#) in the United States, said in its statement, issued on Sunday, that it was "deeply concerned about worsening food insecurity in Gaza," and expressed "immense sorrow for the grave toll this war has taken on Palestinian civilians."

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For the First Time, Israeli Human Rights Groups Say Israel Is Committing Genocide in Gaza, Call for International Intervention

'Genocidal intent throughout': According to the reports by B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, the Israeli attack on Gaza caused 'massive, indiscriminate bombardment of population centers' and the 'starvation of more than two million people as a method of warfare' against the Palestinians



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A Palestinian child stands at a food distribution site in Gaza City, last week. Credit: Khamis Al-Rifi/Reuters



Nir Hasson

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Israeli human rights groups B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel published on Monday two reports concluding that Israel is committing the crime of genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, as defined by international law.

Jul 28, 2025 3:40 pm
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This marks the first time that Israeli human rights groups have officially determined that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. The groups are now calling on the international community to take action against the Israeli government to stop these atrocities.

The B'Tselem report opens with a strong condemnation of Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel, noting that the group's assault included numerous war crimes and likely crimes against humanity.

The report also states that Israel's response was exceptionally brutal, resulting in widespread killing, destruction, displacement and starvation on a massive scale.

This week, Israel starved 43 people to death by Wednesday. The Gaza war is in a new phase

IDF soldiers ordered to shoot deliberately at unarmed Gazans waiting for humanitarian aid

Denying Gaza's starvation is no less vile than denying the Holocaust

According to the B'Tselem report, Israel's attack caused "massive, indiscriminate bombardment of population centers" and the "starvation of more than two million people as a method of warfare" against the Palestinians.

It argues that Israel's attacks on Gaza caused "mass killing, both in direct attacks and through creating catastrophic living conditions that continue to raise the massive death toll; serious bodily or mental harm to the entire population of the Strip; large-scale destruction of infrastructure; and destruction of the social fabric, including educational institutions and Palestinian cultural sites."

According to the report, Israel has also implemented the methods of "mass arrests and abuse of detainees in Israeli prisons, which have effectively become torture camps for thousands of Palestinians held without trial," as well as "mass forced displacement, including attempts at ethnic cleansing and making the latter an official war goal; and an assault on Palestinian identity through the deliberate destruction of refugee camps and attempts to undermine the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees."

"Statements by senior Israeli decision-makers about the nature of the assault on Gaza have expressed genocidal intent throughout," it added.

Palestinians stand next to dead bodies in Al-Shifa Hospital, Gaza City, last week. Credit: Mahmoud Issa/Reuters

The report cites former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant's remarks referring to the people in Gaza as "human animals," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's declaration from October 28, 2023, that this is a war against "Amalek" – a reference to the biblical story of God's command to the Israelites to annihilate the Amalekite people – as well as statements about genocide made by journalists and public figures.

The report concludes that the combination of the reality in Gaza and statements by senior Israeli officials led them to "the unequivocal conclusion that Israel is taking coordinated action to intentionally destroy Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip ... and committing genocide against Palestinians."

The B'Tselem report is based on a series of interviews with Gaza residents, as well as reports from human rights organizations, UN agencies, media investigations and expert opinions from international specialists. Regarding casualty figures, the report relies on data from the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry.

The report's authors note that these figures "are widely considered reliable and have been adopted by numerous organizations and researchers. Moreover, they are generally regarded as conservative compared to the actual number of casualties resulting from [Israel's] assault."

The authors also cite a medical study published in February in the medical journal *The Lancet*, which found that life expectancy during the first year of the war in Gaza dropped by 51 percent for men and 38 percent for women, with the average age of death reaching 40 for men and 47 for women.

The report also includes extremely harrowing testimonies from Gazans, including that of a mother who saw her two children and husband run over by a tank, a father who witnessed his son burn to death and a paramedic who was forced to abandon several bodies – along with a dying woman and an infant – in an ambulance that was shelled.

When he returned the next day, the report says, the medic discovered that stray dogs had eaten parts of the corpses, but the infant had survived.



A Palestinian woman mourns over a dead body in Gaza City, Saturday. Credit: Mahmoud Issa/Reuters

The report also includes the testimony of Muhammad Ghrab, a Gaza City resident who had been displaced to Muwasi, east of Khan Yunis in the southern Strip. In his account to B'Tselem, Ghrab described an Israeli airstrike he witnessed on July 13, 2024.

The attack, which Israel said targeted two senior Hamas military operatives, including Muhammad Deif, consisted of two successive bombings and was the deadliest strike in al-Mawasi during that period, killing 90 Gazans and wounding 300 more.

"Suddenly, a ring of fire formed," Ghrab recounted. "The sky was completely covered in clouds, dust and dirt. People started running in all directions. [...] When we entered the tents that were still standing, we saw they were full of bodies, mostly of women and children."

"What we saw that day, at that hour, was like the embodiment of madness," he said. "Something incomprehensible. It felt like pieces of hell were falling onto the earth. It's impossible to truly describe. Language fails. It can't contain the horrors we witnessed. What I'm describing is only a small part of the horror that took place. [...] I've been afraid ever since that day. I keep expecting the tents to be bombed and for me and my family to die in a similar strike."

The report's authors also note that the high death toll in Gaza has created "the largest orphan crisis in modern history," pointing out that approximately 40,000 children have lost one or both parents, and that 41 percent of families are now caring for children who are not their own.

They further link what they describe as acts of genocide by Israel in Gaza to the rise in violence against Palestinians in the West Bank and even within Israel, expressing deep concern that the genocide could spread to other areas where Palestinians live.

"This is the time to save those who have not yet been lost forever, and use every means available under

international law to stop Israel's genocide of the Palestinians," it concludes.

Another report released on Monday by Physicians for Human Rights – Israel presents a legal analysis of the health-related aspects of the Israeli assault on Gaza. This report concludes that Israel is committing the crime of genocide, as defined by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.



Israeli airstrikes on Gaza seen from the Israeli side of the border fence, Sunday. Credit: AFP/Menahem Kahana

"The evidence shows a deliberate and systematic dismantling of Gaza's health and life-sustaining systems through targeted attacks on hospitals, obstruction of medical aid and evacuations, and the killing and detention of healthcare personnel," PHRI's report says.

The report adds that Israel's acts "are not incidental to war but part of a deliberate policy targeting Palestinians as a group."

PHRI identifies three "core acts" that fulfill at least three core acts defined in the Genocide Convention: "killing members of the group, causing them serious bodily or mental harm and deliberately inflicting on them conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's destruction in whole or in part."

"Despite international legal rulings, Israel has not complied with its obligations, and global enforcement remains weak," the report determines, adding, "PHRI urges international bodies and states to fulfill their duty under Article I of the Genocide Convention to stop the genocide."





"The organization also calls on the global health and humanitarian communities to act, as the destruction of Gaza's health system is not only a legal violation but a humanitarian catastrophe demanding urgent global solidarity and response," it said.

To date, numerous organizations and legal experts have concluded that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Among those reaching this determination are Amnesty International, the European Center for Human Rights, the International Federation for Human Rights and Doctors Without Borders.

Human Rights Watch has also said in a report that Israel is committing crimes of extermination that may amount to genocide.

Several Israeli legal scholars and genocide researchers have also arrived at this conclusion, including Holocaust and genocide experts Daniel Blatman, Omar Bartov, Shmuel Lederman, Amos Goldberg, Raz Segal, legal scholar Itamar Raz and historians Lee Mordechai and Adam Raz, among others.

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OUR GENOCIDE

Executive Summary



July 2025

Since October 2023, Israel has fundamentally changed its policy toward the Palestinians. Following the Hamas-led attack on 7 October 2023, Israel launched an intensive military campaign in the Gaza Strip, which is still underway more than 21 months later. Israel's onslaught on Gaza includes mass killing, both in direct attacks and through creating catastrophic conditions that increase the massive death toll; serious bodily or mental harm to the entire population of the Strip; large-scale destruction of infrastructure and living conditions; destruction of the social fabric, including Palestinian educational institutions and cultural sites; mass arrests and abuse of detainees in Israeli prisons, which have effectively become torture camps for thousands of Palestinians held without trial; mass forced displacement, including attempts at ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Gaza and making the latter an official war goal; and an assault on Palestinian identity through the deliberate destruction of refugee camps and attempts to undermine the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The outcome of this comprehensive assault on the Gaza Strip is severe, and at least in part, irreparable harm to more than 2 million people living in the Gaza Strip, as part of the Palestinian people.

An examination of Israel's policy in the Gaza Strip and its horrific outcomes, together with statements by senior Israeli politicians and military commanders about the goals of the attack, leads to the unequivocal conclusion that Israel is taking coordinated, deliberate action to destroy Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip. In other words: Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The term genocide refers to a socio-historical and political phenomenon that has occurred throughout human history. Since the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was signed in 1948 (and came into force in 1951), genocide has also been recognized as one of the gravest crimes in international law, involving acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Genocide is carried out through multiple and parallel practices over time, with mass physical killing being only one of them. Destroying living conditions, sometimes in concentration zones or camps, systemically trying to prevent births, widespread sexual violence against group members or their mass expulsion, can all be – and have been throughout history – among the means used by states or ruling authorities to destroy ethnic, national, racial, religious and other groups. Accordingly, genocidal acts are various actions intended to bring about the destruction of a distinct group, as part of a deliberate, coordinated effort by a ruling authority. Both morally and legally, genocide cannot be justified under any circumstance, including as an act of self-defense.

Genocide always occurs within a context: there are conditions that enable it, triggering events, and a guiding ideology. The current onslaught on the Palestinian people, including in the Gaza Strip, must be understood in the context of more than seventy years in which Israel has imposed a violent and discriminatory regime on the Palestinians, taking its most extreme form against those living in the Gaza Strip. Since the State of Israel was established, the apartheid and occupation regime has institutionalized and systematically employed mechanisms of violent control, demographic engineering, discrimination, and fragmentation of the Palestinian collective. These foundations laid by the regime are what made it possible to launch a genocidal attack on the Palestinians immediately after the Hamas-led attack on 7 October 2023. This report emphasizes three of these foundations in particular: life under an apartheid regime that imposes separation, demographic engineering, and ethnic cleansing; systematic and institutionalized use of violence against Palestinians, while the perpetrators enjoy impunity; and institutionalized mechanisms of dehumanization and framing Palestinians as an existential threat.

Such conditions can exist over time without developing into a genocidal assault. Often, a violent event that creates a sense of existential threat among the perpetrating group is the trigger for the ruling system to carry out genocide. The attack by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups on 7 October 2023 was a catalyst of this kind. The atrocious attack, aimed mostly at civilians, included many war crimes and likely also crimes against humanity. It took the lives of 1,218 Israelis and foreign nationals, 882 of them civilians, involved extensive and severe acts of violence, including sexual violence, and resulted in tens of thousands of people wounded and the abduction of 252 people to the Gaza Strip – most of them civilians, including women, elderly people and children. The youngest child abducted was a nine-month-old baby who was killed, along with his three-year-old brother and their mother, while held in Gaza. For Israelis, the very fact of the attack, its scope and its outcomes, generated anxiety and a feeling of existential threat to a degree that led to profound social and political changes in Israeli society. These instigated a shift in Israeli policy toward Palestinians in the Gaza Strip: from repression and control to destruction and annihilation.

The assault on Gaza cannot be separated from the escalating violence being inflicted, at varying levels and in different forms, on Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and within Israel. In these areas, as in Gaza, lethal crimes are being committed against Palestinians with no accountability for the perpetrators. The violence

and destruction in these areas is intensifying over time, with no effective domestic or international mechanism acting to halt them. As a result, these crimes are becoming normalized in the eyes of soldiers, commanders, politicians, media figures and Israelis in general. We warn of the clear and present danger that the genocide will not remain confined to the Gaza Strip, and that the actions and underlying mindset driving it may be extended to other areas as well.

B'Tselem is an Israeli human rights organization that documents and researches harm caused to Palestinians under Israel's apartheid and occupation regime. In the name of the duty to protect human beings, their lives, dignity, and individual and collective rights, B'Tselem has worked for over 35 years to expose Israel's systematic violations of Palestinians' human rights.

As a human rights organization working to stop and prevent systemic and widespread state violence against Palestinians, it is our duty to analyze human rights violations on the ground in the context of the regime carrying them out and its underlying political logic.

Since October 2023, we have gathered eyewitness testimonies and documented hundreds of incidents involving unprecedented and extreme violence against Palestinian civilians throughout the territory Israel controls, while key politicians and military commanders have openly declared the policies being implemented on the ground. Countless evidence of the consequences of these policies reflects the horrifying transformation of the entire Israeli system in its treatment of Palestinians.

At B'Tselem, Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Israel work side by side, guided by the shared view that defending human rights is a basic human and moral obligation. We all live under a discriminatory apartheid regime that classifies some of us as privileged subjects simply because we are Jewish, and others as undeserving of any protection simply because we are Palestinian. Together, we fight for the right we all have to live between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River without discrimination, violent oppression and annihilation.

Even as we write, Israel is intensifying its brutal, merciless assault on the Palestinians. The routine killing and destruction in the Gaza Strip, as well as the growing violence and forced displacement of tens of thousands in the West Bank, would not have been possible

without international inaction in the face of the incomprehensible scale and severity of these crimes. Many state leaders, particularly in Europe and the United States, have not only refrained from effective action to stop the annihilation and violence but have enabled it to continue – whether through statements affirming Israel's "right to self-defense" or through active support, including the shipment of weapons and ammunition.

As people of this land and as human rights activists, it is our duty to bear witness to the state of affairs we and many others have documented and investigated. It is our duty to name the reality we are witnessing and living through, to recount it, and to stand with the victims.

The recognition that the Israeli regime is committing genocide in the Gaza Strip, and the deep concern that it may expand to other areas where Palestinians live under Israeli rule, demand urgent and unequivocal action from both Israeli society and the international community, and use of every means available under international law to stop Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people.



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Genocide in Gaza

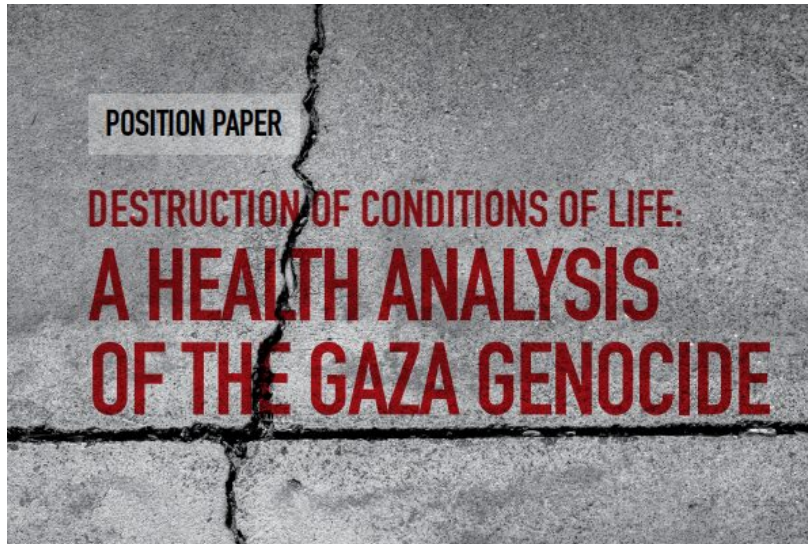
This report documents the Israeli assault for what it is: a deliberate, cumulative, and ongoing dismantling of Gaza's healthcare system - and of the population's ability to survive. Its meaning: genocide.

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Physicians for Human Rights - Israel | 28.07.2025

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PHRI Report (2025)

On October 13, 2023, the Israeli military ordered the evacuation of 22 hospitals in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip. That day marked the start of an unprecedented assault on Gaza's health system. Over the past 22 months, Israel has systematically targeted medical infrastructure across the Gaza Strip, attacking 33 of 36 of Gaza's hospitals and clinics depriving them of fuel and water. More than 1800 of Gaza's medical staff have been killed or detained.

Today, PHRI is releasing a position paper that documents this assault for what it is: a deliberate, cumulative dismantling of Gaza's health system, and with it, its people's ability to survive. This amounts to genocide. Israel's bombing of hospitals, destruction of medical equipment, and depletion of medications have made medical care – both immediate and long-term – virtually impossible. The system has collapsed under the weight of relentless attacks and blockade.

[The Full Report](#)

Each day, dozens die of malnutrition. Ninety-two percent of infants aged six months to two years don't get enough to eat. At least 85 children have already starved to death. Israel has displaced 9 in 10 Gazans, destroyed or damaged 92% of homes, and left over half a million children without schools or stability. It has wiped out essential health services – including dialysis, maternal care, cancer treatment, and diabetes management.

This is not a temporary crisis. It is a strategy to eliminate the conditions needed for life. Even if Israel stops the offensive today, the destruction it has inflicted guarantees that preventable deaths – from starvation, infection, and chronic illness – will continue for years. This is not collateral damage. This is not a side effect of war. It is the systematic creation of unlivable conditions. It is the denial of survivability. It is a genocide.

Governments and international bodies must act now:

- Compel Israel to cease its fire.
- Protect and restore Gaza's health systems.
- Re-instate UN, international, and Palestinian mechanisms of support.
- Allow the free movement of aid.
- Ensure the safety of healthcare workers.

These actions are critical – and must be taken immediately – to prevent further loss of life. The health system's minimal capacity today depends entirely on the efforts of Gaza's medical professionals, to whom this report is dedicated.

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