

Recognition of a Palestinian State

Not Yet and Not Until



A paper prepared for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Rt Hon Winston Peters, the advisors to the Minister, and for Parliamentarians. This paper explains why recognising a Palestinian state is premature because important conditions have still to be met.

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Briefing Note: Recognition of a Palestinian State

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Purpose

To outline why recognition of a Palestinian state at this time would be premature, legally problematic, and inconsistent with New Zealand's foreign policy principles.

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Executive Summary

Introductory Remarks:

On 7 October 2023 Hamas broke the ceasefire and shattered Israel's hopes for peace, by its brutal attack on peaceful communities. This was the culmination of 20 years of Hamas rule in Gaza, where instead of creating the "Singapore of the Mediterranean" it created a vast tunnel system — dubbed the "Gaza Metro" — built using materials diverted from humanitarian aid.

These tunnels crisscross under civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and mosques, providing Hamas with mobility, command centres, and launchpads hidden from aerial surveillance. Some even extend under the Israeli border for infiltration attacks. International aid, intended to rebuild Gaza, was poured — literally — into concrete-lined terror corridors. These are not the actions of an entity that seeks peace.

Hamas has sacrificed its people on the altar of its religiously inspired goal of annihilating Israel. At any time the war could have ended, had Hamas been willing to release innocent hostages and lay down its weapons.

Hamas is entirely responsible for starting the war, continuing the war, and the many tragic outcomes for the people of Gaza. Israel is duty bound to ensure the return of hostages, protect its citizens and ensure future generations do not experience 7 October style massacres (Hamas has vowed to repeat October 7 again, again and again).

Many New Zealanders have deep concern for the plight of Israel and the security of the Jewish people. This is rooted in a shared history of commonly held values, kiwi blood shed in liberation of the land, and of faith.

Israel is the birthplace of the Judeo-Christian values upon which our society was built and which we cherish. Hamas is a death cult that stands opposed to all that we hold dear - the value of life, freedom and humanitarianism. The battle raging is a clash of ideals, values, civilisations.

Through a virulent propaganda campaign, politicisation of humanitarian aid and a willingness to sacrifice its own people, Hamas has fought an asymmetrical war, while Israel, though far from perfect, has sought to abide by international law.

We urge our leaders to not fall prey to the propaganda campaigns, to resist the bigotry of low expectation of the Palestinians and to avoid decisions that are populist in nature and designed, for the most part, to placate the voices of increasingly

radicalized domestic audiences. This cannot serve as an alternative to the Palestinian entity actually meeting the requirements of international law for statehood.¹

Recognition of a Palestinian State - Not Yet and Not Until

Recognition of a Palestinian state at this time would be premature, inconsistent with international law, and contrary to New Zealand's longstanding foreign policy principles. The necessary preconditions for statehood — a defined territory, a functioning and unified government, and the ability to engage coherently in international relations — are absent. Instead, there exist two rival Palestinian authorities: the Palestinian Authority (PA) in parts of the West Bank, and Hamas in Gaza, with considerable support in the WB. Hamas is a designated terrorist organisation under New Zealand law and continues to reject peace, pursue Israel's destruction, and employ terrorism, hostage-taking, and incitement as political tools.

Unilateral recognition would directly contradict the Oslo Accords, which stipulate that Palestinian statehood can only be achieved through negotiated settlement with Israel. Granting recognition outside of this framework would reward avoidance of negotiations, undermine commitments to disarm militias and end incitement, and erode the credibility of peace processes.

Recognition now would also set a dangerous precedent in international law: that statehood can be conferred as a political gesture rather than earned through responsible governance and negotiated agreement. This would weaken New Zealand's credibility when it advocates for rules-based, negotiated outcomes in other regional disputes, including in the Pacific and Asia.

Far from advancing peace, recognition would remove incentives for Palestinian leaders to make the necessary compromises with Israel. It would entrench division, legitimise violence as a political strategy, and embolden those opposed to peaceful coexistence. This is confirmed by U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Dorothy Shea, Security Council on 10 August, who stated that as one of the parties "in the room" negotiating with Hamas they saw that most recent round of negotiations collapsed because Hamas drew encouragement from efforts to target Israel with libels and lies, and unilateral announcements regarding recognition of a Palestinian State.

For New Zealand, recognition at this stage would represent a misalignment with our values and a departure from our commitment to a rules-based international order. It would place New Zealand in the company of states that have recognised Palestine for

¹ <https://jcpa.org/what-will-the-state-of-palestine-look-like/>

ideological, domestic or political reasons, rather than on the basis of law, diplomacy, or the practical realities on the ground.

The prudent course is to withhold recognition until the essential conditions for responsible statehood and lasting peace are in place.

Key Points

- **Premature and legally problematic:**
 - The Montevideo Convention (1933) sets out four criteria for statehood: permanent population, defined territory, functioning government, and capacity for international relations.
 - None of these criteria are currently met by the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank or Hamas in Gaza.
 - Recognition would effectively acknowledge two rival regimes — one (Hamas) designated as a terrorist organisation under New Zealand law.
- **No agreed borders, no unified government:**
 - The PA governs parts of Judea & Samaria (West Bank). Hamas controls Gaza.
 - Palestinian support for the PA in the West Bank is extremely low, while Hamas has a moderate level of support.
 - These factions are politically opposed, lack territorial unity, and have no coherent foreign policy capacity.
- **Contrary to the Oslo Accords:**
 - Oslo requires Palestinian statehood to result from bilateral negotiations with Israel.
 - Recognition outside of negotiations would reward avoidance of obligations (e.g. disarming militias, ending incitement).
- **Rewarding violence and terrorism:**
 - Hamas openly rejects peace, seeks Israel's destruction, carried out the 7 October 2023 massacre, and still holds hostages.
 - The PA maintains its "pay-to-slay" policy, incentivising terror through stipends to attackers and their families.
 - Recognition now would hand a political win to actors using terrorism and hostage-taking as strategies.
- **Dangerous international precedent:**
 - Weakens the principle that sovereignty is earned through responsible governance.
 - Risks undermining NZ's credibility when promoting negotiated solutions in other disputes (Pacific, Asia).
- **Undermines peace negotiations:**
 - Removes incentives for Palestinian leadership to negotiate directly with Israel.

- Encourages belief that diplomatic gains can be achieved without compromise.
- **Misaligned with New Zealand's foreign policy values:**
 - NZ traditionally supports rules-based order and negotiated settlements.
 - Recognition at this stage would place NZ alongside states whose decisions are driven by ideology, not legal or diplomatic criteria.
- **The Palestinian Authority's (PA) Ineffective Governing**
 - Corruption within the PA is systemic, tied to both its dependence on external aid and its dominance by a small ruling elite around Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah. This corruption is a major reason why the PA has lost credibility among Palestinians and why international support is increasingly conditional.
 - [Polls](#) consistently show a demand for PA leader Mahmoud Abbas' resignation with a recent poll at 81%. Support for Hamas is at 48% among active voters in the West Bank. In addition almost 90% of the public believes that Hamas did not commit the atrocities depicted in the videos taken on 7 October. While support for Hamas 7 October attack has declined, it still stands at 59% support in the West Bank and 38% in Gaza.
- Recognising Palestine *right now*, without the complete dismantling of Hamas and without a sound leadership in the West Bank could lead to a repeat of the 2007 Gaza takeover by Hamas, in which Hamas gained power through a violent and bloody civil war.
- Recognising Palestine *right now* could lead to a repeat of 7 October 2023, which was the culmination of 20 years of investing international aid into building a terrorist entity from which to attempt to annihilate Israel, rather than establishing a successful thriving Singapore of the Middle East.
- Recognising Palestine *right now* would achieve little beyond virtue signalling and would be rewarding division, dysfunction, and violence — not a legitimate, unified, peaceful state.

Conclusion

New Zealand should withhold recognition of a Palestinian state until:

- A unified Palestinian government exists, committed to peaceful coexistence with Israel.
- Defined borders are agreed through negotiations.
- Commitments under the Oslo Accords are met.
- Leadership is chosen by free and fair elections.
- There is renunciation of violence and dismantling of terror networks.

- There is commitment to coexistence with Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.
- The end of institutional antisemitism and glorification of martyrdom.

Premature recognition would damage NZ's credibility, undermine international law, and hinder rather than advance the prospects for peace.

Supplementary Material

Historical Narratives

Misunderstanding the background to the conflict hinders a resolution

The settler colonial framework is entirely the wrong lens by which to understand the Israel Palestinian conflict and does not help to form a correct view for decision-making. It postulates that the cause of the conflict is that Jews are foreign colonisers who dispossessed the so-called Indigenous Palestinians and are oppressing them in a drive to gain more land. This politically driven historical revisionism ignores or re-writes the historical record to push its claims. It ignores historical realities, such as that the Jewish people are Indigenous to the land of Israel, within which they have had a continuous presence for three millenia.

It ignores the fact that in 1948 Israel was surrounded by five Arab armies who sought to “drive them into the sea”, or the fact that an equivalent number of Jews were driven from Arab lands, as Arabs who fled Israel.

It ignores the fact that radical ideologies drive Islamists to utterly reject the existence of a Jewish state anywhere. The Jews are simply the first step in their quest against Western values and civilisation. Israel does not have the luxury of ignoring the genocidal statements made by this terrorist network driven by Iran, with proxies in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank.

Land for Peace

Jews have always been willing to accept compromises and give up land in exchange for peace. The first division occurred in 1921 when the British peeled off 77% of the British Mandate for Palestine to create Transjordan (later named Jordan). In 1947, Jews accepted the UN Partition Plan, even though it offered less land than they hoped for. They have given up land to make peace with Egypt and Jordan. On numerous occasions between 1967 to 2008 the Palestinians have been offered land for peace deals, even up 97% of return of land, and they have refused every offer. (See table).

History of New Zealand’s Relationship with Israel

Many New Zealanders have deep concern for the plight of Israel and the security of the Jewish people. This is rooted in a shared history of commonly held values, of fighting on the battlefield and of faith.

From as early as the nineteenth century, New Zealanders have been connected with the place now called Israel. As a then largely Christian country, new developments and discoveries in the “Holy Land” were followed closely by a newspaper reading

public. Māori prophetic movements were developed, inspired by the plight of the Israelites of the Hebrew Scriptures.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, groups were established to support the “upbuilding of Palestine”.

By WW1, New Zealand was fully engaged in the Allied effort to free the land from the oppression of the Ottoman Empire. The 1800-strong unit of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade (NZMR) and the New Zealand companies of the Imperial Camel Corps joined other units from across the British Empire to comprise the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF). The EEF took control of the Gaza-Beersheba line, which cleared the way to take Jerusalem. In the final stage of battle, beginning at Megiddo, three Ottoman field armies were destroyed, 76,000 prisoners of war captured and the territories of Palestine, Jordan and Southern Syria conquered.

Military historian Terry Kinloch argued that, ‘This was perhaps the finest body of New Zealanders ever to serve overseas’. They were a military elite, highly mobile and adept in difficult desert conditions, with a reputation for determination and grit.

The well-known Battle of Beersheba campaign cleared the way to take Jerusalem, a highly symbolic moment which was seen to mark the end of Ottoman dominion over the ‘cradle of Christianity’. When General Allenby dismounted his horse to walk through the city of Jerusalem on foot, fifty men of the Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles contributed to the Imperial guard of honour, which stood outside Jaffa gate.

Another battle that proved significant for New Zealand took place near Rishon le Zion on November 14, 1917. The NZMR Brigade captured Ayun Kara in a fierce battle that included close hand-to-hand combat. It resulted in the heaviest New Zealand toll of the campaign with 44 New Zealanders killed and many wounded. This battle was a turning point in the war. It also led to the development of a warm friendship between New Zealanders and the Jewish inhabitants of the nearby community of Rishon le Zion. A new Silver Fern Sculpture was erected in Gan Sorek in 2023 to remember this bond of friendship between New Zealand and Israel.²

Prime Minister William Massey was involved in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 which dealt with the post-war chaos in Europe. He had great sympathy for the Jewish

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<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/anzac-day-2023-the-tauranga-connection-to-the-battle-of-ayun-kara-and-liberation-of-the-holy-lands/7RQP7PSDRNGA5P7O5RUZM2LH6U/>
<https://newsroom.co.nz/2020/04/24/the-gap-in-our-anzac-memory/>

aspiration to establish a homeland and used his influence at the conference to champion the cause.

In the 1920s, New Zealand women contributed to the health needs of Jewish and Arab mothers and babies by establishing Plunket-styled infant welfare centres in Tel Aviv.

Many New Zealanders fought in World War II to free Europe from the perils of Nazi Germany. After the horrors of the Holocaust emerged, Prime Minister Peter Fraser affirmed his commitment to the Jewish community, declaring 'Whatever can be done to help the persecuted Jewish people shall and must be done to the utmost ability of all right-thinking men...I hope and believe that the representatives from this country who take part in the council will stand four-square for justice for the ancient home and new hope of the Jewish people'.

New Zealand voted for the 1947 partition plan to divide Palestine into two states; one for the Jews and the other for the Arabs. PM Fraser believed the UN Plan was a fair solution which 'involved the least injustice to the rights of both parties'.

In 1947, Fraser's "independent policy" involved challenging what he perceived as Britain's anti-Jewish position, which included supplying munitions to the Arabs, stemming the immigration of Jews to the land and the involvement of British officers in the Transjordan Arab Legion.

While in more recent decades New Zealand's position has shifted from friendship, to at times belligerence towards Israel, a bedrock of support exists in New Zealand amongst those who remember the history, who remember the battles fought in the land and the loved ones buried there, those with friends and family in the land, and for those whose Jewish and Christian belief systems tie them to the land. Like New Zealand, Israel is a small democracy which values life and freedom and which punches above its weight globally.

Māori Christians have sought to maintain a warm relationship with Israel, with roopu taking delegations to Israel and others holding significant events with Israeli ambassadors to rectify broken relationships and to develop new ones. This builds on a history of respect for the Jewish people which began in the nineteenth century, with the development of Māori prophetic movements and significant institutions like Kingitanga and the Ratana movement.

Protection of significant Christian sites is important to many New Zealanders who have travelled and undertaken pilgrimages to the land. History demonstrates that these sites are best protected under Israeli control.

Urgency of Release of Hostages

Approximately **251 people** were taken hostage by Hamas and allied militant groups on 7 October. Close to half were foreign nationals or held multiple citizenships. Civilians included babies, children, women, elderly persons, and soldiers. 148 have returned alive either through hostage deals or rescues and likewise 56 have been returned deceased. Currently 50 hostages remain in Gaza with Intelligence suggesting **at least 27** of these remaining individuals are likely dead.

Treatment of Hostages - Human Rights Abuses

In what has been described as the “Health report from hell”, the Israel’s Ministry of Health has compiled an evidence-packed report of the horrific conditions hostages are experiencing in Hamas captivity, and sent it to the ICRC (Red Cross) and other health organizations.

The report on the hostages was based on testimonies and medical records from 12 former hostages, four women and eight men, who told of systematic physical and psychological degradation, and in some cases ongoing sexual harassment and subhuman conditions, according to the Times of Israel. Their testimonies were corroborated by others who were held in captivity.

Here are some of the details included in the report:

- Hostages reported suffering from constant diarrhea, high fevers, severe metabolic issues, lice, parasites, skin infections, and dangerous external and internal inflammation.
- There were reports of daily beatings, relentless psychological torture, chronic sexual assault, and sustained trauma.
- They survived on just one meal of half a pita bread or rice each day, and sometimes fed rotting food crawling with worms.
- Due to medical neglect and deliberate starvation, the hostages lost between 15% – 40% of their body weight and muscle mass.
- Some were forced to drink contaminated water such as untreated sewage and sea water.
- Many hostages were tightly bound for hours without regard for basic physiological needs.
- They had to go to the toilet in holes dug by captives, and sometimes in public view.
- They were largely kept in narrow tunnels barely two square meters (21 sq ft) in size and under 1.5 meters (5 ft) tall, with up to six people for extended periods.
- Several were kept in absolute isolation for over a year, and one was held alone while injured for over 50 days. This resulted in despair, sensory deprivation and in some cases, dissociation.
- Hostages could be suddenly woken in the night at gunpoint, and forced on long walks through tunnels while blindfolded.

- They slept on hard tunnel floors amid insects, exposed to constant oppressive heat or freezing cold.
- Most went months without showering or changing clothes. Showers were cold with a shared towel, and some had to wear the same underwear for 6 months.
- Psychological suffering was reported, including hallucinations from untreated pain, loss of sense of time due to psychological abuse, and nightmares and flashbacks.³

Reports on Sexual Violence

1. UN Special Representative Report (Pramila Patten) — March 2024

- The UN envoy Pramila Patten and her team conducted a fact-finding mission to Israel and the occupied West Bank from late January to mid-February 2024. They reviewed over 5,000 photos, 50 hours of footage, and conducted 34 confidential interviews with survivors, witnesses, first responders, and released hostages. They visited four attack sites and viewed morgue evidence.
- They found **reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence—including rape and gang rape—occurred at at least three locations:** the Nova music festival site, Road 232, and Kibbutz Re'im. Bodies—as mostly women—were found fully or partially naked from the waist down, with hands bound and shot multiple times, which may be indicative of sexual violence.
- The team also reported **clear and convincing information** that hostages held in Gaza had suffered **rape and sexualized torture**, and they raised **reasonable grounds to believe such abuse may still be ongoing**.
- Limitations included: inability to meet survivors of sexual violence (many still undergoing trauma treatment or displaced), incomplete forensic evidence, constrained time, and lack of UN infrastructure in-country. As a result, findings were **not a formal investigation**.

The Dinah Project — July 2025

- This independent report titled *"A Quest for Justice: October 7 and Beyond"* documents **widespread, systematic sexual violence** by Hamas at multiple locations: Nova music festival, Route 232, Nahal Oz military base, Kibbutz Re'im, Nir Oz, and Kfar Aza.
- It includes testimonies and evidence from 15 freed hostages and 17 witnesses, reporting **bodies with genital mutilation, foreign objects inserted into genitals**, victims found **bound, undressed from the waist down, shot—often in the head or genitals**.

³ <https://img.mako.co.il/2025/08/12/hashlachi122.pdf?Partner=interlink>

The Gaza War

The Role of Propaganda

As Israel has fought a kinetic and existential war on seven fronts, a propaganda war has been waged in the media, which has repeatedly maligned and demonised Israel.

As early as 17 October 2023, media reported that Israel had targeted the Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza and killed 500 people. This proved to be false. HRW later admitted that a rocket-propelled munition from a Palestinian group had hit a paved area inside the hospital compound and there were a number of people injured.

This established a pattern which has continued throughout the war. The media publishes false stories, which enrages the general public, ignites protests and political statements. By the time proper investigations are undertaken and the truth is revealed, the public has moved on and the damage has been done. Such examples include the claim that 14,000 children would die within 48 hours, and the publishing of photos of children with genetic disorders to give the impression that Israel was causing starvation in Gaza.⁴

This is a strategy that Hamas understands well and the western media and followers are only too happy to oblige.⁵

The propaganda strategy has directly led to the rise in antisemitism globally, through inciting rage which is directed towards Jewish people. Following the “14,000 babies” claim, a Jewish/Israeli couple were murdered in Washington DC by a man shouting, “Free, free Palestine”.⁶

However, the claims used to demonise Israel do not stand up to scrutiny.

One example is the claim that Israel is committing genocide, even though there is no provable intent to do so. Judge Joan Donoghue who was President of the ICJ when South Africa brought its case, clarified on BBC that the ICJ did not find Israel guilty of genocide.

She explained the meaning of the Order when interviewed by Stephen Sackur on BBC’s Hardtalk programme, broadcast on 25 April 2024.

⁴ <https://www.newsweek.com/un-gaza-babies-fletcher-2075235>

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/terrorize-israelis-while-eliciting-sympathy-abroad-inside-ha-mass-propaganda-strategy/amp/>

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/two-israeli-embassy-staffers-killed-in-shooting-attack-at-washington-dc-jewish-museum/>

“...the Court’s test for deciding whether to impose [provisional] measures uses the idea of plausibility, but the test is the plausibility of the rights that are asserted by the applicant, in this case South Africa. So the court decided that the Palestinians had a plausible right to be protected from genocide and that South Africa had the right to present that claim in the court. It then looked at the facts as well, but it did not decide –and this is something where I’m correcting what’s often said in the media – it didn’t decide that the claim of genocide was plausible. It did emphasize in the Order that there was a risk of irreparable harm to the Palestinian right to be protected from genocide but the shorthand that often appears, which is that there’s a plausible case of genocide, isn’t what the court decided.”⁷

Politicisation of Humanitarian Aid

Since October 7, 2023, the humanitarian situation in Gaza has become a global rallying cry. Governments, NGOs, and media outlets alike have pointed the finger squarely at Jerusalem, accusing it of orchestrating a deliberate siege with genocidal intent.

But this dominant narrative is not only misleading — it is dangerously divorced from fact. It omits critical context, ignores hard evidence, and **obscures the real source of Palestinian suffering: Hamas, not Israel, is the primary obstacle to humanitarian relief in Gaza.** And disturbingly, powerful institutions like the United Nations have chosen complicity over clarity — helping perpetuate the very crisis they claim to want to solve.

Even amid this war, Israel has [facilitated](#) the entry of over 250,000 tons of humanitarian aid via more than 12,000 trucks through crossings like Kerem Shalom and Nitzana. The volume and consistency of this aid flow have been verifiable, coordinated with the UN and international partners.

Moreover, Israel has enabled [airdrops](#) of more than 10,000 pallets of humanitarian supplies, supported by the United States, France, Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE. A U.S.-built floating pier also enabled deliveries of aid by [sea](#) — over 6,000 tons — directly to Gaza’s coast. Israel has paused operations, opened humanitarian corridors, and accepted significant security risk to screen shipments for weapons and dual-use items — a necessity when dealing with a regime like Hamas.

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3g9g63jl17o>

These are not the actions of a country seeking to starve a population. Yet international condemnation continues to rain down on Israel, while Hamas's obstruction, theft, and terrorisation of civilians receives a deafening silence.⁸

Hamas's War on Aid

If so much aid is entering Gaza, why does starvation persist?

The answer is grim and well-documented: Hamas systematically steals and diverts aid. Gunmen intercept convoys, violently seize supplies, and reroute them to merchants loyal to the group. These goods are [resold](#) at inflated prices, enriching Hamas's coffers while impoverishing the very people the aid was meant to help.

Eyewitnesses in Gaza have reported watching Hamas fighters commandeering trucks and shoot at civilians near distribution points. Videos show armed looting and systematic exploitation. One Gazan told Israel Hayom:

"Hamas steals the aid and resells it to merchants, who set the prices they want at the expense of the entire population."

This is not opportunistic corruption — it is a deliberate policy. Israeli intelligence and independent media alike confirm that Hamas operates a centralised black-market aid economy, designed to keep the population dependent and the leadership flush with cash. Aid theft is not a bug in the system; [it is the system](#).

UNRWA and the United Nations: Complicity in Collapse

Rather than confront this reality, the United Nations — particularly UNRWA — has enabled it. Not only have several [UNRWA](#) employees been exposed as having [participated](#) in the [October 7](#) massacre, but its [facilities](#) have also been [used](#) to store weapons, shield Hamas fighters, and conceal tunnel entrances. [Textbooks](#) distributed by UNRWA glorify terrorism, and staff have promoted antisemitic content with impunity.

Instead of reforming, the UN has responded to these revelations with denials, internal suppression of findings, and scapegoating. Rather than defending Palestinian civilians, it has defended its institutional credibility — even if that means shielding Hamas from accountability.⁹

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<https://israelinstitute.nz/2025/05/aiding-hamas-abandoning-gaza-the-uns-moral-collapse/>

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<https://israelinstitute.nz/2025/05/aiding-hamas-abandoning-gaza-the-uns-moral-collapse/>

A New System for Aid Distribution

[GHF](#) was established to deliver humanitarian assistance during the Israel-Hamas conflict. It has continued to operate despite direct attacks by Hamas on its operations and Hamas placing a [bounty on the heads of GHF workers](#). Tragically, on July 3, 2025, the terrorist group murdered [12 GHF workers](#). The [GHF further reported](#) that Hamas took the bodies to Nasser hospital and threatened medical workers at the hospital not to help the wounded.

Hamas prevents full operations to distribute aid in Central Gaza. Extensive security measures are required to ensure aid is delivered.

With clans present in central and north Gaza and in an active combat zone, the ability to distribute aid directly to north and central Gaza is complicated and problematic. As a result, GHF is delivering aid in an alternative way.

The GHF is limited in its capacity to operate in distributing relief aid because of the continued and active threat posed by Hamas. Palestinians have been engaged in allocation of aid packages to people attending the distribution sites.

As part of its operations, the GHF has also collaborated with [clans to distribute humanitarian aid](#). While this engagement is crucial, it also presents challenges. Despite these difficulties, the GHF actively involves Palestinians in the distribution of aid.

For the first time since October 7, 2023, because of GHF, Hamas no longer controls humanitarian aid entering Gaza. This change has been observed to significantly enhance the safety of civilians and workers. The GHF operations have eliminated Hamas aid profiteering.

However, the UN has [failed to collect aid delivered into Gaza for distribution](#). Outside of Rafah lie around 950 food trucks' worth of aid that UN organisations have expressed no desire to deliver. Hamas threatened anyone attempting to report on these UN failings. Video [evidence](#) of Hamas looting a UN humanitarian aid truck surfaced, showing their inability to successfully deliver aid to civilians

The UN has faced difficulty in [ensuring safe and secure delivery](#).

The UN's double standards are evident in their commentary on humanitarian aid operations. While the UN OCHA labelled Gaza "the hungriest place on Earth," they neglected greater humanitarian crises occurring worldwide. Sudan, for example, has suffered a [three-year civil war](#) that has displaced over 14 million people, killed around 150,000, and triggered a [catastrophic hunger crisis](#) far greater than observed in Gaza. Despite this, the UN remains silent about its own limited aid operations. Between [August 2024 and January 2025](#), only 1,100 humanitarian trucks entered

Sudan, while 1,800 trucks entered Gaza between [May 2025 and June 2025](#) under Israel's coordination. This comparison raises questions about consistency in humanitarian assessment and the UN's anti-Israel agendas.¹⁰

Hamas's Three-Front War: How Gaza's Rulers Exploit Civilians, Law, and Media to Attack Israel

Many headlines and public protests frame the conflict in simplistic terms: Israel as the aggressor, Palestinians as victims. Yet this framing misses the deeply strategic, multi-dimensional war being waged by Hamas — *not just against Israel*, but against the foundational norms of international law, humanitarian principles, and media integrity.

This is not a conventional war. It is a hybrid campaign — fought on three interlocking fronts: military, psychological, and legal/political. And at the centre of it all lies a chilling reality: civilian exploitation is not a tragic consequence of Hamas's war plan — it is the plan.

Hamas's military campaign has always been rooted in the principle of asymmetric warfare. It cannot match Israel's conventional strength, so it seeks advantage through terror, saturation, and surprise. Over 12,000 rockets have been launched from Gaza since October 2023, targeting Israeli towns, schools, and synagogues indiscriminately. Unlike Israel, which invests heavily in civil defence and precision targeting, Hamas invests in civilian endangerment.

The most brutal example came on October 7, 2023, when Hamas orchestrated the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Fighters breached Israel's border and carried out widespread atrocities — raping women, executing entire families, burning homes, and kidnapping more than 240 civilians, including babies and Holocaust survivors. Far from denying these crimes, Hamas celebrated them, live-streamed them, and paraded victims through Gaza's streets.

Beneath the ground, another warfront lurks: a vast tunnel system — dubbed the "Gaza Metro" — built over years using materials diverted from humanitarian aid. These tunnels crisscross under civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and mosques, providing Hamas with mobility, command centres, and launchpads hidden from aerial surveillance. Some even extend under the Israeli border for infiltration attacks. International aid, intended to rebuild Gaza, was poured — literally — into concrete-lined terror corridors.

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<https://israelinstitute.nz/2025/08/guest-post-michael-pushenko-delivering-aid-not-empowering-terror-why-the-ghf-model-matters/>

This is not military defence. It is a war machine embedded within a civilian population, designed not just to shield Hamas from retaliation, but to manufacture civilian casualties for global sympathy.

While rockets aim to kill Israelis, propaganda is designed to kill support for Israel. Hamas's psychological war hinges on the control and distortion of information — especially in the Western world, where public opinion can shape political pressure and diplomatic isolation.

In Gaza, all journalism is monitored by Hamas. Local reporters are often affiliated with the terror group or forced to comply under threat. Foreign journalists are granted access only under conditions that ensure their reporting does not expose Hamas's use of human shields, the presence of rocket sites beside schools, or the presence of weapons in hospitals. When such images do leak out, the reporters are expelled — or worse.

Instead, what the world sees are images of rubble, crying children, and shrouded bodies — with little explanation of what was targeted, why it was targeted, or whether the dead were combatants. **By design, Hamas hides its own losses while amplifying civilian suffering.** Every strike by the IDF, even those that follow prior warning, is presented as indiscriminate. And Israel's extensive efforts to mitigate harm — via phone calls, leaflet drops, and real-time evacuation routes — are barely mentioned.

This strategy feeds into Western media's appetite for outrage and simplicity. Nuance is buried beneath headlines. "Israeli strike kills 15," reads the headline; buried in the 12th paragraph may be the detail that those killed were firing mortars from a school rooftop.

The third front in Hamas's war is legal-political, or what is commonly termed *lawfare*. **This is the strategic use of international law — not as a constraint on violence, but as a tool to delegitimise and hamstring Israel's right to self-defence.**

Hamas routinely violates the laws of armed conflict by placing military assets in civilian sites, conscripting children into combat, and targeting civilians. Yet these violations go largely unpunished. Why? **Because Hamas understands how to invert the rules of war — and how to weaponise the double standards of the international system.**

Every Hamas violation is designed to provoke an Israeli response that results in civilian casualties. These casualties are then used to trigger international outrage, war crimes allegations, and legal proceedings in forums like the UN Human Rights Council and the International Court of Justice — bodies notoriously hostile to Israel.

Meanwhile, Hamas-run institutions such as the Gaza Health Ministry report death tolls without distinction between fighters and civilians. Combatants are classified as children if

they are under 18, or as “journalists” if they are affiliated with Hamas media outlets. International media then repeat these figures without verification, and world leaders condemn Israel based on data provided by a terrorist regime.

Meanwhile, [military experts](#) concur that Israel takes extraordinary steps to limit civilian harm. It warns before attacks using text messages, phone calls, leaflets, and broadcasts. It opens safe corridors and pauses operations so civilians can leave combat areas. It tracks civilian presence down to the building level. Israel has delivered more humanitarian aid to Gaza than any military in history has provided to an enemy population during wartime.

The incomplete and skewed [narrative](#) of many media sources obscure the fact that Israel has achieved one of the lowest civilian-to-combatant casualty ratios in modern conflicts. Based on data from the IDF and Hamas, the civilian-to-combatant casualty ratio in Gaza stands at approximately 1.4 to 1. ⁵ This is low compared to past conflicts. For instance, a 2009 study by Adam Roberts revealed that during the Bosnian War (1991–1995), the ratio was roughly 2 to 3, while in the Iraq War (beginning in 2003) estimates ranged from a 5-to-1 to a 3-to-1 ratio. ⁶

Israel stands repeatedly accused of genocide by those who make no distinction between targeting a terror group embedded in civilian areas and targeting civilians themselves. **It is the ultimate distortion of justice: a group that glorifies mass murder accuses its victims of crimes against humanity — and is believed.**

These three warfronts — military, psychological, legal — are not separate strategies. They are dependent on one unifying tactic: the exploitation of civilians.

Civilian areas are not collateral damage in this conflict — they are deliberately militarised by Hamas. Hospitals are headquarters. Mosques store rockets. Schools train child soldiers. Human shields are not accidental — they are systematic. Children are placed near rocket launchers, not out of ignorance, but as *protective armour*. **Every civilian death is a strategic asset in Hamas’s war plan.**

Contrast this with Israel’s approach. The IDF uses advanced systems to verify targets, aborts strikes when civilians are spotted, and goes to lengths unprecedented in modern warfare to protect the lives of enemy civilians. And yet it is the IDF — not Hamas — that stands accused of war crimes.

The war Israel is fighting is not just for its borders, but for the integrity of global norms. If Hamas’s strategy is allowed to succeed — if it becomes acceptable to hide behind civilians, to fake casualty reports, to manipulate journalists and weaponise international law — then no democratic nation will be able to defend itself without global condemnation.

New Zealand and the international community must resist the temptation to treat Hamas and Israel as equivalent actors. One is a terror group that sacrifices its own people; the other is a sovereign democracy defending its citizens. One seeks death to Jews; the other seeks peace with its neighbours. One weaponises the law; the other abides by it even under the harshest conditions.¹¹

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) Ineffective Governance

The PA has faced long-standing accusations of corruption, both from Palestinians themselves and from international observers. The problems include:

Financial Mismanagement & Embezzlement - Billions in international aid and tax revenues have allegedly been diverted or misused since the PA's creation in the 1990s. High-ranking officials have been accused of using state funds for personal enrichment.

Reports from organizations like the European Court of Auditors and the World Bank have highlighted a lack of transparency and accountability in PA finances.

Nepotism & Patronage Networks - Jobs in the PA and its security services are often distributed on the basis of loyalty to Fatah rather than merit. This entrenches political patronage systems and discourages reform.

Weak Rule of Law - The judiciary is often seen as politicized and corrupt, with judges subject to political pressure. Ordinary Palestinians frequently report that access to justice depends on connections and bribes.

Opaque Security Sector Spending - The PA devotes a significant portion of its budget (sometimes over 25%) to security forces. Oversight is minimal, and critics argue this serves more to suppress dissent (including against Fatah's rivals) than to provide genuine security.

Misuse of Public Funds for Political Purposes - Accusations that PA elites benefit disproportionately from housing, travel, and business privileges. Some of this is tied to international aid money, which was intended for development.

Impact on Palestinian Society

Loss of Legitimacy: Surveys consistently show that many Palestinians see the PA as corrupt and unaccountable.

Hamas' Advantage: Hamas often gains support by presenting itself as less corrupt (though it faces corruption accusations too).

¹¹

<https://israelinstitute.nz/2025/07/hamass-three-front-war-how-gazas-rulers-exploit-civilian-s-law-and-media-to-attack-israel/>

Aid Fatigue: International donors have grown increasingly wary of unrestricted financial aid, leading to stricter conditions.

Recent Developments

2021–2023: Protests erupted in the West Bank over PA corruption and authoritarianism, especially after the death of activist Nizar Banat, allegedly killed by PA security forces.

EU & U.S. pressure: Donors continue to call for transparency reforms.

Abbas' long rule: President Mahmoud Abbas (in office since 2005, with no elections since) is widely criticized for entrenching an unaccountable elite.

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2. Dinah Project. Website summary on October 7 atrocities.
3. AP News. *Israeli report accuses Hamas of using sexual violence as a weapon of war on Oct. 7*
4. Times of Israel. *Rape as weapon of war: Report lays groundwork for prosecuting Oct 7 sexual violence*
5. ITIC. "Hamas' Use of Human Shields in Gaza" (PDF, 2010)
6. Henry Jackson Society. *Questionable Counting: Analysing the Death Toll from the Hamas-Run Ministry of Health in Gaza* (Dec 2024)
7. UN SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict (Pramila Patten) findings (2024–25)
8. Jerusalem Post, Jerusalem Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center data on tunnel and rocket incidents
9. GHM methodology reviewed by Human Rights Watch, NPR, Sky News

Breach of the Oslo Framework

- 1993 Declaration of Principles (Oslo I) – final-status issues to be resolved in negotiations
 - <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-180015>
 - https://avalon.law.yale.edu/21st_century/isrplo.asp
- 1995 Interim Agreement (Oslo II) – Article XXXI(7): neither side to change the territories' status pending permanent-status talks
 - <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-185434/>
 - <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20698680>

Rewarding terrorism and violence

Absence of state-like qualities

- Montevideo criteria (statehood)
 - https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/intam03.asp

- <https://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/01/1-02/rights-duties-states.html>
- <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/lon/volume%20165/v165.pdf>
- <https://israelinstitute.nz/2025/08/why-palestine-fails-the-state-hood-test-and-why-it-matters/>
- Governance split
 - <https://www.usip.org/palestinian-politics-timeline-2006-election>

Major Palestinian/Arab Rejections of Peace and Statehood

1. Peel Commission Partition Plan (1937)

- *Proposal*: Britain's Royal Commission recommended partition of Mandatory Palestine into a small Jewish state and a larger Arab state, with population transfers.
- *Accepted by*: The Jewish Agency (despite reservations).
- *Rejected by*: The Arab Higher Committee, which demanded all of Palestine and launched the 1936–39 Arab Revolt.

2. UN Partition Plan (Resolution 181, 1947)

- *Proposal*: Partition Palestine into two states (Jewish and Arab), with Jerusalem under international administration.
- *Accepted by*: The Jewish leadership.
- *Rejected by*: Arab states and Palestinian Arab leaders, who instead launched war against the nascent State of Israel.

3. Armistice Agreements (1949)

- *Proposal*: End of the Arab–Israeli War created an opportunity to establish a Palestinian state in areas occupied by Jordan (West Bank & East Jerusalem) and Egypt (Gaza).
- *Outcome*: Arab states deliberately prevented creation of a Palestinian state, prioritising hostility to Israel.

4. UN Resolution 242 (1967)

- *Proposal*: After the Six-Day War, called for Israel's withdrawal from territories in exchange for peace and recognition.
- *Rejected by*: Arab League's "Three No's" at Khartoum (No peace with Israel, No recognition, No negotiations).

5. Camp David Accords (1978)

- *Proposal*: Framework included Palestinian autonomy in Judea & Samaria (West Bank) and Gaza for 5 years, leading to negotiations on final status.
- *Rejected by*: PLO and Arab states, who denounced Egypt for signing with Israel.

6. Reagan Plan (1982)

- *Proposal*: Palestinian self-government in association with Jordan, eventual autonomy, Israeli withdrawal from most of West Bank & Gaza.
- *Rejected by*: PLO outright.

7. Madrid Conference (1991)

- *Proposal*: Internationally backed peace conference including Palestinians in joint Jordanian delegation.
- *Outcome*: Palestinians participated under pressure but resisted compromise; progress stalled.

8. Oslo Accords (1993, 1995)

- *Proposal*: Mutual recognition between Israel and PLO, Palestinian self-rule, staged negotiations toward two states.
- *Outcome*: Signed, but Palestinian leadership failed to uphold commitments — including disarming militias, ending incitement, and halting terrorism.

9. Camp David Summit (2000)

- *Proposal*: Ehud Barak offered Yasser Arafat a Palestinian state with Gaza, most of West Bank, East Jerusalem as capital.
- *Rejected by*: Arafat, who walked away and launched the Second Intifada instead.

10. Clinton Parameters (2000–2001)

- *Proposal*: U.S. President Bill Clinton outlined near-total Israeli withdrawal from West Bank & Gaza, land swaps, Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as capital.
- *Accepted by*: Israel (with reservations).
- *Rejected by*: Arafat and PLO leadership.

11. Taba Summit (2001)

- *Proposal*: Negotiations nearly concluded on borders, refugees, and Jerusalem; Israel offered up to 97% of West Bank with swaps.
- *Outcome*: Palestinians again walked away.

12. Annapolis Conference (2007–2008)

- *Proposal*: PM Ehud Olmert offered Mahmoud Abbas a Palestinian state on 94% of West Bank, Gaza, with land swaps and division of Jerusalem.
- *Rejected by*: Abbas, who later admitted he “did not even respond.”

13. Obama/Kerry Framework (2014)

- *Proposal*: U.S.-brokered talks with extensive Israeli concessions, including settlement freezes and security arrangements.
- *Rejected by*: Abbas, who refused to recognise Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people and abandoned talks.

14. Trump Peace Plan (“Deal of the Century,” 2020)

- *Proposal*: Palestinian state on 70% of West Bank and all of Gaza, \$50 billion investment package.
- *Rejected by*: PA outright, refusing even to negotiate.

15. Ceasefire & Hostage Deals (2023–2025 Gaza War)

- *Proposal*: Multiple internationally mediated frameworks offered Hamas a ceasefire, reconstruction aid, and phased prisoner exchange in return for releasing hostages and ending attacks.
- *Rejected by*: Hamas, who insisted on full lifting of blockade and maintenance of military capacity.

Pattern

From 1937 to 2025, Palestinian and Arab leadership have consistently rejected statehood and peace offers — often responding instead with violence, terrorism, or renewed war.

Arab States Normalising Relations with Israel

1979 - Egypt

First Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel (Camp David Accords). Full diplomatic recognition.

1994 - Jordan

Second Arab state to sign a peace treaty. Established trade, security, and diplomatic relations.

2020 - United Arab Emirates

Abraham Accords. Normalisation covering diplomacy, trade, security, and technology.

2020 - Bahrain

Abraham Accords. Established diplomatic relations with Israel.

2020 - Sudan

Abraham Accords. Agreed to normalise ties with Israel, steps ongoing.

2020 - Morocco

Abraham Accords. Resumed and expanded ties with Israel, including embassies.

2023+

Other Arab/Islamic states (ongoing)

Saudi Arabia, Oman, and others reported in talks for future normalisation, contingent on regional conditions.