

Asking the Australian Government to take further measures for peace in Palestine and Israel

February 2025

One time, guards spotted someone approaching from the south. We responded as if it was a large militant raid. We took positions and just opened fire. I'm talking about dozens of bullets, maybe more. For about a minute or two, we just kept shooting at the body. People around me were shooting and laughing.

We approached the blood-covered body, photographed it, and took the phone. He was just a boy, maybe 16.

That evening, our battalion commander congratulated us for killing a terrorist, saying he hoped we'd kill ten more tomorrow.

- Israeli soldier from the 252nd Division in Gaza, quoted in "No Civilians. Everyone's a Terrorist: IDF Soldiers Expose Arbitrary Killings and Rampant Lawlessness in Gaza's Natarim Corridor", *Haaretz*, 18 December 2024.

For over a year, we've operated in a lawless space where human life holds no value. Yes, we commanders and combatants are participating in the atrocity unfolding in Gaza.

- A senior reserve commander in the Israeli Defence Forces, quoted in the same article.

At the time of writing, a ceasefire is in place that has halted the horrific war in Gaza. However, there remains a high risk that the conflict in Gaza will start again and with neither the Netanyahu Government nor Hamas showing a meaningful commitment to reach a lasting peace agreement.

Murders of Palestinian children, people with disabilities and other Palestinian civilians at the hands of Israeli soldiers and police continue in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Israeli daily newspaper *Haaretz* regularly reports on such murders, and in most cases, no action is taken against the murderers. Palestinian militants still carry out a small number of terrorist attacks and have murdered 76 Israeli civilians, including children, in the year after the 7 October 2023 attack.

Now is the time to write to our government urging that they support Palestinians and Israelis that are seeking a lasting peace through non-violent means.

War Crimes in Gaza

Following the horrific act of mass murder carried out by Hamas on 7 October 2023, which resulted in the estimated deaths of over 1,100 Israelis and foreigners, the wounding of over 5,400 and the abduction of over 200, the Israeli Government launched an attack on Gaza with the stated aim of destroying Hamas.

The Israeli attack on Gaza has seen the massive use of force that has left the Palestinian civilian population devastated. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed by the Israeli military from shootings, shelling and bombing. Many more have been injured. Israeli historian Lee Mordechai has been documenting war crimes being committed by Israeli soldiers in Gaza, including the murders of civilians waving white flags, burning of homes and looting. Over 90% of Palestinians in Gaza have been made homeless by the Israeli military action.

In December 2024 and January 2025, [Haaretz](#) published a series of articles that reported on an investigation into Brigadier General Yehuda Vach, commander of the Israeli 252nd Division operating in northern Gaza. He was reportedly in charge of the Netzarim corridor, a 7 km wide strip of land stretching from near Kibbutz Be-eri to the Mediterranean coast, until November 2024. Palestinians have been expelled from the area, and their homes have been demolished to construct military roads and positions. A senior officer in the Division told *Haaretz* that Brigadier General Vach had allegedly "designated this area as a 'kill zone'. Anyone who enters is shot." A recently discharged officer from the Division alleged that "For the division, the kill zone extends as far as a sniper can see." Brigadier General Vach allegedly ordered his troops to harass aid convoys bringing essential



supplies to Palestinian civilians, telling his officers all Palestinians are terrorists. He allegedly set a goal for his division to drive 250,000 Palestinians from their homes.

Over 800 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the conflict in Gaza. Most of these are young men in their late teens or 20s. These deaths justify inflicting destruction on Palestinians in the minds of many Israelis. The conflict hardened Israeli attitudes, showing there is no pathway to a lasting peace through armed combat. A survey conducted in September 2024 found that 68% of Jewish Israelis now oppose the formation of a Palestinian state, of which 42% support a Jewish state that absorbs all Palestinian land. Only 21% support a two-state solution. By contrast, 40% of Palestinians supported a two-state solution.

A [Pew Research Centre survey](#) from May 2024 found that 39% of Jewish Israelis believed the military response to Hamas has been about right, while 34% said it had not gone far enough. Only 19% believed it had gone too far.

A report issued by Human Rights Watch in December 2024, [Israel's Crime of Extermination, Acts of Genocide in Gaza](#), used satellite images and interviews to document the destruction of 84% of Gaza's water infrastructure, leading to the deaths of thousands of Gazan civilians, from lack of clean water. The Israeli military has prevented the entry of equipment to repair the water infrastructure, keeping Palestinians in Gaza with a lack of access to clean water.

Palestinians had grown weary of the conflict, with the [Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research](#) finding in a September 2024 survey that support for the armed conflict by Palestinians in Gaza has fallen to 36%, down from 56% six months ago. These views may have changed with the ceasefire.

What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

Senator The Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep sorrow at the tragedy of the war between Israel and Hamas that has claimed tens of thousands of lives.
- Thank the Australian Government for its approach to trying to curb the extent of the killing and its support for upholding human rights.
- Urge that the Australian Government do all it can to see a lasting end to the killing. The Australian Government should seek to align itself with people who are seeking lasting peace.
- Ask that the Australian Government fund Palestinian and Israeli organisations that seek a lasting peace that meets the legitimate needs of all people through non-violent means. These groups include Peace Now, Parents Circle – Families Forum, Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center, the Refuser Solidarity Network, Roots, Women Wage Peace and Women of the Sun.
- Ask that the Australian Government add any Israeli officers and soldiers who have been identified as having ordered or committed war crimes, and have not been brought to justice in a meaningful trial, to the sanctions list. Ask that Brigadier General Yehuda Vach be added to the Australian sanctions list.