

Writers on Gaza

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I did not sign [this letter](#). I was not invited to do so, unsurprisingly. But I would have done so if I had been asked.

Writers Demand Immediate Gaza Ceasefire

We, the undersigned writers of England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, ask our nations and the peoples of the world to join us in ending our collective silence and inaction in the face of horror.

A year and seven months ago, the Palestinian poet Hiba Abu Nada was killed by Israeli airstrikes. In her poem “A Star Said Yesterday,” she imagined for the people of Gaza a cosmic refuge — something utterly unlike the constant lethal danger they now face:

*“And if one day O Light
Of the entire universe
Had no more room for us
You would say Enter my heart,
There you will finally be safe.”*

The government of Israel has renewed its assault on Gaza with unrestrained brutality. Public statements by Israeli ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir openly express genocidal intentions. The use of the words “genocide” or “acts of genocide” to describe what is happening in Gaza is no longer debated by international legal experts or human rights organizations. Amnesty International, Médecins Sans Frontières, Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and many other specialists and historians have clearly identified genocide or acts of genocide in Gaza, enacted by the Israel Defence Force and directed by the government of Israel.

On behalf of the UN, and published by the office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, over 40 Special Rapporteurs and independent experts recently concluded: “While States debate terminology — is it or is it not genocide? — Israel continues its relentless destruction of life in Gaza, through attacks by land, air and sea, displacing and massacring the surviving population with impunity,” the experts said. “No one is spared — not the children, persons with disabilities, nursing mothers, journalists, health

professionals, aid workers, or hostages. Since breaking the ceasefire, Israel has killed hundreds of Palestinians, many daily — peaking on 18 March 2025 with 600 casualties in 24 hours, 400 of whom were children.”

Palestinians are not the abstract victims of an abstract war. Too often, words have been used to justify the unjustifiable, deny the undeniable, defend the indefensible. Too often, too, the right words — the ones that mattered — have been eradicated, along with those who might have written them.

The term “genocide” is not a slogan. It carries legal, political, and moral responsibilities. Just as it is true to call the atrocities committed by Hamas against innocent civilians on 7 October 2023 crimes of war and crimes against humanity, so today it is true to name the attack on the people of Gaza an atrocity of genocide, with crimes of war and crimes against humanity, committed daily by the Israeli Defence Forces, at the command of the government of the State of Israel.

Recently, Alexis Deswaef, vice-president of International Federation of Human Rights and a lawyer at the International Criminal Court, recalled the concept of the “bystander-approver,” drawn from the special tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. It refers to a senior official who looks on, remains silent, and whose silence is interpreted as a green light by the perpetrators.

We refuse to be a public of bystander-approvers. This is not only about our common humanity and all human rights; this is about our moral fitness as the writers of our time, which diminishes with every day we refuse to speak out and denounce this crime.

In taking this stand, we assert without reservation our absolute opposition to and loathing of antisemitism, of anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli prejudice. We reject and abhor attacks, hate and violence — in writing, speech and action — against Palestinian, Israeli, and Jewish people in all and any form. We stand in solidarity with the resistance of Palestinian, Jewish, and Israeli people to the genocidal policies of the current Israeli government.

We ask all people to join in our call for compassion, for reason and for mediation. For Hiba, for the nearly 54,000 Gazans killed, and for the survivors — starving, wounded, and scarred for life:

- 1. We demand the immediate unrestricted distribution of food and medical aid throughout Gaza by the UN.*
- 2. We demand that sanctions be imposed on the State of Israel if the Israeli government does not heed this call, which is also the world’s call, for an immediate ceasefire.*
- 3. We demand a ceasefire which guarantees safety and justice for all Palestinians, the release of all Israeli hostages, and the release of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners*

arbitrarily held in Israeli jails.

This genocide implicates us all. We bear witness to the crimes of genocide, and we refuse to approve them by our silence.

Signed:

Jeanette Winterson

And more than. 300 others.