

### 'Humanitarian Hellscape' in Gaza

# UNRWA Says 'Insidious Campaign' Underway to End Operations

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – The head of the UN's main relief agency in Gaza (UNRWA) has warned that an "insidious campaign" is underway to end the operations of the UN body, warning of "serious implications for international peace and security".

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini told the UN Security Council that the agency was being "denied permission to deliver this aid and save lives".

UNRWA has been under fire since the Zionist regime alleged that some of its employees were involved in the October 7 Hamas operation. The occupying regime has long campaigned for UNRWA, the main distributor of aid in Gaza, to be disbanded. Israel has also banned UNRWA from operating in Gaza's north.

More than a dozen countries pulled funding for UNRWA after the allegations, some of which have resumed donations.

"Dismantling UNRWA will have lasting repercussions. In the short-term, it will deepen the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and accelerate the onset of famine," Lazzarini



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said.

"In the longer-term, it will jeopardize the transition from ceasefire to 'day after' by depriving a traumatized population of essential services."

Lazzarini added children were "bearing the brunt of this war", with more than 17,000 separated from their families and "left to face the horror of Gaza alone."

He also warned that "a man-made famine is tightening its grip"

across Gaza.

"Across the border, food and clean water wait. But UNRWA is denied permission to deliver this aid and save lives," Lazzarini said.

"This outrage is occurring despite consecutive orders by the International Court of Justice to increase the flow of aid into Gaza – which can be done if there is sufficient political will," he added, calling on the council to "make a difference".

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-Gen-

eral Antonio Guterres says the Zionist regime's war on Gaza has turned the besieged strip into a "humanitarian hellcape," warning of a wider regional war.

"In Gaza, six and a half months of Israeli military operations have created a humanitarian hellcape," Guterres said Thursday.

He also reiterated his call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and stressed that Israel must allow more aid into the hunger-stalked territory.

Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas waged the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity in response to the Israeli intensified violence against Palestinians.

Tel Aviv has also blocked water, food, and electricity to Gaza, plunging the coastal strip into a humanitarian crisis.

Also on Thursday, the UN chief warned that one wrong move could see the West Asia region devolve into a wider war.

"The Middle East is on a precipice," Guterres said.

## Report: Blinken Failing to Act on Staff Recommendations to Suspend Israel Aid

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has ignored recommendations from a special State Department panel to suspend assistance to military aid to the Zionist regime's police units, after those units were being probed for human rights abuses against Palestinians, according to a report by ProPublica citing several current and former U.S. officials.

The report stated that in several incidents where this panel had reviewed cases of human rights abuses committed by Zionist troops, including extrajudicial killings by police; the gagging and handcuffing of an elderly Palestinian-American man who later died; and reports that Israeli interrogators

tortured and raped a teenager.

The review of those incidents was obtained by ProPublica and did not include which incidents led to a recommendation of sanctions.

Citing several current and former American officials, the New York-based ProPublica news site reported that a special committee of the State Department - known as the Israel Leahy Vetting Forum - had recommended in December that Blinken disqualify Israeli military and police units from receiving U.S. aid.

However, it added, "They've been sitting in his [Blinken's] briefcase since then."

Most of the cases of rights violations took place in the occupied

West Bank before the Zionist regime's war on the Gaza Strip more than six months ago.

The occupying regime waged a genocidal war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group carried out a historic operation against the usurping entity in retaliation for the regime's intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people.

The occupying regime has killed 34,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 76,770 others.

Since the start of the Gaza onslaught, the U.S., the Zionist regime's most dedicated ally, has fast-tracked arms shipments to the occupying regime.

Washington has also vetoed all the UN Security Council resolutions that called for an immediate ceasefire in the besieged Palestinian territory.

Human rights organizations tracking the aggression against Gaza have collected eyewitness testimony and videos showing Israeli war crimes.

"If we had been applying Leahy effectively in Israel ... maybe you wouldn't have" the occupation forces filming "their war crimes now because we have contributed to a culture of impunity," said Josh Paul, a former director in the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and a member of the vetting forum.

## Report: Israel Has Speeded Up Settlement Expansion Since Gaza Onslaught



A bulldozer operates at a construction site near an Israeli settlement in East Al-Quds on December 7, 2023.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The occupying regime has accelerated its settlement expansion across East Al-Quds since it launched its military aggression in the besieged Gaza Strip in early October 2023, according to a report by the Guardian.

The Guardian, citing the most recent official planning documents, reported that the occupying regime has approved or advanced more than 20 projects – totaling thousands of settler units.

At least two new settlement projects were approved in the immediate aftermath of hostilities in Gaza – only 48 hours. The expansion of a high-security gated settlement called Kidmat Zion in the heart of the Palestinian neighborhood of Ras al-Amud on the eastern periphery of the city was soon set to go ahead.

The second project is known as Givat Shaked and will be built on the northwestern side of Beit Safafa on a plot of grass and trees.

Two major projects now flank the Palestinian community of Beit Safafa, most of which is in East Al-Quds. One, known as Givat Hamatos, was frozen for a decade due to international opposition.

A third settlement project, also near Beit Safafa, is known as Lower Aqueeduct and involves the construction of a

large settlement adjacent to a Palestinian neighborhood. The Lower Aqueeduct plan was fully approved on December 29. The site straddles the line between East Al-Quds and the western part of the city.

Sari Kronish, with the Israeli rights organization Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights, has said, "The fast-tracking of these plans has been unparalleled in the last six months."

Kronish added the construction plans continued to advance "at unprecedented speed", notwithstanding the shutdown of many activities due to the military campaign in Gaza.

Ahmed Salman, 71, the chair of Beit Safafa's community council, stated, "Our family has been here for 250 years ... Now I have a black hole in my heart because I can't see how my children and grandchildren can spend their lives here."

In a report to the Human Rights Council in March, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, said the Israeli regime was going on with its settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian territories by unprecedented amounts, posing a significant threat to the viability of a future Palestinian state.

The high commissioner added the expansion involved the transfer of settlers into occupied territories.

## Google Fires Dozens of Employees Protesting Controversial Israeli Contract

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – Tech giant Google fired dozens of employees on Thursday who took part in protests at the company's U.S. offices against its controversial cloud-computing and AI contract with the Zionist regime and army.

Google said it fired the 28 staff members because they were "physically impeding other employees' work" as they held sit-ins at Google Cloud CEO Thomas Kurian's office in Sunnyvale, California, and Google offices in New York City.

In a statement on Medium, Google workers affiliated with the No Tech for Apartheid campaign, which organized the protests, called it a "flagrant act of retaliation" and said that some employees who did not directly participate in Tuesday's protests were also among those that Google fired.

"Google workers have the right to peacefully protest about terms and conditions of our labor," the statement said.

The employees had specifically hit out at Project Nimbus, a \$1.2bn agreement for Google and Amazon to supply Israel and its military with cloud computing and AI services.

The project, announced in 2021 by Google and Amazon, provides advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities to the Zionist regime.

Since then it has sparked backlash among some Google workers who

have condemned Israel's treatment of Palestinians. That criticism has resurfaced amid the Zionist regime's war on Gaza, which has killed over 34,000 Palestinians, mainly women and children.

"Google execs basically chose to arrest workers for speaking out against the use of our technology to power the first AI-powered genocide," Google software engineer Mohammad Khatami, one of the protesters arrested in New York, told Democracy Now.

In its statement, Google maintained that the Nimbus contract "is not directed at highly sensitive, classified, or military workloads relevant to weapons or intelligence services".

Protests at Google are not new. In March, Google fired an employee who shouted, "I refuse to build technology that empowers Genocide" during a presentation in New York City by Barak Regev, Google's Israel managing director.

And in December, Google staff members and No Tech for Apartheid held a vigil in London for software engineer, Mai Ubeid, who was a graduate of the Google-funded coding boot camp, Gaza Sky Geeks, and in 2020 was part of the Google for Startups accelerator program.

Ubeid was killed on 31 October along with her entire family in an airstrike during the Zionist regime's war on Gaza.

## Zionist Minister Ben Gvir Calls for Execution of Palestinian Prisoners to Ease Overcrowding

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Itamar Ben Gvir, the Zionist regime's far-right minister, has called for the execution of Palestinian prisoners to ease overcrowding in the regime's jails.

Writing on social media, he welcomed a decision by the Israeli army to build 936 additional prison places for "security prisoners".

"The additional construction will allow the prison service to take in more of them, and will bring a partial solution to the prison crisis that exists in the Shabak," he said, referring to the occupying regime's prison service.

"The death penalty for them is the right solution to the incarceration problem, until then - glad that the cabinet approved the proposal I brought."

In a statement on Wednesday marking Palestinian Prisoners' Day, the Gaza media office said over 5,000 Palestinians had been arrested by Zionist regime during their current war on Gaza, which started on October 7.

The office also said that Palestinian prisoners were undergoing "the worst kinds of torture" in Israeli jails, and asked the international community to intervene.

The Israeli Public Defender's Office in February published a report stating that some Israeli prisons have been declared to be in a state of emergency due to severe overcrowding.

During a visit by members of the Public Defender's Office, squalid conditions were noted, including "intolerable overcrowding", with less than three square meters of space per person, poor sanitary conditions, pest issues, inadequate ventilation, and a lack of basic necessities for the incarcerated.

The report said that the overcrowding has caused people stress and anxiety, which can at times cause unnecessary friction in cells.

A statement from the Public Defender's Office said that it had witnessed an "unprecedented prison crisis, in which detainees and prisoners

were crowded into inhumane living spaces".

It added that almost half of the incarcerated in Israel are held in harsh conditions that do not meet the High Court's "first step" of living space, which states that they are to be held in an area of no less than three square metres.

Thousands have also been detained in the occupied West Bank since 7 October.

Palestinian rights group Addameer said that Israel was holding 9,500 Palestinian political prisoners, not including those taken from Gaza.

"The date of October 7 marked a significant turning point that imposed radical transformations on the reality of prisoners and detainees in Israeli occupation prisons," said the group in a statement.

"This was reflected across all dimensions related to this issue, in light of the comprehensive aggression against our people and their detainees, and the ongoing genocide against our people in Gaza for over six consecutive months."