



The Sheffield Palestine Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid grew naturally out of decades of political campaigning across the city for Palestine. Given the context of what is happening on the ground across historic Palestine, we are issuing this statement to recall some of the key reasons why so many citizens are uniting and working for justice for Palestine.

Seventeen years ago, Israel began a siege of Gaza, turning it into an open-air prison. Fifty-six years ago, Israel occupied the West Bank starting its policy of illegal settlement building and seizure of Palestinian land. Seventy-six years ago, Israeli forces destroyed over 500 Palestinian villages and expelled over 750,000 Palestinians from their land in what is referred to as the Nakba.

Since the siege of Gaza began and long before October 2023 there have been five major Israeli onslaughts; one in 2014 resulted in 2,251 Palestinian people being killed. In 2018, the Great March of Return, a series of peaceful demonstrations every Friday by Palestinian people at the border of Gaza and Israel, was met with lethal force when Israeli snipers killed over 200 Palestinians and injured many thousands more.

Escalating provocations at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and of lethal settlers' attacks over the West Bank, with no protection coming from the Palestinian Authority, gave the message that Palestinians would have to take any level of attack from Israel undefended.

This larger context and the violence of the death of these Palestinians, as well as the struggles of those still living, goes largely untold in the west. So, the attack on 7th October 2023 which tragically resulted in over 1200 Israelis being killed (some by the Israeli forces themselves) and over 200 taken captive, some of whom have since died, seems inexplicable to many.

Even so, it cannot be justified that since then Israeli bombardments have killed over 40,000 people, most of whom are women and children. Most residential homes, hospitals and schools have been deliberately reduced to rubble making normal life impossible in Gaza. The death toll increases daily with nowhere safe for civilians. For those left alive,

conditions are intolerable - food, shelter and healthcare are in very short supply and attempts to provide aid are subject to the uncertain whims of Israeli army priority.

Also, since then, in the West Bank, attacks by settlers and the Israeli forces have become daily occurrences. Theft of Palestinian land through settlement expansion, murder of Palestinians, detention of thousands without trial, resulting in separation from loved ones and, in many cases, torture, are all key features of the occupation.

The onslaught on Gaza's population over the past 12 months and statements by Israeli politicians to justify the bombardment have been widely seen, including by the International Court of Justice in January 2024, as genocidal in intent. The Israeli military's actions during this time not only in Gaza but also, as we mention above, on the West Bank, show that Israel intends nothing less than the destruction of the Palestinians as a nation.

It is not to diminish the tragedy of the Israeli deaths on October 7th or the anguish of being taken captive to state the self-evident: the eruption of Palestinian resistance on that day, was born out of a long history of brutality, incremental occupation, land theft and dispossession since 1948. This occupation and the settlements that go with it, in a landmark ruling by the International Court of Justice in May 2024, have been judged illegal. But there is little pressure on Israel, from western governments, to abide by the ruling, as they ought to do.

Palestinians have the right to resist. The only guarantee of an end to the armed resistance is an end to the occupation, an end to Israeli Apartheid and addressing the right of return of Palestinian refugees.