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Letter to attorney general and state prosecutor demands action to stop ‘explicit calls to commit atrocious crimes’

A group of prominent Israelis has accused the country’s judicial authorities of ignoring “extensive and blatant” incitement to genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza by influential public figures.

In a letter to the attorney general and state prosecutors, they demand action to stop the normalisation of language that breaks both Israeli and international law.

“For the first time that we can remember, the explicit calls to commit atrocious crimes, as stated, against millions of civilians have turned into a legitimate and regular part of Israeli discourse,” they write. “Today, calls of these types are an everyday matter in Israel.”

Signatories include one of Israel’s top scientists, the Royal Society member [Prof David Harel](#), alongside other academics, former diplomats, former members of the Knesset, journalists and activists.

Represented by the human rights lawyer [Michael Sfard](#), their 11-page letter contains multiple examples of “the discourse of annihilation, expulsion and revenge”.

The list of elite Israelis who have incited war crimes includes cabinet ministers and Knesset members, former top military officials, academics, media figures, social media influencers and celebrities, the letter says.

Comments quoted in the letter include several made by MPs. One, Yitzhak Kroizer, said in a radio interview: “The [Gaza](#) Strip should be flattened, and for all of them there is but one sentence, and that is death.”

Tally Gotliv, from Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party, demanded the prime minister use a nuclear bomb on Gaza for “strategic deterrence”, the letter says, quoting her as saying: “Before we consider inserting ground troops, doomsday weapon.”

Another Likud MP, Boaz Bismuth, is quoted as evoking the biblical massacre of the Amalek nation, enemies of ancient Israel. “It is forbidden to take mercy on the cruel, there’s no place for any humanitarian gestures,” he said with reference to Gaza, then added the biblical reference: “The memory of Amalek must be erased.”

Among other commenters cited is the journalist Zvi Yehezkeili, who said on Channel 13: “[We] should have killed many times 20,000 people, [we] should have begun with a blow of 100,000.”

Sfard said he was stunned by the speed with which incitement to genocide and other extreme speech had been normalised in Israel. “I never could have imagined that I would need to write such a letter,” he said. “The fact that this type of talk has completely left the far, unimportant fringes and came into the mainstream in such a massive way, for me it’s incomprehensible.

“The first danger is that people will act in accordance with that speech, then you have the question of what kind of society we are going to be when this is the speech that governs our treatment of Palestinians. There are 2.3 million Gazans, most of them minors.”

The letter contrasts the lack of action on even “the gravest and most dangerous instances of incitement against residents of Gaza” with an intense campaign against incitement “whose potential victims are Israeli Jews”. Huge resources have been devoted to tracking down people, mostly anonymous and with little reach, over speech that authorities interpreted as supporting Hamas, the letter notes. By late November, 269 investigations had been opened and 86 indictments filed.

“It is quite amazing the number of criminal investigations, when it comes to Palestinian citizens of Israel, most of them completely anonymous, many of them almost with no audience,” Sfard said. “The gap between that and the freedom and impunity for those who advocate all kinds of things – ethnic cleansing, killing civilians, bombarding civilian areas, and even genocide – doesn’t square up, and that’s something for the authorities to explain.”

The language of genocide risks influencing how Israel wages war, the letter says. “Normalised discourse which calls for annihilation, erasure, devastation and the like is liable to impact the manner by which soldiers conduct themselves.”

It highlights the November killing of Yuval Doron Kestelman, who stopped a terrorist attack at a Jerusalem bus stop by shooting two gunmen but was then shot himself by soldiers who arrived at the scene minutes later and assumed he was a terrorist.

“We had years of incitement that dealt with not leaving terrorists alive at the scene of the crime, and there were people including myself that warned that it is immoral and illegal to kill a terrorist who is neutralised,” Sfard said. “Then came this tragic event with this Israeli who in a heroic action neutralised two Palestinian militants. He himself was then targeted, even though he threw away his weapons, took off his coat [to show he didn’t have a suicide vest], put up his hands.”

The letter was sent before South Africa [filed a case at the international court of justice](#) accusing Israel of genocide and of failing to stop incitement to genocide. “We filed this letter last week, before South Africa lodged their complaint, and without knowing they were going to do that,” Sfard said.

The group Sfard represents does not accuse Israel of genocide in Gaza; their letter is about incitement to genocide inside Israel. However, the charges of incitement levelled by South Africa includes language cited in the letter and notes authorities’ failure to take judicial action in response.

It was the role of the attorney general to make clear that comments inciting genocide were

unacceptable, amount to incitement and had become normalised, Sfard said. “We want to flag this and allow the authorities an opportunity to do something about it.”

An official response is particularly important as Israel grapples with the legacy of grief and rage created by the “inconceivable and unforgivable war crimes and crimes against humanity” carried out by Hamas on 7 October, the letter says. “Israeli society is embroiled in trauma which will take years to heal. This is precisely the substrate on which immoral monsters are liable to grow, and are growing.”