**PRESS RELEASE: PSC demands UK response to UN report**

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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

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**PSC welcomes the latest UNHRC commission report into Israeli war crimes in the Gaza strip and calls for action by the UK Government.**

* The report of the UN independent international commission of inquiry finds Israel guilty of the deliberate targeting of children, disabled people and journalists.
* In contradiction to the official narrative of the Israeli Government it finds that the demonstrations were civilian in nature, had clearly stated political aims and, despite some acts of significant violence, did not constitute combat or a military campaign.
* PSC calls for the UK Government to uphold its legal obligation to enforce international law as a third party state. This includes holding Israel accountable for crimes committed against Palestinians, and ending UK complicity in supplying Israel with weaponry.

On the 30th March 2018 Palestinians launched the Great Return March, a peaceful series of demonstrations reaffirming the Palestinian right of return – as enshrined by international law – and protesting against the inhumane living conditions caused by a decade long illegal blockade of Gaza.

For 48 consecutive weeks Palestinians have been met with brutal violence as they exercise their right to protest. The World Health Organisation [reported](http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO-Health-Cluster-Special-SitRep-_20_-_31_Jan.pdf?ua=1) in January 2019 that since the beginning of the protests on March 30th 2018, Over 250 Palestinians have been killed at the Gaza fence, and a further 27,000 injured and maimed. The UNHRC report details that 9,204 Palestinian demonstrators have been injured by live fire, bullet fragmentation or tear gas canisters.

According to [Human Rights Watch](https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/03/israel-gaza-killings-unlawful-calculated), “Israeli soldiers were not merely using excessive force, but were apparently acting on orders that all but ensured a bloody military response to the Palestinian demonstrators… who posed no imminent threat to life.”

It is therefore of no surprise that the UNHRC report finds reasonable grounds to believe Israeli soldiers committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that may be war crimes. This includes evidence of the Israeli Defence Forces deliberately targeting disabled people, children and journalists.

The commission also stated all violations “must be immediately investigated by Israel.” However, the report also notes that “to date, the Government of Israel has consistently failed to meaningfully investigate and prosecute commanders and soldiers for crimes and violations committed against Palestinians or to provide reparation to victims in accordance with international norms”. Given this reality PSC believes it is futile to expect that Israel will comply with the recommendations of any independent inquiry unless pressured to do so by the International Community.

In light of the UNHRC report, PSC calls on the British government to uphold its legal obligation to enforce international law as a third party state. This includes respecting the call from the UNHRC commission for UN members – including the UK – to consider imposing individual sanctions, such as a travel ban or an assets freeze, on those identified as responsible for these crimes.

Furthermore, PSC reaffirms its call for the UK government to pressure Israel, in line with the report’s recommendations, to immediately lift the blockade of Gaza, and to end its complicity with Israel’s violations of human rights and international law by ending the two-way arms trade with Israel.

PSC Director Ben Jamal said:

“ This report is comprehensive and chilling in its description of some of the victims of Israel’s grotesque shoot to kill or maim policy.  These include the shooting in the head of an 11 year old boy for the crime of chanting slogans, 200m away from the Gaza fence, and the shooting of clearly identified medical personnel and journalists. These are crimes against humanity and the UK government must act on its responsibilities under international law to hold Israel to account. To continue to sell arms to a state that carries out such acts makes the UK government complicit and it must act now to end this complicity.”