

ISRAEL

OVERVIEW OF RECENT RESTRICTIONS TO CIVIC FREEDOMS



Police officers intervene the protesters as they gather for a “Day of Resistance” demonstration to protest the Israeli government plan to introduce judicial changes (Photo by Mostafa Alkharouf/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)



INTRODUCTION

Respect for civic freedoms in Israel is intrinsically linked to the state's ongoing practices of settler colonialism and [illegal occupation](#) of Palestinian territories. International human rights organisations have [concluded](#) that Israeli authorities are enforcing a system of apartheid against all Palestinians living under their effective control, including in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and refugees in other countries. Apartheid is a crime against humanity [prohibited by](#) international law.

Civic freedoms have significantly deteriorated under the current governing coalition, considered to be the most far-right, religiously conservative government in Israel's history. Ahead of the [last election](#) in November 2022, [B'Tselem](#), an Israel-based human rights organisation, [outlined](#) how the system of apartheid continues to prevent equal political participation for Palestinian people. At that election, Benjamin Netanyahu was [returned](#) as prime minister after his Likud party formed a coalition with several right-wing parties, including the [Religious Zionism](#) party, which have expressed anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab and anti-LGBTQI+ sentiments.

ABOUT THE CIVICUS MONITOR

The CIVICUS Monitor, an online platform that tracks threats to civil society in countries across the globe, rates civic space – the space for civil society – in Israel as **Obstructed**.

The data provides the basis for civic space ratings, which are based on up-to-date information and indicators on the state of freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Countries can be rated as:

CLOSED**REPRESSED****OBSTRUCTED****NARROWED****OPEN**



GAZA GENOCIDE

On 7 October, Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, killing around 1,400 people and taking over 200 hostages. Since then, Israel [has continued](#) its brutal bombardment and siege of Gaza, killing at least 43,374 Palestinians, including 17,000 children, and injuring over 102,261 people at the time of writing. Israel currently holds [over 10,000](#) Palestinian civilians in its prisons.

In a case brought by South Africa, on 26 January 2024 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) [issued](#) an [interim ruling](#) that Israel is plausibly committing genocide in Gaza, in violation of the Genocide Convention. Israel has repeatedly reiterated its 'right to defend' itself at all costs, and several high-level government officials, including Netanyahu, have made [public statements](#) that incite violence and genocidal intent, in defiance of the ICJ's orders. On 20 May 2024, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced that he had [requested](#) arrest warrants for several Hamas leaders, Netanyahu and Israel's Minister of Defence, Yoav Gallant, although to date no warrants have been issued.

The killing has continued with Israel also now [targeting Lebanon](#). Several international human rights and civil society organisations (CSOs), including Israeli-based organisations, [have called](#) for an immediate ceasefire and respect for international humanitarian law.

Israel's ongoing bombardment of Gaza has also had a significant impact on civil liberties in Israel.

International human rights law [recognises](#) that in the context of officially proclaimed public emergencies that threaten the life of a country, including on the grounds of public health or public safety, restrictions on some rights can be justified, but they must have a legal basis and be strictly necessary, of limited duration, respectful of human dignity, subject to review, proportionate to achieving the objective, not involve discrimination and be used strictly to the extent required by the emergency in question. Even where an official proclamation of emergency has been made, non-derogable fundamental rights such as the right to life and freedom from torture and inhuman, cruel, or degrading treatment still must not be infringed.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) has [raised concerns](#) about the government's misuse of the state of emergency law to [enact](#) emergency regulations following 7 October without necessity and proportionality and at the risk of eroding the separation of powers. It stated: 'Disasters or emergencies always serve as fertile ground for pursuing anti-democratic measures, violating human rights and questioning their underlying ideals, inciting against minorities, and using silencing and intimidation tactics'.

During this time, the Israeli government [has passed](#) at least 19 emergency regulations, violating several freedoms, including the rights of suspects and detainees. For example, it passed an emergency regulation giving the minister of defence the power to shut down foreign broadcasters deemed to 'harm the security of the state' (see freedom of expression, below).

RULE OF LAW AND JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Before the current phase of conflict, in January 2023, Israel's justice minister [announced](#) a series of changes to the status of the judiciary, which included giving the Israeli government unchecked powers over the appointment of judges and prosecutors and [limiting](#) judicial review over laws and government decisions. The move sparked large protests. Volker Türk, the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights, [expressed](#) concerns about the changes, stating that they would 'pose serious risks to the effectiveness of the judiciary to defend the rule of law, human rights and judicial independence'. In July 2023, the first law in this passage was passed by the Knesset, Israel's parliament, with the opposition boycotting the vote. The amendment removed "reasonableness" as grounds for courts to challenge government decisions. As a result, the Knesset was given the power to overrule a Supreme Court decision by a simple majority vote. In January 2024, [Israel's Supreme Court ruled to](#) scrap this law.

In March 2023, the Knesset [approved](#) the preliminary reading of the Death Penalty Bill, an amendment to the Penal Code, to impose the death penalty as a mandatory sentence for 'a person who wilfully or



negligently causes the death of an Israeli citizen' on motives of 'racism or hostility toward the public', or aiming to 'harm the State of Israel' or the 'revival of the Jewish people in its homeland'. UN experts [expressed](#) concerns, calling the proposal a 'deeply retrogressive step'. In a statement, Adalah, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, raised [concerns](#) that the bill violates international law and the rights of Palestinians.

PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

JUDICIAL CHANGES PROTESTS

Following the government's announcement of judicial changes in January 2023, mass protests took place for at least 20 weeks. Between 90,000 and 300,000 people [gathered](#) on 13 February 2023.

Protesters faced repression on several occasions. For example, on 1 March 2023, protesters [staged](#) a 'National Day of Disruption', blocking Ayalon highway in Tel Aviv. Police responded with stun grenades and reportedly injured one protester. On 28 March 2023, ahead of a night protest, Tel Aviv District Commander Lt. Gen. Peretz Amar [sent warning letters](#) to leading activists, stating that plans to block roads were illegal and their behaviour was 'dangerous and forbidden'. ACRI stated that the letter was an attempt to intimidate protesters.

In the same month, following the government's sacking of the defence minister after he called for a pause on the judicial changes, people [protested](#) in several locations including outside the Knesset and Netanyahu's home. Police clashed with protesters and used water cannon to disperse the crowd.

During a protest as parliament voted on the measures in July 2023, around 20,000 people gathered in the streets near the Knesset. At least 19 protesters [were arrested](#), with police using skunk gas and water cannon to disperse the crowd.

Netanyahu and senior government officials [publicly vilified](#) protesters. For example, in one public address in March 2023, Netanyahu stated that protesters simply want to 'burn down the house', calling them 'extreme and dangerous' and accusing them of attempting to 'overthrow the government'. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir branded protesters 'anarchists'.

ANTI-WAR AND GAZA SOLIDARITY PROTESTS

Following the 7 October attack and in the context of Israel's ongoing bombardment of Gaza, several protests have [taken place](#) calling for the release of all hostages, an immediate ceasefire and an end to the brutal violence against Palestinian people. Protests have also [taken place](#) criticising Netanyahu's failure to prevent the 7 October attack.

Adalah [noted](#) that since 7 October, Palestinian citizens of Israel and some Jewish Israelis have experienced a severe crackdown on freedoms of assembly and expression and political persecution. Adalah points to a 'widespread, coordinated effort among government offices, Israeli institutions, and extreme right-wing groups' to target Palestinians and others who speak out to show support or solidarity with people in Gaza. Between 7 October 2023 and 13 November 2023 alone, Adalah [documented](#) at least 251 cases of arrests, interrogations and 'warning talks' related to social media posts, involvement in protests or other activities such as political or religious activity or obstructing police work. In this period, 76 indictments were filed on charges of 'incitement to terrorism' and 'identifying with terror organisations', as defined in Israel's 2016 Counter-Terrorism Law.

ACRI [has documented](#) several restrictions on the right to protest including the disproportionate use of force and arbitrary arrests, unnecessary authorisation requirements, banning of approved protests and confiscation of protest signs. On 14 October 2023, ACRI wrote to the police commissioner requesting



that the right to protest and freedom of expression be guaranteed, including under the restrictions of emergency regulations. Shortly after, the police imposed a blanket ban on demonstrations relating to diplomatic, political or security issues and prohibited holding a protest near Netanyahu's residence calling for his removal. Police subsequently issued an ambiguous notice allowing protests.

Between 18 and 20th October 2023, several protests in response to the Israel bombardment of Gaza took place in the cities of Haifa and Umm al-Fahm. The protests went ahead following an order by the Israeli Police Commissioner to reject all permits for demonstrations in support of Palestinian people in Gaza. Adalah [sent an urgent letter](#) to the Police Commissioner and to Israel's Attorney General to demand the immediate cancellation of the illegal directive.

On 18 October 2023, shortly before a protest was about to begin in Haifa, police arrived, [declared](#) the protest unlawful and detained five protesters overnight after they refused to leave the area. The Haifa court ordered their release the following day.

On 19 October 2023, police spokesperson Eli Levy publicly stated that protests 'in support of Gaza or a Nazi terrorist organisation that committed a Holocaust here' would not be permitted. He also stated that 'Anyone who dares to step out and utter a single word in praise of Gaza will be behind bars'. On that day, police violently [detained](#) 12 protesters, including minors, and used batons, rubber bullets, and stun grenades against protesters. Ben-Gvir [praised](#) what he called the police's 'zero tolerance' response to the protests.

In early November 2023, the High Court [upheld](#) a ban on protests in two Arab Israeli cities. Police banned the two protests on the grounds that they were likely to disrupt public order and public security related to calls for violence.

Between 9 and 12 November 2023, people held several protests against the [arrests](#) of the heads of the High Committee for the Arabs in Israel, a political umbrella group, and of Meir Baruchin. Baruchin, a teacher, was arrested after a social media post which expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people and opposed the Israel Defence Force's (IDF) operations in Gaza. ACRI stated that police used disproportionate force, including physical violence such as beating and dragging protesters, and made arbitrary arrests. Police verbally harassed protesters, calling them 'traitors' and telling them to 'go to Gaza'. In a letter to the Attorney General, ACRI raised its concerns over police misconduct.

In at least two cases, police [demanded](#) that organisers of two small protests report to the police station to obtain prior authorisation. In one case the demonstration was not approved. According to [international human rights law](#), prior approval is not a requirement, particularly when dealing with small or spontaneous protests that are organised quickly in response to ongoing events.

On 15 November 2023, ACRI petitioned the High Court after police [refused](#) permission for the Hadash party to hold a demonstration in Tel Aviv, citing public order and public security concerns. Following this, the police agreed to approve the demonstration at a different location, with a limitation on the number of participants.

Left-wing protest organisers from the Standing Together group, a coalition of over 20 organisations, [applied](#) to the police in advance for permission to hold an Only Peace Will Bring Security march on 11 January 2024. However, police instructed the group to hold the march on an alternative route and required organisers to sign a document of conditions. Three days prior to the march, the police retracted their authorisation on the grounds that the march location would increase the likelihood of violence.

On 17 January 2024, ACRI [petitioned](#) the High Court after police refused to grant permission for protests in Haifa organised by The Peace Partnership on three occasions. Following the hearing, the police announced they were withdrawing their refusal and permitted the protest to go ahead with no more than 700 participants.



Police [arrested](#) at least 127 protesters during anti-war protests between 31 August and 9 September 2024. Of these, they held 56 people in overnight detention, who then attended remand hearings where the courts found no substantial grounds for arrest. On 9 September 2024, ACRI [sent legal correspondence](#) to the State Prosecutor demanding immediate action to address the police's conduct. It highlighted that these practices are 'part of a recurring pattern of police abuse' that frequently entails unjustified overnight detention of protesters.

Police have [harassed](#) and arrested protesters for carrying critical protest signs, such as 'Stop the massacre', 'Stop the genocide in Gaza' and symbols associated with Palestinian solidarity such as the watermelon or Palestinian flag. In one example, on 29 October 2023, Israeli police arrested Yoav Bar, a 68-year-old Haifa resident, who advocates for Palestinian rights and has been involved in protests, for suspicion of 'incitement and membership in a terrorist organisation'. Police [stated](#) that they had 'seized a significant amount of materials suspected of constituting incitement', including posters, signs and media related to prisoners and what they called 'terrorist organisations'. Bar was hospitalised during his detention due to a health condition before being released after a judge ruled that the arrest was illegal since the materials alleging the offence were confiscated in a private setting.

According to ACRI, the large number of incidents show that [there is](#) a systematic practice or policy by the police. In response to these concerning developments, it wrote to the State Attorney's Office six times seeking clarification of its approach, after which it petitioned the High Court. It provided evidence of 14 separate incidents during protests where police continued to prevent people carrying signs and chanting slogans, attack protesters and violently arrest people. On 25 August 2024, the High Court [dismissed](#) a petition filed by ACRI. The court ruled that the petition was moot since the police legal counsel had issued an instruction to officers prohibiting the confiscation of political signs.

PUBLIC EVENTS AT UNIVERSITIES AND CENSORSHIP OF STUDENTS

In January 2024, Tel Aviv University [announced that](#), due to the war, only public activities organised by university authorities or the student union would be allowed on campus in the first semester. Following legal correspondence with ACRI, the university vice-rector clarified that the university had not prohibited and did not intend to prohibit activities or meetings of student groups on campus. However, the dean of students refused to allow the Hadash student group to host a lecture on student rights in higher education institutions, with a focus on disciplinary committees. The university cited the 'war and shortage of security guards' as a reason for its decision and stated that only urgent events were approved during this period. Following ACRI's appeal, the university's Public Activities Committee issued a new notice stating that student groups are permitted to hold public activities, with the limitation that each group is only allowed to host one public activity for the rest of the semester. In another incident, the same student group [planned](#) to stage a protest at the university on 15 May 2024, to mark Nakba Day, a day that commemorates the displacement of Palestinians following the establishment of Israel in 1948. Police denied the for the protest, despite repeated attempts by the group to obtain permission. Following a petition by ACRI to the High Court, on 14 May 2024 the police announced that the protest was permitted to go ahead.

POLICE POLITICISATION IMPACTS ON RIGHT TO PROTEST

Since coming into government, Ben-Gvir has [politicised](#) the police force as part of the criminalisation of dissent. For example, Ben-Gvir amended the Police Ordinance (amendment 37) to [expand his powers](#) over the police. A [petition](#) by ACRI to the High Court against this amendment is pending. In the interim, the court issued an injunction [prohibiting](#) Ben-Gvir from interfering in the policing of protests. According to ACRI, Ben-Gvir has [overstepped](#) his powers by setting general agendas for the police, giving direct orders to police commanders and interfering in investigations and the promotion and appointment of officers in the police and prison service. Additionally, undercover police officers have been frequently used to suppress protests in recent months. ACRI has reported that [undercover police](#) mingle with protesters and photograph them on their phones, and arrest perceived protest leaders, including with the use of violence, without revealing that they are police officers. Ben-Gvir's policies have disproportionately impacted on Israel's Arab population.



ASSOCIATION

STIGMATISATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY PERSONNEL

On 2 November 2023, during a Knesset committee session, Knesset member Tzvika Fogel of the Jewish Power Party [verbally attacked](#) ACRI staff member Debbie Gilad-Hayo, claiming she had come to arrange family visits for Hamas, implying that the organisation's work to uphold the fundamental human rights of prisoners amounted to support for Hamas. Fogel also posted a social media video spreading these claims. Following this, Gilad-Hayo [received](#) several threats, including against her family. ACRI confirmed that the seriousness and intensity of the threats necessitated enhanced security measures for its staff and offices.

IMPRISONMENT OF PALESTINIAN HRDS

Several Palestinian Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) living in Israel are facing persecution for their activism.

On 19 October 2023, Israeli police [arrested](#) Ahmad Khalefa, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, lawyer and HRD, along with 10 other protesters during a peaceful protest in Umm al-Fahm, northern Israel. He was charged with 'incitement to terrorism' and 'identification with a terrorist group' under the broadly worded Counter-Terrorism law for chanting anti-war slogans. Amnesty International reported that during almost four months in prison, Khalefa was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings and witnessing the torture of other prisoners. On 30 January 2024, he [was placed](#) under house arrest on strict terms, including electronic tagging. In [an appeal](#) to the state attorney, Amnesty International pointed to the broader pattern of repression against Palestinian citizens of Israel, including of their freedom to protest against the war, stating that this violates Israel's obligations under Articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Police also [arrested](#) Muhammad Jabareen, an activist who works with young people, at the same time that they arrested Khalefa, and on the same charges. Despite many appeals by the legal team, Jabareen was held in an Israeli prison for eight months, enduring inhumane conditions. On 16 June 2024, the Haifa District Court ruled to place Jabareen under house arrest with strict conditions. According to [Adalah](#), the case is unprecedented because it is the first time the state prosecutor has charged a Palestinian citizen of Israel with terrorism for non-violent and non-disruptive protests.

According to the [Israeli police](#), as of 1 May 2024, [over 160 indictments had been filed](#) concerning charges of incitement to terrorism, almost exclusively against Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. According to [Adalah](#), since 7 October, the state attorney's office's official policy is to seek detention until the end of legal proceedings in all cases involving charges of incitement to terrorism.

On 7 April 2024, Walid Daqqah, a terminally ill Palestinian prisoner, [died](#) in an Israeli jail after having spent 38 years imprisoned, as a result of systematic medical neglect, torture and other ill-treatment, including physical attacks while in prison. Daqqah was convicted in 1987 for commanding a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-affiliated group that abducted and killed an Israeli soldier. On 16 April 2024, Adalah filed a petition to the Supreme Court on behalf of Daqqah's family [to request](#) the immediate release of his body for burial. Daqqah, who was due to be released next year, was one of the most [prominent](#) and longtime Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody.

EXPRESSION

AMENDMENTS TO COUNTER-TERRORISM LAW LIKELY TO HARM EXPRESSION

Article 24 of the Counter-Terrorism Law states that it [seeks to strike](#) a balance between freedom of expression and protecting state and public security. However, a series of amendments to Article 24 approved by the Ministerial Committee on Legislation could harm freedom of expression.



Two proposed bills – on the [Amendment to The Counter-Terrorism Law](#) (Identification with the Perpetrator of a Terrorist Offense) and the Amendment to Combating Terrorism (Prevention of Identification with a Terrorist Organization) – remove the probability test, where expression should only be prohibited if there is a real probability it will lead to an act of terrorism, taking into account the content of a statement, the circumstances, timing and scope of publication, the public atmosphere and the identity and status of the speaker. However, the amendments will criminalise a statement even when there is no risk it will lead to acts of terrorism. For example, simply condemning attacks on civilians or the use of acts of terrorism may amount to a serious offence. The Arab Centre for the Development of Social Media (7amleh) [noted](#) that the new law would enable the state to criminalise Palestinian individuals who have not committed or planned any offence, and would increase the Israeli authorities' surveillance of Palestinian citizens.

Another proposed change, the Amendment to The Counter-Terrorism Law (Incitement to Terrorism on Social Media) Bill, [expands](#) the definition of 'advertising' set out in the law by equating publicity with a like on social networks. The bill seeks to lower the bar for the probability test, requiring 'reasonable' rather than a 'real' probability that a statement will lead to an act of terrorism. The amendment gives more power to the police, as they no longer need permission from the Attorney General before initiating criminal proceedings for such offences. ACRI [stated](#) that this is likely to silence dissent. It also pointed out that the majority of investigations and arrests were of Arab citizens and residents. For example, a woman was investigated for posting a picture of a large fish eating a small fish, and someone else was investigated for posting a picture of injured children in Gaza with the caption 'The eye cries for the children of Gaza'.

The [Amendment to the Counter-Terrorism Law](#) (Offence of Identification with a Terrorist Organization and Compensation for Publication of Incitement to Terrorism) Bill [proposes](#) to impose liability in tort for publications prohibited by law, without proof of damage. This could be used against people who are critical of the government, leading to a chilling effect.

RESTRICTION ON MEDIA FREEDOM: AL JAZEERA SHUT DOWN

On 1 April 2024, the government passed the [Law for the Prevention of Foreign Broadcasting Harm to State Security \(Temporary Order – Iron Swords\), 5774-2024](#), known as the Al Jazeera Law. This [law grants](#) the minister of communications the authority to block broadcasts of a foreign media entity and shut down its offices in Israel on the basis that it may endanger state security. The law prevents courts intervening in a decision, even if a court believes it should be overturned. Shortly after the law was passed, on 5 May 2024, the government [unanimously](#) authorised the communication minister to order the [blocking](#) of Al Jazeera broadcasts in both Arabic and English within Israel, ban its website in Israel, close its offices in the country and confiscate equipment used by its staff. The Israeli government accused the outlet of being a ' Hamas mouthpiece'. Al Jazeera journalists have been on the ground covering Israel's ongoing bombardment of Gaza, and several have been killed. Media freedom [groups condemned](#) the decision as a 'violation of media freedom and the right to access independent and diverse media coverage and sources'.

In addition, [The Israeli Broadcasting Report](#) – the Annual Report to the Knesset Economic Committee – aims to increase government involvement in the Israeli Public broadcasting corporation's content and financial management, which could [undermine](#) media freedom.

ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS

Police have [repeatedly](#) prevented journalists from covering protests, including through the use of force, physical violence and false arrests. They have also failed to protect journalists when attacked. In a statement, Reporters Without Borders [noted](#) that since October 2023 at least 15 journalists in Israel have been subjected to intimidation and harassment by members of the Israeli security forces and Israeli citizens, noting that Arab and Palestinian journalists have come under particular threat.

On 13 October 2023, Israeli police [stopped](#) and physically attacked BBC Arabic journalists Haitham Abudiab and Muhannad Tutunji and held their crew at gunpoint. The police stated that the crew's vehicle was 'suspicious', even though it was marked as 'TV', with the crew wearing bulletproof helmets and vests marked 'press'.



On 15 October 2023, a security agent verbally [attacked](#) Ahmed Darousha, a reporter for the Qatari TV news channel Al Arabi, who was broadcasting live from the northern city of Nazareth. After directly attacking the journalist, the agent turned to the camera and shouted, 'Killers, killers. Gaza must be reduced to dust'.

On 25 October 2023, an Israeli citizen physically [attacked](#) and threatened a group of five photographers – Fadi Amun from Haaretz, Eyal Margolin of Israel Hayom, Jalaa Marey from Agence France-Presse, Sergey Ponomarev from the New York Times and Atef Safadi, the head of the European Press Agency, a photo agency in Israel – near the Lebanese border. The attack resulted in one journalist sustaining a broken arm. While the attacker was arrested, he was released a few hours later.

On 5 June 2024, an unknown man [smashed](#) the windows of Haaretz's office in Tel Aviv. Haaretz – a left-of-centre daily newspaper – and its staff have been subject to intimidation and harassment. For example, a Haaretz investigative reporter told the Guardian that unnamed senior security officials threatened actions against him if he reported on attempts by the former head of Mossad, the national intelligence agency, to intimidate the ex-prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Several senior government officials have publicly attacked the publication. On 23 November 2023, Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi announced on X/Twitter that he had submitted a proposal to the government to terminate funding for Haaretz because of its '[anti-Israeli propaganda](#)'. Haaretz editor Gideon Levy has been publicly vilified by several government officials as a '[traitor](#)' for running a newspaper they deem '[worse than Al Jazeera](#)'.

PALESTINIAN CITIZENS IN ISRAEL TARGETED

Palestinian citizens of Israel have faced repression in the workplace and in higher education institutions for speaking out about Israel's bombardment of Gaza.

Several Israeli universities have instituted disciplinary proceedings, suspensions and expulsions of Palestinian students for social media posts relating to the ongoing war. As of [May 2024](#), Adalah [reported](#) that it was monitoring at least 160 cases related to repression against Palestinian students in Israeli universities. The universities [claim](#) that students' social media posts violate the disciplinary regulations by either 'supporting terrorism' or 'sympathising with terror organisations'. Adalah found that students have faced disciplinary action for simply posting national symbols of Palestine such as the flag or citing verses from the Quran. In addition, they have been de facto banned from using terms such as 'ethnic cleansing', 'massacre' and 'genocide'.

In one case [documented by](#) B'Tselem, a young student anonymously recounted receiving a letter from her university in October 2023 informing her of suspension from her studies, without prior warning. In November 2023, following her disciplinary hearing, she was summoned to the police for an interrogation and then arrested. She was subjected to degrading treatment in prison, including regular strip searches, with prison guards insulting her for wearing a hijab and calling her 'Hamas'. She was conditionally released after more than a month in detention, under conditions of 10 days of house arrest, a travel ban until February 2024 and an order to do 120 hours of voluntary work. She was also forbidden from posting on social media for two months.

The Minister of Education, Yoav Kish, has publicly supported the universities' actions, stating that schools must 'immediately suspend any student or employee who supports the barbaric terrorist acts currently experienced in the State of Israel' and calling for permanent expulsions.

A 7amleh [study](#) found that 70 per cent of young Palestinians living in Israel either self-censor or completely abstain from digital activity. The organisation highlighted that fear and self-censorship is fuelled by state policies of intensive surveillance and the prosecution of young Palestinians in Israel who are active online inside Israel. Heightened feelings of digital insecurity have led many to avoid interacting online.

According to Adalah, more than 90 Palestinian citizens in Israel have been fired or suspended from their jobs in various industries, including retail, hospitals and high-tech, due to their social media posts or other acts of expression. On 18 October 2023, Dr. Abd Samara was fired by from his position as the Head of the



Department of Cardiac Intensive Care at [Hasharon Hospital](#) due to a Facebook post in which, the hospital alleges, he 'praises the Hamas invasion of Israel'.

On 11 October 2023, Israel's Civil Service Commission [issued a letter](#) advising all governmental bodies, directors of public hospitals and statutory organisations to contact the commission if they come across employees making statements that support terrorism and express views hostile to the state of Israel. The commission further noted that, 'employees of the state are subject to various restrictions regarding their freedom of expression', which extend 'to private capacities and social media'.

Palestinian lawyers [face](#) serious threats, particularly from Jewish-Israeli lawyers, due to social media posts and other forms of expression. There have been several cases where Jewish-Israeli lawyers have falsely accused Palestinian lawyers of 'supporting terrorism' or labelled them as 'terrorists', and threatened to lodge complaints against them to the Israeli Bar Association's Ethics Committee. On 12 October 2023, the Israeli Bar Association sent [an email](#) to all lawyers registered with the Israeli bar, stating that the National Ethics Committee would display 'zero tolerance' towards any lawyer who publishes content on social media that is perceived as 'incitement to violence'.

In [a statement](#) on International Women's Day, 8 March 2024, Adalah and feminist organisation Kayan noted that Palestinian women citizens of Israel have faced further restrictions. Since 7 October 2023, Adalah noted an 'unprecedented surge' in arrests of Palestinian women for expression-related offences. This includes disciplinary actions against women students at Israeli universities and dismissals of women workers, such as doctors, nurses, artists and academics. Kayan reported receiving calls from Palestinian women who were threatened in the workplace by Jewish-Israeli employees. Palestinian women have also faced harassment, including doxing, by Jewish-Israeli citizens and government officials.

Young Palestinian women students have been disproportionately targeted at universities. Seventy-nine per cent of the disciplinary cases recorded by Adalah have been taken against women students. Palestinian women have been subjected to police brutality during arrest, including blindfolding, violent arrest raids carried out in the middle of the night and strip searches, and face ill-treatment and poor prison conditions.

Some left-wing Jewish-Israeli citizens [have also faced](#) repression. For example, Meir Baruchin was [dismissed](#) from his job as a teacher after posting a photo of Palestinian children killed by an Israeli airstrike, with the caption, 'stop this madness'. Baruchin was accused of 'condemning IDF soldiers, denouncing the State of Israel and supporting terrorist acts'. The Petah Tikvah Municipality filed a complaint to the police leading to Baruchin's arrest on suspicion of 'revealing intent to betray the country', during which he was placed in solitary confinement in a high-security jail. On 15 January 2024, the Tel Aviv Labour Court ruled that the dismissal was unlawful. However, the municipality has appealed against the ruling.



RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT

- Immediately agree to an unconditional ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access and end the blockade of Gaza.
- Immediately end its unlawful [occupation](#) of the Occupied Palestine Territories, starting with the immediate halting of the expansion of Israeli settlements and reversing the annexation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and dismantling its brutal system of apartheid against Palestinians.
- To ensure international scrutiny, ensure that the United National human rights experts have full and unhindered access to Israel and Palestinian territories.
- Immediately drop its judicial changes and commit to upholding judicial independence
- Provide an environment where the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association are guaranteed – for both Palestinians and Israelis – in practice and in law.
- Respect the right to peaceful assembly by ensuring that peaceful protests take place unhindered, and refrain from using violence to disperse protesters
- Halt the ongoing detention, imprisonment and intimidation and harassment of protesters, including for carrying critical protest signs and social media posts, in relation to the War and Gaza solidarity
- Refrain from public vilification of protesters, civil society actors and human rights defenders critical of the current government.
- Refrain from targeting and systematically discriminating against Palestinian Citizens of Israel
- Immediately release Palestinian Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) who have been detained for their activism.
- Conduct independent investigations into cases where Palestinian Citizens of Israel have been detained, harassed and subjected to ill-treatment and torture in prison to hold perpetrators to account.
- Repeal the [Amendment to The Counter-Terrorism Law](#) which seek to restrict freedom of expression and disproportionately target Palestinian Citizens of Israel.
- Respect the right to freedom of expression, press and media freedom and allow journalists to do their work unhindered.



- End serious intimidation and attacks against journalists and conduct independent investigations into the attacks and bring those responsible to justice.
- Repeal the 'Al Jazeera law' and allow Al Jazeera to continue its broadcast operations in Israel unhindered.

TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY:

- Put urgent pressure on Israel to comply with the orders issued by the International Court of Justice
- All states should accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ, join the ICC and recognise Palestine as a state
- Impose economic and diplomatic sanctions, severing cultural ties, ending all trade in weapons with Israel through a two-way arms embargo and ending military-security cooperation, banning any economic relations that perpetrate the apartheid regime over the Palestinian people, including by adopting legislation to prohibit trade with illegal Israeli settlements, supporting and calling for an annual update of the UN Database of all business enterprises involved in or with settlements, and implementing other effective countermeasures to reverse the illegal situation.
- Support efforts for accountability for human rights violations committed by Israel
- Recognise that Israel's discriminatory laws, policies, and practices have established, and continue to maintain, an apartheid regime of systematic racial domination and oppression over the Palestinian people as a whole, and call for the reconstitution of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid and the UN Centre against apartheid.

