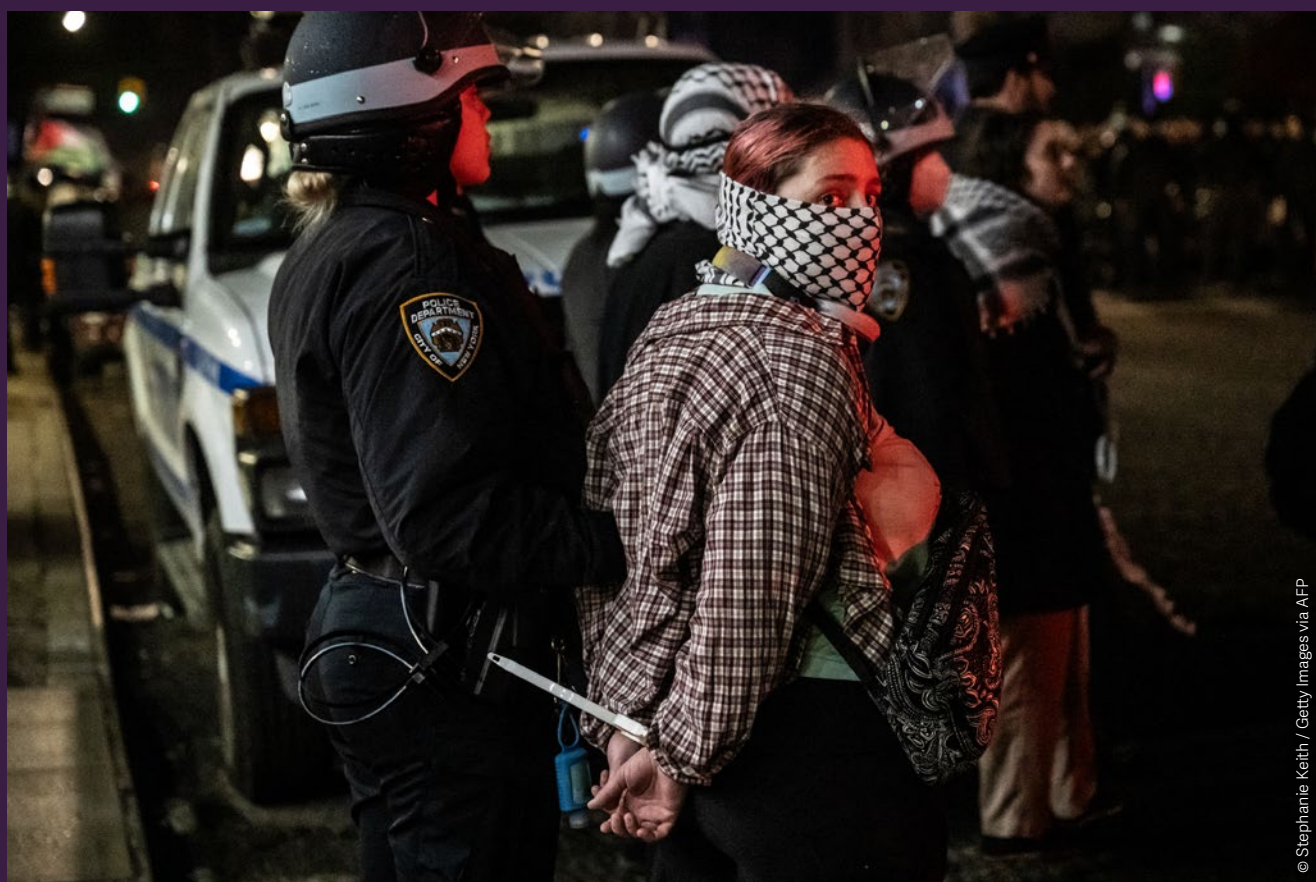


OCTOBER 2025 | N° 846a

Solidarity as a Crime: Voices for Palestine Under Fire

A Report on the violations of the rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression in the context of the repression of the palestinian solidarity movement



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List of acronyms

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
BAFTA	British Academy of Film and Television Arts
CAP	Palestine Action Committee
CD&V	Flemish Christian-democratic political party in Belgium
CGRS	Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons in Belgium
CIHRS	Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
CPV	Collectif Palestine Vaincra
CUNY	City University of New York
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EIPR	Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
EU	European Union
FACE Act	Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act
FIDH	International Federation for Human Right
GFA	Good Friday Agreement
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IHRA	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
KC	King's Counsel
KULeuven	Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium
LFI	La France Insoumise
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MP	Member of Parliament
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDAH	Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment policy
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)

NWU	National Writers Union
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PREVENT	British program to prevent radicalisation
RELE	Rapporteurship on Freedom of Expression
REDESCA	Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights
RN	Rassemblement National
SJP	Students for Justice in Palestine
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, London University
UCU	Universities and College Union
UGent	University of Ghent, Belgium
ULB	Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium
ULiège	University of Liège, Belgium
UN	United Nations
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UK	United Kingdom
U.S. / USA	United States of America
USCPR	US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
VUB	Free University of Brussels, Belgium

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Methodology

This report draws upon extensive open-source research, a review of reports from United Nations mechanisms and international Non Governmental Organisations, and substantial input from the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) member and partner organisations. We are especially grateful to the Ligue des droits de l'Homme (France), the Center for Constitutional Rights (United States), and the Committee on the Administration of Justice (Northern Ireland), whose contributions were vital.

To complement this research, first-hand testimonies were collected and cross-verified through an online questionnaire filled out by individuals who personally experienced violations. These accounts provided essential insight into the real-world impact of the policies and practices analysed.

The data was analysed and synthesised by two independent consultants, working in close coordination with FIDH's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Office. This approach ensures a robust, credible, and rights-based analysis of the patterns and violations documented throughout the report.

This report examines developments between 7 October 2023 and May 2025, with an update added in September 2025 in light of successive events.

Why this report matters

In light of these findings, it is imperative to reaffirm that the fight against antisemitism and terrorism must not be manipulated to suppress human rights, nor should it be allowed to silence legitimate critique of state violence or international solidarity.

States have a legal obligation not only to combat discrimination and violence, but also to uphold the right to freedom of expression, especially when that expression is uncomfortable, dissenting, or challenges powerful interests. Failure to do so undermines the rule of law and exposes the double standards that erode confidence in the international human rights system.

This report is a call for urgent scrutiny, accountability, and reform. The rights, and safety of those who speak out for justice in Palestine, and elsewhere, must be defended, not suppressed.

Executive summary

In the aftermath of the 7 October 2023 attacks and the ensuing escalation of violence—marked by the ongoing genocidal war in Gaza—expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people have been met with an alarming global backlash. From Paris to Washington, Berlin to London, support for Palestinian rights has been censored, criminalised, or violently repressed under the pretexts of combating antisemitism and protecting national security.

Purposes of the Report

- To highlight rights violations against solidarity and anti-atrocity crime protests undertaken against the genocide in Gaza and in solidarity with Palestinians around the world, with particular attention to the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany and France;
- *To clearly outline the manner in which the stigmatising narratives, policing, surveillance, administrative sanctions, criminal sanctions, kidnap and detention of those standing in solidarity with Palestine violate human rights obligations, and to make clear the lack of legitimate justification for these violations;*

- *To raise awareness among the general public, the media and civil society of the violations in question and their severe consequences for rights enjoyment and respect for international law more broadly.*
- *To advocate for increased attention to how States have weaponized accusations of antisemitism to legitimise the violation of human rights obligations in ways that further discrimination against those standing in solidarity with Palestine.*

This report, developed by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), documents a disturbing trend of violations of fundamental freedoms in four countries: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It investigates how governments have weaponised counter-terrorism narratives and the fight against antisemitism to suppress dissent, silence solidarity, and criminalise support for Palestinian rights.

A central concern is the growing conflation of antisemitism with legitimate criticism of Israeli state policies. This deliberate confusion has allowed authorities to delegitimise and penalise a wide range of actors, activists, academics, students, artists, and even elected officials, who publicly denounce Israeli actions in Gaza or advocate for Palestinian liberation. In doing so, political speech, long regarded as a foundation of democratic life, is increasingly being equated with hate speech or extremist ideology, especially when it concerns Israel or Zionism.

This weaponization does not exist in a vacuum. In each of the countries examined, the post-7 October context has deepened long standing structural issues: the shrinking of civic space, the erosion of democratic safeguards, growing Islamophobia, and the normalisation of racial profiling. State actors have invoked the protection of public order, antisemitism prevention, and national security to justify draconian measures, protest bans, arbitrary arrests, academic sanctions, media censorship, and legislative threats, often in flagrant violation of international human rights standards.

The chilling effect on public debate is profound. In all four countries, journalists, students, academics, artists, elected officials, and civil society actors, many from Muslim, Arab, migrant or racialized communities, have been harassed, sanctioned, or prosecuted simply for exercising their rights. These repressive trends are not only creating a dangerous precedent but also threaten the core principles of democratic discourse and the universality of human rights.

Background

- i. Israel's unrelenting campaign of genocidal violence against the Gaza strip has given rise globally to unprecedented and sustained actions in solidarity with the people of Palestine. These solidarity actions have expressed horror at the levels of civilian casualties, the restriction of life saving humanitarian aid and the resulting health crisis and famine, the destruction of vital infrastructure, and the targeting of schools, hospitals and camps for the internally displaced population of Gaza.
- ii. Over 62,895 Palestinians in Gaza¹ have been killed by Israeli attacks since October 7, 2023, in response to a Hamas attack that killed an estimated 1,139 Israelis.² Of the Palestinian casualties, over 18,431 were children³. More than 158,927⁴ have been injured. A further 11,000 Palestinians are missing and presumed dead⁵. The violence has also included the West Bank, where 925 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli attacks, including at least 214 children since October 7th⁶. Journalists have been targeted at an alarming rate, the highest ever recorded in a conflict.⁷ Additionally, 1.9 million Palestinians are currently displaced in Gaza as a result of the bombardment of residential buildings⁸. Over 90% of Gaza homes have been destroyed by Israel⁹, as well as 80% of commercial facilities¹⁰, 90% of school buildings¹¹, 68% of road networks¹² and 68% of cropland¹³. Israel has deliberately and arbitrarily blocked humanitarian aid from reaching civilians. During the spring of 2025, the Israeli government conferred an exclusive monopoly on humanitarian aid distribution in Gaza to the newly established Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). Rather than alleviating the crisis, this measure intensified the suffering, creating conditions akin to a death trap¹⁴. The grave consequences of this policy were made clear when over 1,400 Palestinians lost their lives while seeking food¹⁵. On Friday, 22 August, the United Nations officially declared a state of famine in Gaza — the first to affect the Middle East — after its experts estimated that 500,000 people were in a 'catastrophic' condition¹⁶.
- iii. Many forms of protest against genocide and in solidarity with the Palestinian people have erupted around the world in response to this devastation. Protestors have decried the lack of concrete actions on the part of the international community of States and international organisations to end Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza. Many protestors have also pointed to the material and moral complicity of States that continue to supply

1 [Reported impact snapshot | Gaza Strip \(27 August 2025\) | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory](#)

2 [Israel-Gaza war in maps and charts: Live tracker | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

3 [Israël - Palestine : les enfants pris au piège d'un conflit sans fin - UNICEF](#)

4 [Reported impact snapshot | Gaza Strip \(27 August 2025\) | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory](#)

5 [On the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances: Israel's Policy of Enforced Disappearance as a Pillar of Genocide in Gaza | Palestinian Centre for Human Rights](#)

6 [Israël - Palestine : les enfants pris au piège d'un conflit sans fin - UNICEF](#)

7 [Israel's war on Gaza deadliest conflict ever for journalists, says report](#)

8 [Crisis in Gaza: What to know and how to help | The IRC](#)

9 [92% of Gaza homes destroyed by Israeli war: UNRWA](#)

10 [Israel-Hamas ceasefire: What's left of Gaza and its people? | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

11 [Education under attack in Gaza, with nearly 90% of school buildings damaged or destroyed | Save the Children International](#)

12 [Gaza's destruction in numbers](#)

13 [Gaza: Geospatial data shows intensifying damage to cropland](#)

14 [Privatised "humanitarian" operators in Gaza complicit of international crimes](#)

15 [Gaza: Nearly 1,400 Palestinians killed while seeking food, as UN warns airdrops are no solution](#)

16 [Famine in Gaza: 'A failure of humanity itself', says UN chief | UN News](#)

weapons to Israel and publicly justify violence against Palestinians. These protests have included large-scale demonstrations. Between 7 October and the end of November 2023, around 60 countries saw demonstrations in support of Palestine.¹⁷ Solidarity with Palestine has also included many smaller scale public shows of support across sectors of society.

- iv. The global pro-Palestine solidarity movement has gained momentum at a time of growing international concern around the rights to freedom of expression and the freedom of peaceful assembly and association.¹⁸ Expanding authoritarianism in many parts of the world has seen restrictions on civic space and fundamental freedoms. The Special Rapporteurs for freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of expression have identified several widespread trends in threats to these freedoms.¹⁹ These include increasingly severe stigmatization of civil society and social movements; the use of expansive restrictive legislation to suppress the legitimate exercise of those rights; the criminalisation of activists; and indiscriminate and excessive use of force against protestors among other concerning forms of hostility.²⁰
- v. The surge of pro-Palestine solidarity builds on decades of global organising for the rights of Palestinians. In parallel there is a long history of repression and censorship against pro-Palestinian solidarity and criticism of Israel's violence against Palestinians. This repression has included false accusations of antisemitism and support for terrorism, monitoring and surveillance of activists and pro-Palestinian civil society, official denunciations of solidarity activists and actions, bureaucratic and administrative sanctions, threats to academic freedom, lawsuits and legal threats against activists and pro-Palestinian civil society, legislation against solidarity actions such as the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions movement and criminal investigations and prosecutions, and in some cases the kidnapping and illegal detention of students expressing solidarity with Palestine.²¹
- vi. There is significant polarisation within the international community in opposition or support of Palestinians.²² The governments of many States in the Global North have stood behind Israel despite the condemnation from international institutions including the United Nations General Assembly and the International Court of Justice and determinations by many major human rights organisations— with FIDH²³ being the first to recognize that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people —.²⁴ In the case of the four States that will be the focus of this report: The United States, The United Kingdom, France and Germany, all four States have taken public positions supportive of Israel's actions in Palestine. State actors in all four of these countries have responded to pro-Palestine solidarity protests with disproportionate restrictions on the rights to expression, peaceful assembly and association.
- vii. An important development in the repression of pro-Palestine solidarity has been the adoption by number of states of the non-binding definition of antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance²⁵ of 2016. This definition expanded

¹⁷ [Recommendations for universities worldwide for the second semester of 2024: Safeguarding the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association](#)

¹⁸ [A/HRC/56/50 General Assembly](#)

¹⁹ [A/79/263 General Assembly](#), and [A/79/319 General Assembly](#)

²⁰ [A/HRC/56/50 General Assembly](#), and [A/79/263 General Assembly](#)

²¹ [The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US | Center for Constitutional Rights](#)

²² [A/79/319 General Assembly](#)

²³ [The unfolding genocide against the Palestinians must stop immediately](#)

²⁴ [Israel's Crime of Extermination, Acts of Genocide in Gaza | Human Rights Watch](#), and ['You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza - Amnesty International](#)

²⁵ [Adoption of the Working Definition | AJC](#)

the meaning of antisemitism to include anti-Zionism and criticism of the Israeli state. For example, the claim that the State of Israel is “a racist endeavour” is characterised as antisemitism under this definition, thereby censoring critiques based on the colonial ideologies that underpinned the creation of the Israeli State. In addition to stifling debate and critique, the definition has also been used to drive narratives that stigmatise solidarity with Palestine. The European Legal Support Centre, an Amsterdam based organisation supporting the Palestine solidarity movement through advocacy, legal advice and strategic litigation has found that the IHRA definition of antisemitism has overwhelmingly been used to suppress human rights advocacy for Palestinian rights and to silence criticisms of Israel.²⁶ Additionally, policies using the IHRA definition have been implemented in ways that foster anti-Palestinian racism.²⁷

Conceptual Framework and States’ Obligations

- i. The rights to freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are universally protected under international and regional human rights law, as well as by the constitutions of most States. These rights are enshrined in the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (arts. 19, 21 and 22) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- ii. Freedom of opinion is fundamental to the exercise of freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Together, these freedoms are essential pillars of democracy, as they facilitate the exchange of ideas and public participation in the democratic process.²⁸ The right to peaceful assembly has been used to facilitate the recognition of a range of other fundamental rights including economic, social and cultural rights. These rights are of particular importance to marginalised individuals and groups. Failure to respect these rights is often an indicator of a repressive State and society.
- iii. The Covenant imposes obligations on State parties to respect and ensure all of the rights in the covenant without discrimination. This includes taking legal and other measures to achieve this purpose and to pursue accountability, and providing effective remedies for violations of Covenant rights.²⁹
- iv. The protection of the rights to hold opinions without interference in article 19 of the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights (“the Covenant”) permits no exception or restriction.³⁰ All forms of opinion are protected under this right, including opinions on political, moral, scientific, artistic or religious matters. This right is incompatible with the criminalisation of any form of opinion, or the harassment, stigmatisation, or intimidation of any person for holding any opinion.
- v. Freedom of expression includes the right to express information and ideas of any kind, even if they may be considered deeply offensive. This includes expressing opinions through political campaigning, artistic expression, journalism, teaching or commercial advertising in spoken, written, or sign language as well as any non-verbal forms of expression. A free and uncensored media is essential to ensuring the freedoms of opinion and expression.
- vi. Restrictions on freedom of expression are limited to those necessary to respect the rights and reputation of others and those necessary for the protection of national

²⁶ [Suppressing Palestinian Rights Advocacy through the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism](#)

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ [A/HRC/56/50 General Assembly](#)

²⁹ [General Comment on the Right to Peaceful Assembly, 21](#)

³⁰ Ibid, 9

- security, public order or public health or morals. This is a high bar, and any restrictions must conform to the strict tests of necessity and proportionality. Restrictions must be provided by law. They must also be sufficiently precise and should not give extensive discretion to those executing the law or be overbroad in any other way.
- vii. The right to peaceful assembly may be exercised in any place. States have duties to facilitate peaceful assemblies and to make it possible for participants to achieve their objectives. A peaceful assembly is any gathering of persons for the purpose of expression, conveying a position on an issue or exchanging ideas. Peaceful assemblies may pursue contentious ideas or goals and they may cause disruption to everyday movement or economic activities. They may not use physical force against others that is likely to result in injury or death, or serious damage to property. Disruption and disorderliness do not amount to violence. Establishing whether participation in a peaceful assembly is protected is a two-stage process. First, it must be established whether the conduct amounts to participation in a “peaceful assembly”. Second, it must be established whether any restrictions applied to the right are pertinent to the conduct and context.
 - viii. Any restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly must be limited, specific and in conformity with the law. This means that, as with restrictions on freedoms of expression, they must be provided by law and conform to the limitations of necessity and proportionality. Any restrictions must be content neutral and cannot be based on the identities of the participants.
 - ix. The right of freedom of association applies to any “organised, independent, not-for-profit body based on the voluntary grouping of persons with a common interest”.³¹ This right extends to non-governmental organisations, trade unions, political parties and all other organised voluntary groups, whether or not they have a legal personality. The state has a positive obligation to ensure these rights, even for associations that annoy or offend those opposed to the ideas the association seeks to promote.

31 Joint Guidelines on the Freedom of Association, Venice Commission and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 12

CHAPTER 1

United Kingdom

1.1 Background

- i. The United Kingdom (UK) has had a close relationship with Israel from the very beginning of the creation of the Israeli State. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration saw Britain pledge to create “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. At the time, Palestine was occupied by Britain under the mandate system. The declaration was seen by many as a catalyst for the Nakba during which 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes and 15,000 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces.
- ii. The UK and Israel have signed several long term agreements underpinning a close strategic partnership between the two States that encompasses defence and security, cyber-security, trade and the economy and technology among other objectives.³² Numerous concerns have been raised about the lack of transparency and accountability regarding the relationship between Israel and British politicians.³³ In 2017, a senior Israeli political officer in London was recorded proposing to “take down” a Conservative Party minister for being critical of Israel.³⁴ In the previous government, 180 of Britain’s 650 Members of Parliament are reported to have accepted funding from pro-Israel lobby groups and individuals.³⁵
- iii. The British government has repeatedly minimised and legitimised Israel’s atrocities in Gaza. Following the Hamas attack on October 7, then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak offered Israel the UK’s “unqualified support in the face of evil” without any explicit reference to Palestinians in Gaza.³⁶ In April 2024, the former Home Secretary Suella Braverman stated that she believed Israel’s actions since October 7 have been in compliance with international law.³⁷
- iv. Parliamentary elections on July 4, 2023 brought a new Labour Party government, headed by Prime Minister Keir Starmer. The Labour Party has been shaped deeply in recent years by polarisation on the issues of solidarity with Palestinians and criticism of Israel. Numerous accusations of antisemitism in the Labour party arose in the run up to the 2017 general election during which the party was led by Jeremy Corbyn, a well-known supporter of the Palestinian right to self-determination who has been publicly critical of Israel’s human rights abuses³⁸. In 2020, the British Equality and Human Rights Commission published a report that found that the Labour party had committed illegal and antisemitic acts under the UK equality act.³⁹ In 2022, an independent investigation by Martin Forde KC led to the publication of the Forde report, which detailed widespread political weaponization of antisemitism accusations across factions of the Labour party, with insufficient attention given to antisemitism itself.⁴⁰ Forde additionally identified a

32 Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office on the UK-Israel Strategic Partnership - GOV.UK

33 <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/79711/pdf/>, and Israel lobby funded a quarter of British MPs

34 Israel apologises over plot to ‘take down’ UK MPs – Middle East Monitor

35 Israel lobby funded a quarter of British MPs

36 Sunak promises Israel ‘unqualified support in face of evil’ – but makes no mention of Gaza’s plight

37 Suella Braverman ‘rebutts’ Israel being in breach of international law | News | Independent TV

38 Anti-Semitism. Orchestrated Offensive against Jeremy Corbyn in the UK

39 Investigation into antisemitism in the Labour Party

40 <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/The-Forde-Report.pdf>

- “hierarchy of racism”, that discriminated against Black, Asian and Muslim members of the party. Jeremy Corbyn was ultimately suspended from the party on the grounds of antisemitism, leading to the election of Keir Starmer as party leader.
- v. In November 2024, Prime Minister Keir Starmer stated in the House of Commons that there is no genocide in Gaza⁴¹. The Foreign Secretary David Lammy has further stated that to call the devastation in Gaza a genocide would be to “undermine the seriousness of the term”.⁴² Both politicians alongside many others in the Labour government have continued to reiterate Israel’s right to self-defence and have implied Israel is in compliance with international law in the growing evidence and numerous findings by international bodies that Israel’s actions have been genocidal, including the ICJ’s finding that violations of the genocide convention are “plausible”.⁴³
 - vi. The right to protest has come under sustained attack from the British government across administrations and party lines. In May 2024, UK courts ruled that new anti-protest legislation put forward by the Conservative government was unlawful. These laws lowered the threshold at which police could intervene in protest from protests causing “serious disruption” to those causing “more than minor” disruption.⁴⁴ These amendments were the latest in a string of legal attacks on activists, including new public nuisance laws carrying 10-year prison sentences and court orders forbidding activists from explaining the contexts and reasons for their protests to a jury in court.⁴⁵ The new Labour government lodged an appeal against the court ruling on anti-protest legislation. However, the Court of Appeal dismissed that appeal in May 2025, affirming that Braverman had exceeded her legal powers by using secondary (Henry VIII) legislation to make such a change⁴⁶.

1.2 Relevant Human Rights Violations in the UK

Government Narratives including Censorship of Public Office Holders

- i. The Israeli attacks on Gaza sparked the largest mass protest movement in recent British history.⁴⁷ On October 30, 2023, Suella Braverman the British Home Secretary at the time characterised these protests as “hate marches” in a letter to the British police. She further noted that “Islamists and other racists” would use “legitimate Israeli defensive measures” to “stir up hatred against British Jews”. In the same letter, Braverman stated that it would be a criminal offense to “recklessly” express support for Hamas, wear clothing or symbols that could reasonably arouse suspicion that the individual supported Hamas, and further encouraged the police to “consider whether chants such as “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” “should be understood as an expression of a violent desire to see Israel erased from the world” and therefore deemed an arrestable offence. This narrative, stigmatising support for Palestine and Palestinian resistance movements, also worked to discriminate against Muslims and other racialized groups in the UK⁴⁸.

⁴¹ [British premier tells UK parliament there's no genocide in Gaza](#)

⁴² [Prime Minister: "I have never described what is going on in Gaza as genocide"](#)

⁴³ [ICJ Order: Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip \(South Africa v. Israel\) - Question of Palestine](#)

⁴⁴ [UK Court Rules Anti-Protest Measures Unlawful](#)

⁴⁵ [UN expert condemns UK crackdown on environmental protest](#)

⁴⁶ [Court of Appeal dismisses Government's appeal over anti-protest laws - Public Law Project](#)

⁴⁷ [How Gaza sparked the biggest UK protest movement in recent history – and a headache for the police | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian](#)

⁴⁸ [Letter to Chief Constables in England and Wales following the Israel-Hamas conflict \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

- ii. A UK government funded watch group that records cases of Islamophobia, TellMama UK, recorded a sharp rise in cases following October 7, 2023.⁴⁹ In 2024, they received the highest ever level of anti-Muslim hate incidents in their 12-year history.⁵⁰ The group documented a “huge surge” in language both online and offline associating Muslims with terrorism. In March 2025, the British government announced it would no longer fund the watch group.⁵¹
- iii. A change in government on July 4, 2024 from the Conservative Party to Labour did little to change official government narratives that continued to associate critique of Israel and support for Palestine with violent antisemitism and targeted Muslim and racialised groups. As noted above, the government led by Keir Starmer has also pushed to legitimise Israel’s genocidal violence, and has continued to justify support for Israel. Any attempts from within the government to push back against this narrative have been met with censure⁵².
- iv. Changes in legislation have worked to put further pressure on the enjoyment of rights including freedoms of opinion, expression and association in the UK. In 2016, the UK formally adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism, despite the strong concerns raised by numerous human rights experts and civil society organisations about the definition’s potential to stifle legitimate criticisms of the Israeli State.⁵³ The UK does not currently have a working definition of Islamophobia, despite petitions made to the House of Commons to adopt one.⁵⁴
- v. Further to this, the designation of Hamas as a proscribed organisation in 2021 has created a broad scope for censoring support for Palestinian resistance under British Terrorism Legislation. Section 12 of the Terrorism Act (2000) prohibits the expression of opinions or beliefs that are supportive of a proscribed organisation. Combined, these pieces of legislation have created a broad basis for accusations of antisemitism support for terrorism.
- vi. In the case of Northern Ireland, the adoption of the IHRA not only raises concerns of violations of rights under international human rights instruments such as the UDHR and ICCPR but also threatens rights affirmed by the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA). Whilst the Irish state is not the subject of the present report it is also bound under the equivalence provisions of the GFA to ensure similar levels of protection for GFA affirmed rights in its jurisdiction (and in this context incorporated the ECHR in 2003). The recent decision by the Irish Government to also adopt the IHRA definition could therefore conflict with the same provisions of the GFA.⁵⁵
- vii. On March 14, 2024 a new definition of extremism was published by the British government explicitly to “respond to increased extremist threat since October 7 terror attacks in Israel”⁵⁶. The new definition widens the scope of “extremism” to include not

⁴⁹ [The new norm of anti-muslim hate](#), 33

⁵⁰ Ibid at 8

⁵¹ [Tell Mama monitoring group facing closure after funding pulled by government | Islamophobia | The Guardian](#)

⁵² [Pro-Palestine Politics Hit a Wall in Keir Starmer’s Labour Party](#)

⁵³ According to more than 100 CSOs, the IHRA definition has often been used to wrongly label criticism of Israel as antisemitic, and thus chill and sometimes suppress non-violent protest, activism and speech critical of Israel and/or Zionism, including in the US and Europe. Such misuse has also been criticized by the former Special Rapporteur on Racism E. Tendayi Achiume. [Global: UN must respect human rights while combating antisemitism - Amnesty International](#)

⁵⁴ [Definition of Islamophobia Volume 743: debated on Tuesday 9 January 2024](#)

⁵⁵ [Tánaiste announces endorsement of Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism and the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism](#)

⁵⁶ [Government strengthens approach to counter extremism - GOV.UK](#)

- only acts that undermine the already ambiguous principle of “UK democracy” but also extends to actions that create a “permissive environment” for these acts.⁵⁷
- viii. Dissent from the official narrative of the legitimacy of Israel’s genocidal actions from within the institutions of the state has been systematically sidelined. Several British political office holders have been sacked or suspended for voicing their solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza or for calling for an end to Israeli attacks. Conservative party MP Paul Bristow was sacked from his position as aide to the Secretary of State after writing a letter to then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak calling for him to change his position and back a permanent end to hostilities. In the letter, Bristow stated that a full ceasefire would allow aid to reach the people who needed it most.⁵⁸
 - ix. Three Conservative party councillors were suspended for attending a pro-Palestine solidarity march in November, 2023. All three of the councillors Kamran Ghafoor, Muhammad Irfan and Abdul Wahid were ethnic minorities who sat on the Oldham Council. Two of the councillors have since left the Conservative party. Cllr Wahid spoke out about his decision to run as an independent candidate: “They tried to censor us and stop us from speaking about the Palestinian people, and my conscience can’t take being part of a party that supports the genocide of the Palestine people.”⁵⁹
 - x. Four Labour party councillors were similarly suspended from the Hackney council in London in February 2024 for publicly calling for a ceasefire. The councillors were suspended for voting to hear a motion calling for immediate ceasefire, as well as calling for an investigation into how a councillor convicted of possessing indecent images of young children had been allowed to stand for election.⁶⁰
 - xi. A further four Labour party councillors were removed from Lambeth council for voting for a motion calling for a ceasefire. One of the councillors resigned soon after. Martin Abrams, a Jewish councillor who was one of the four councillors suspended said “I will continue speaking out for what I believe is right because there is a complete absence of that happening from Keir Starmer and the Labour Party leadership.”⁶¹
 - xii. Veteran anti-racism campaigner and Lambeth Labour councillor Sonia Winifred resigned her seat following her suspension for voting for a ceasefire in Gaza. She described her meeting with Labour Group Chiefs over the issue as “the most hostile, aggressive and humiliating environment I have ever encountered in my 10 years as a Labour Councillor.”⁶² Winifred, who is also known for her activism around the UK’s discriminatory immigration system, received support from a number of Black MPs and councillors. Diane Abbott, MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, who had faced significant pushback from the leadership of the Labour party herself, noted “On that basis not a single Labour councillor would have dared breathe a word about apartheid in the 80s.”⁶³
 - xiii. The State bureaucracy in the UK has also been subject to repressive measures directed against public solidarity with the people of Gaza and Palestine. In March 2024, the Civil Service’s Muslim Network was suspended following a number of webinars the network organised to discuss the government’s policy on Israel and Gaza. Then deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden described the activity as “disturbing political activism”.

⁵⁷ Ibid,

⁵⁸ [UK MP Paul Bristow sacked as aide after call for Israel-Gaza ceasefire | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

⁵⁹ [Tory councillors resign after Palestine march suspension | The Oldham Times](#)

⁶⁰ [‘Atrocious’: Four councillors suspended by Hackney Labour for voting to hear motions on Gaza ceasefire and Dewey investigation](#)

⁶¹ [Suspended Labour politician labels Starmer ‘utterly shameful’ on Gaza | openDemocracy](#)

⁶² [Black MPs slam Labour over Councillor suspended for Gaza ceasefire vote](#)

⁶³ <https://x.com/HackneyAbbott/status/1765769457471791344>

The network has since resumed function, however senior sponsors have been appointed to monitor its activities.⁶⁴

- xiv. In the courts, Judge Tan Ikram, a senior British judge received a formal warning for misconduct after allegedly accidentally liking a post on LinkedIn calling for a free Palestine. The warning stated that Judge Ikram risked undermining public confidence, as he had previously presided over a case concerning Palestine solidarity activists.⁶⁵ Suella Braverman, then Home Secretary, publicly branded the Judge's behaviour "utterly shocking" and called for a review of his previous cases.⁶⁶
- xv. The silencing of support for Palestine and criticism of Israel's human rights violations from within the British governing institutions works together with legislation and official narratives to popularise a narrative that legitimises Israel's actions and stigmatises vulnerable populations within the UK.

Violations against Journalists

- i. The restrictions on public narratives in the UK extend to censorship and control of media messaging around Israel's attacks on Palestine. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a public service broadcaster, has been a key site of these restrictions. In October 2023 six BBC News Arabic journalists were taken off air and put under investigation by their employer following displays of pro-Palestinian sentiment, including allegedly calling the morning of October 7 a "morning of hope" on social media. Nada Abdelsamad, who worked for BBC Arabic for 27 years has since filed a defamation lawsuit against the BBC in Lebanon.⁶⁷
- ii. The BBC has also been accused of censoring public statements in support of the Palestinian people in its coverage of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) in Scotland in November, 2023. Several public figures used the opportunity to express solidarity with Palestine, which led to entire segments of their awards speeches being cut from public view.⁶⁸
- iii. On August 15 2024, pro-Palestinian British Journalist Richard Medhurst was arrested at Heathrow Airport. He was detained under Schedule 12 of the Terrorism Act (2000) for allegedly expressing an opinion or belief that was supportive of a proscribed organisation. Medhurst denies having. Upon arrest, police seized his phone and recording devices. He was held for nearly 24 hours and questioned, but no charges were made and he was allowed to leave.
- iv. Another journalist, Sarah Wilkinson, was arrested at her home at 7:30am on August 29, 2024. Her electronic devices were seized and her son was told the arrest was due to pro-Palestinian content she had posted online. Wilkinson was also arrested and put under house arrest under the Terrorism Act 2000. According to an interview, Wilkinson's bail conditions state that she may not speak publicly about Palestinian resistance.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ [Civil Service Muslim Network resumes activities following review](#)

⁶⁵ [Senior British judge receives warning after liking a post calling for a free Palestine](#)

⁶⁶ [Tan Ikram: Suella Braverman leads calls to discipline judge who spared Hamas paraglider protesters and 'liked Palestine post' | The Independent](#)

⁶⁷ [Lebanese BBC journo suspended over al-Aqsa Flood tweet to testify in Parliament - L'Orient Today](#)

⁶⁸ [BBC accused of censoring acts of Gaza solidarity in BAFTA awards coverage | Media News | Al Jazeera](#)

⁶⁹ [Bail conditions dropped against UK peace activist, and The crackdown | Dialogue | thenews.com.pk](#)

Violations against Activists, NGOs and Civil Society

The right to protest has come under sustained attack from the British government across administrations and party lines. Protests in solidarity with Gaza and against Israel's genocidal violence have been met with high levels of police surveillance and police violence. An investigation by The Network for Police Monitoring found "ample evidence" supporting the accusation of racist and Islamophobic policing of pro-Palestine protests, including a pattern of racial profiling.⁷⁰ Police in England and Wales are permitted to conduct stop and searches without suspicion in connection with protests under Section 11 of the Public Order Act 2023, which took effect on 20 December 2023. By September 2025, Big Brother Watch reported that 40 out of 47 instances of this power being used occurred at Gaza-related demonstrations, resulting in no arrests and raising concerns that the measure lacks justification.⁷¹ Between October 7, 2023, and August 2025, at least 1,000 individuals were arrested during pro-Palestinian protests in the United Kingdom. This includes 532 people detained at a demonstration in Parliament Square, London,⁷² for expressing support for Palestine Action, a group now banned under UK anti-terrorism legislation. The incident has been described as the largest mass arrest at a single protest in the capital. As protests in solidarity with Gaza began to erupt around the country following Israel's first attacks after October 7, 2023, the British government repeatedly made statements implying that protests were dangerous, immoral and possibly criminal. On October 11, 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak briefed the media on protests by " Hamas sympathisers" and the English Defence League, a far right group that used the pro-Palestine protests as an opportunity to express their objection to non-white immigrants in the UK, with numerous documented instances of protesters using swastikas and Nazi salutes. Equivocating between the two groups, Sunak emphasised that "all criminality must be met with the full and swift force of the law".⁷³

- i. Mass pro-Palestine demonstrations grew to unprecedented levels in London, reaching up to 750,000 people at their height. Then Home Secretary Suella Braverman referred to these demonstrations as "hate marches". She further noted that police must take a "zero tolerance approach to antisemitism" and that protestors were "chanting for the erasure of Israel from the map", likely referring to the famous chant "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free".⁷⁴
- ii. On October 10, 2023, in a letter to the Chief Constables, Suella Braverman stated that "experience indicates that whenever Israel is attacked, Islamists and other racists seek to use legitimate Israeli defensive measures as a pretext to stir up hatred against British Jews". She further emphasised that it is a criminal offence to "express support for Hamas" or wear clothing that might "arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of Hamas". She further encouraged police officers to "consider whether chants such as "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" should be understood as an expression of a violent desire to see Israel erased from the world".⁷⁵ Noting that "context is crucial" Braverman added that waving a Palestinian flag in certain contexts might itself be "intended to glorify acts of terrorism".⁷⁶
- iii. Actions against activists and protestors have sometimes been targeted against immigrants to the UK. In October 2023, then immigration minister Robert Jenrick suggested that "inciting antisemitism" would be grounds for deportation even if those activities fell "below the criminal standard". Due to the UK's use of the IHRA standard for

⁷⁰ In Our Millions | Netpol, (p6)

⁷¹ [Met police accused of targeting pro-Palestine protesters for stop and search](#)

⁷² [UPDATE: 532 arrested during protest policing operation](#)

⁷³ ["All criminality must be met with full and swift force of law": Sunak on violence during pro-Palestine rallies in UK – ThePrint](#)

⁷⁴ [Suella Braverman calls pro-Palestine demos 'hate marches' | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian](#)

⁷⁵ [Letter to Chief Constables in England and Wales following the Israel-Hamas conflict \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

⁷⁶ [Waving Palestinian flag may be a criminal offence, Braverman tells police | Rishi Sunak | The Guardian](#)

antisemitism and the categorisation of Hamas as a terrorist group, these actions could include criticism of the Israeli state, support for Palestinian resistance, or as Jenrick himself stated “comparing Israel to Hamas”.⁷⁷

- iv. Dana Abu Qamar, a Palestinian-Canadian student studying at Manchester University was told that her visa to live and study in the UK would be revoked, following a speech in which she expressed “joy” about Palestinian resistance. Abu Qamar appealed this decision, and won her appeal in October 2024, where it was found that the government had failed to demonstrate that her continued presence in the UK was not conducive to the public good.⁷⁸ Leaked court documents had also shown that Robert Jenrick, then immigration minister, had personally intervened, enquiring with the Home Office whether it would be possible to revoke her visa.⁷⁹
- v. In April 2024, Khaled Hajsad, a 24 year old asylum seeker who had arrived in the UK only one year earlier was found guilty of arousing reasonable suspicion of support for Hamas. Hajsad had attended a protest in November, 2023 at which he wore a green headband that featured the shahada, a fundamental article of Islamic faith. He was given a conditional discharge for three months by Westminster Magistrates’ Court in June 2024.⁸⁰
- vi. CAGE international recorded a rise in cases of repression of solidarity with Palestine in the UK. 118 of these cases concerned repression in schools, 35 in workplaces, 35 at protests, 13 in universities and 13 in mosques.⁸¹ The cases in schools included a pattern of referrals to PREVENT⁸², the UK’s anti-radicalisation programme⁸³. The PREVENT programme has been criticised by human rights groups for its Islamophobic assumptions and use as a “pretext for surveillance and social conditioning”.
- vii. Anti-terrorism legislation has also been used to clamp down on protests by activists against arms sales to Israel. One organisation that has been at the forefront of direct activism in solidarity with Palestine in the UK is Palestine action. The group was founded in 2020 by Huda Ammori and Richard Barnard and targets weapons manufacturing companies in the UK that supply arms to Israel, especially the Elbit Systems – Israel’s largest weapons producer.⁸⁴ In August 2024, Richard Barnard, the co-founder of Palestine Action was charged under the Terrorism Act after public speeches in support of Palestine. Previously, in July 2024, police arrested ten other Palestine Action activists for their actions against arms manufacturers supplying arms to Israel. These activists were detained without charge under the Terrorism Act, and later charged with non-terror offences including burglary, violent disorder and conspiracy to damage property and remanded to prison. On 5 July 2025, the government banned Palestine Action and designated it as a terrorist organisation. This decision was met with strong criticism from NGOs⁸⁵, UN experts⁸⁶, intellectuals⁸⁷, and hundreds of lawyers.
- viii. In contrast to policing in Britain, the reformed Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has largely facilitated the right to protest. The PSNI is like police services in

⁷⁷ [Visitors to UK who incite antisemitism will be removed, says minister | Immigration and asylum | The Guardian](#)

⁷⁸ [Supporting Palestinians’ Right to Resistance is protected under Free Speech: Dana Abu Qamar Wins Landmark Tribunal Victory to Overturn Home Office’s Visa Cancellation](#)

⁷⁹ [UK minister Jenrick intervened to push for removal of Palestinian’s student visa | Middle East Eye](#)

⁸⁰ [Man found guilty of wearing Hamas headband given conditional discharge](#)

⁸¹ [New report exposes scale of Palestine repression at UK schools and workplaces](#)

⁸² [Kids referred to counter-terror police amid crackdown on Palestine support](#)

⁸³ [Prevent | Counter Terrorism Policing](#)

⁸⁴ [About - Palestine Action](#)

⁸⁵ [UK: Banning Palestine Action ‘a disturbing legal overreach’ by UK Government, Amnesty International UK Chief Executive warns](#)

⁸⁶ [UK: Palestine Action ban ‘disturbing’ misuse of UK counter-terrorism legislation, Türk warns | OHCHR](#)

⁸⁷ [Palestine Action ban is an attack on fundamental freedoms | Protest | The Guardian](#)

Britain operationally independent, but is accountable to an independent policing board rather than the UK Home Office. There is also an independent Police Ombudsman to deal with police complaints, a more powerful institution than its counterparts in Britain. Both of these oversight bodies, and the reform of the former police force into the PSNI are products of peace process reforms. Such reforms have also led to significant changes into how the PSNI handle public order situations, with human rights-based decision-making frameworks on intervention and use of force now prominent in the process. An exception to this is the PSNI's handling of protests at Queen's University in Belfast, considered below.

Violations against Academic Freedom

- i. Schools and universities have become one of the primary sites of repression and censorship of public expressions of solidarity with Palestine. Universities have worked with police and private security firms. A joint investigation by Sky News and the British civil liberties organisation Liberty found that at least 28 universities have launched disciplinary investigations against 113 staff and students in relation to their pro-Palestine activism since October 2023. At least 36 universities corresponded with police in relation to pro-Palestine protests.⁸⁸ Nearly 50 universities refused to respond to at least one of the Freedom of Information requests for information on disciplinary investigations that were put to them.
- ii. Reports of repression and censorship include enforcing removal of Palestine memorabilia and clothing; holding students in isolation rooms, suspensions, disciplinary meetings, disallowing mention of Palestine, educating children that Palestine resistance factions are all terrorists, PREVENT referral, enforcing criminal investigations and threat of deportation for international students.⁸⁹
- iii. Crackdowns on student encampments protesting genocide in Palestine and pushing for universities to divest from companies enabling Israeli violence in Palestine have sometimes been violent. Pro-Palestine encampments have been subject to frequent raids and threats of forced eviction, despite the encampments being non-violent in nature. Students at Newcastle University were filmed being assaulted and dragged from the camp by police forces.⁹⁰
- iv. Students and staff have been subject to increased surveillance. Security at SOAS, University of London was found to have compiled a list of students and staff involved in "unauthorised" Palestine activism, although SOAS has denied holding lists of students based on their political views.⁹¹
- v. Lecturers have also been restricted and subject to censorship. Some lecturers at Sheffield university note that they have been forced to cancel talks unless they agreed to 'disproportionate' restrictions including reserving the right to search attendees.⁹² Professor James Dickings, Emeritus Professor at the University of Leeds was put under official investigation following his attempts to organise a response to the University's Jewish Society inviting a pro-Israel musician to the campus. Following public support for Prof. Dickins the University decided not to strip him of his emeritus status but have proposed depriving the Professor of all associated privileges, amounting to stripping him of his status in practice if not in name.

⁸⁸ Uncovered: the 'worsening crackdown' on pro-Palestine activism at UK universities - Liberty Investigates

⁸⁹ European Policy Briefing: Special Edition on Palestine

⁹⁰ War on Gaza: Why are UK universities inviting police to curb student protests? | Middle East Eye

⁹¹ Uncovered: the 'worsening crackdown' on pro-Palestine activism at UK universities - Liberty Investigates

⁹² Ibid,

- vi. The University of Cambridge won a four-month injunction at the High Court, blocking protests related to Israel or Palestine until the end of July. This follows student protests in 2024 including a pro-Palestine encampment that ended when the university agreed to review its research partnerships with arms and defence companies.⁹³ The Universities and College Union has condemned the move to place legal restrictions as a “shameful attack on basic democratic rights”.⁹⁴

⁹³ Cambridge students to dismantle pro-Palestine encampment, following university agreement | Varsity

⁹⁴ Union and leading campaigners condemn Cambridge Uni attempt to quash peaceful protest through the High Court

United States of America

2.1 Background

- i. The United States and Israel are firm allies and have had a close relationship since the creation of the State of Israel. The U.S. Embassy in Israel describes Israel as “America’s most reliable partner in the Middle East”.
- ii. Following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, President Biden promised Israel an “unprecedented” military support package.⁹⁵ In the year that has followed, the United States has spent at least \$22.76 billion on military aid to Israel and related U.S. operations in the region.⁹⁶ Both the Democratic and Republican parties have publicly and financially supported Israel throughout its campaign of terror in Gaza. Just before leaving office, the Biden administration approved an \$8 billion weapons sale to Israel,⁹⁷ while the Trump administration recently expedited a transfer of \$4 billion in military assistance, by passing Congressional review, after already approving nearly \$12 billion in weapons sales in under two months in office.⁹⁸ Trump’s State Department also rescinded the limited restrictions the Biden administration had put on weapons sent to Israel, approving the transfer of 2,000 pound “bunker buster” bombs.⁹⁹ On 4 February 2025, Trump stirred controversy by suggesting that the U.S. could “take over” Gaza in the aftermath of the ceasefire following the Israeli genocide.¹⁰⁰ On September 2, 2025, The Washington Post revealed former President Trump’s plan for Gaza, which envisions occupying the Gaza Strip and relocating the entire population in order to transform the territory into a so-called “French Riviera.” The 38-page proposal outlines the US administration of Gaza through an entity named the “Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation Trust” (GREAT Trust), to operate for a period of ten years. The plan calls for the “voluntary” relocation of residents either to another country or to restricted, secured zones within the enclave during reconstruction, in exchange for a package consisting of \$5,000, four years of rent, one year of food supplies, and digital tokens redeemable for apartments for property owners.¹⁰¹
- iii. Pro-Palestine solidarity activism in the United States has been met with repression, sanctions and censorship for many decades.¹⁰² Pro-Palestine solidarity activists have documented abuses against the right to freedom of expression including false and inflammatory accusations of antisemitism and support for terrorism; official denunciation; bureaucratic barriers; cancellations and alterations of academic and cultural events; administrative sanctions; threats to academic freedom; lawsuits and legal threats; criminal investigations and prosecutions and legislation condemning or restricting advocacy for Palestine.

95 <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/18/politics/congress-request-national-security-aid>

96 [United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region, October 7, 2023](#)

97 [Biden administration notifies Congress of planned \\$8 billion weapons sale to Israel | PBS News](#)

98 [Military Assistance to Israel - United States Department of State](#)

99 [US moves to expedite delivery of \\$4 billion in military aid to Israel, and Trump rips up Biden memo aimed at Israel on rights abuses using US arms](#)

100 [Why does Trump want to take over Gaza and could he do it?](#)

101 [Gaza postwar plan envisions 'voluntary' relocation of entire population - The Washington Post](#)

102 [The Palestine Exception](#)

- iv. On May 1, 2024, the US House of Representatives passed a bill attempting to codify the IHRA definition of antisemitism, despite pushback from civil society organisations.¹⁰³ The bill remains in the Senate. The Trump administration had incorporated the IHRA definition in its 2019 Executive Order on Combating Antisemitism, which stated that the executive branch should consider the IHRA definition in its enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, colour and national origin.¹⁰⁴ In a follow-up Executive Order on Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism issued on January 29, 2025, the Trump administration ordered all the executive agencies to report on pending complaints, investigations, and court cases; encouraged the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights to pursue investigations against schools; and requested that executive agencies recommend to schools that they report foreign students who engage in protests for deportation.¹⁰⁵
- v. Over 12,000 demonstrations in support of Palestine were organised in the US between October 2023 and June 2024.¹⁰⁶ These have included vigils, street protests, public rallies, student encampments and other forms of public assembly. Responses from law enforcement and universities, endorsed by states and the federal government, have resulted in massive repression effort, with significant consequences.¹⁰⁷

2.2 Documentation of Violations

The Role of Government Narratives including Censorship of Public Office Holders

- i. Since 2014, U.S. federal and state lawmakers have proposed nearly 300 pieces of legislation aimed at repressing expressions of solidarity with Palestine, with over a quarter of the bills passing into law in 38 states and the federal government.¹⁰⁸ Over 80 bills were proposed in 2023 alone,¹⁰⁹ with some as extreme as a federal bill proposing to expel all Palestinians from the U.S.¹¹⁰
- ii. Anti-Palestinian legislation in the U.S. tends to fall into two categories: redefinition of antisemitism via the IHRA definition,¹¹¹ like the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, the bill that passed the U.S. House in 2024, and bans on boycotts of Israel that prohibit state contracts with or investments in entities determined to have boycotted Israel, as well as requirements of certifications from businesses or individuals contracting with states that they will not engage in boycotts.¹¹² Since October 7, some states have renewed decade-old efforts to defund universities, student groups, or academic associations that are purported to have engaged in boycotts.
- iii. The U.S. government has long been hostile to Palestine solidarity activism.¹¹³ Executive orders have been issued that eliminate U.S. funding for UNRWA, the UN's Palestinian

¹⁰³ [Text - H.R.6090 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Antisemitism Awareness Act of 2023](#)

¹⁰⁴ [Executive Order on Combating Anti-Semitism – The White House](#)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ [Protests in the United States on Palestine and Israel, 2023–2024 | Harvard Kennedy School](#)

¹⁰⁷ [As Trump Takes Office, Punishments for Pro-Palestine Protests Escalate](#), and [REVERBERATIONS OF OCTOBER 7th Mobilization against genocide undeterred by peak anti-palestinian repression](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Legislation](#)

¹⁰⁹ [REVERBERATIONS OF OCTOBER 7th Mobilization against genocide undeterred by peak anti-palestinian repression](#)

¹¹⁰ [Anti-Palestinian at the Core: The Origins and Growing Dangers of U.S. Antiterrorism Law | Center for Constitutional Rights](#)

¹¹¹ [Backgrounder on Redefinition — Palestine Legal](#)

¹¹² [Legislation](#)

¹¹³ [The Palestine Exception](#)

refugee agency,¹¹⁴ withdraw the U.S. from UN bodies,¹¹⁵ and sanction staff of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and his family members, through denial of entry and blocking of assets and property, for their work on the investigation of crimes against Palestinians.¹¹⁶ These sanctions have been applied to Karim Khan, the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, and also Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, on July 10, 2025; as well as ICC Judge Kimberly Prost (Canada), ICC Judge Nicolas Guillou (France), ICC Prosecutor Nazhat Shameem Khan (Fiji), and ICC Prosecutor Mame Mandiaye Niang (Senegal) on August 20, 2025. An executive order was also issued that prohibits any future U.S. aid to South Africa explicitly in retaliation for the case brought by South Africa in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) seeking accountability for Israel's genocide in Gaza,¹¹⁷ and another rescinded a Biden-era executive order that established sanctions against violent settlers in the West Bank.¹¹⁸

- iv. Legislators themselves have not been exempt from suppression. On November 8, 2023, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to censure Palestinian-American Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib. Republican Representative Rich McCormick claimed that Tlaib had "levied unbelievable falsehoods about our greatest ally, Israel, and the attack on October 7." More than twenty Democrats joined the Republicans in voting for the censure, pointing to Tlaib's use of the famous slogan "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free".¹¹⁹

Violations against Journalists and Media Workers

- i. No action has been taken by the government against the repression of speech in solidarity with Gaza in the U.S. media. In December 2023, 38 workers at the Los Angeles Times were restricted from covering topics related to Palestine after signing letters condemning the killing of journalists in Gaza and criticizing Western newsrooms for their biased reporting on Israel's genocide of Palestinians¹²⁰. Numerous journalists and cultural workers have been fired for public statements in support of Palestine.¹²¹ David Velasco, the Editor-in-Chief of Artforum, was fired after he oversaw the publication of an open letter in solidarity with Palestinians. eLife also fired their Editor-in-Chief Michael Eisen after he posted satirical articles criticising indifference to the lives of Palestinians on social media.¹²²
- ii. These are high-profile instances of the repressive dynamics that have restricted the speech of journalists and other cultural workers in the U.S. The National Writers Union (NWU) compiled and verified 44 cases of retaliation between October 7, 2023 and February 1, 2024, which affected more than 100 people.¹²³ Many other cases abound across the U.S. In Detroit, Palestinian-American journalist Ibrahim Samra was fired by CBS News Detroit after complaining to his employers about intimidating and

¹¹⁴ [Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations – The White House](#)

¹¹⁵ Ibid,

¹¹⁶ [Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court – The White House](#)

¹¹⁷ [Addressing Egregious Actions of The Republic of South Africa – The White House](#)

¹¹⁸ [Initial Rescissions Of Harmful Executive Orders And Actions – The White House](#)

¹¹⁹ [House votes to censure Rep. Rashida Tlaib over her Israel-Hamas rhetoric in a stunning rebuke](#)

¹²⁰ [LA Times Reporters Who Demanded Unbiased Reporting Banned From Covering Gaza | Truthout](#)

¹²¹ [Prominent US figures face backlash and firings for pro-Palestinian statements | US news | The Guardian](#)

¹²² [United States: Journalists face retaliation for their Gaza war coverage, NWU reports - IFJ](#)

¹²³ [Red Lines](#)

discriminatory behaviour he had experienced as a result of his advocacy for Palestinians.¹²⁴ He has since filed a case against CBS News Detroit alleging discriminatory conduct. Journalists and writers have reported being moved off covering Israel and Palestine after their support for Palestinians became clear, as well as having unrelated stories cancelled and contracts terminated.¹²⁵

Violations against Activists, NGOs and Civil Society

- i. Mass demonstrations in the U.S. have been met with significant suppression at the hands of the State. This has included widespread arrests and police intimidation. Thousands of pro-Palestine protestors were arrested at major protest actions¹²⁶, including protests at Grand Central station in New York¹²⁷ and during the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington D.C. in July 2024.
- ii. Activities in solidarity with Palestine led by civil society have been curtailed. In October 2023, a conference in Houston organised by the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights was cancelled at short notice following pressure from the Orthodox Jewish Chamber of Commerce. In response, Texas Governor Greg Abbott posted that "No location in Texas should host or sponsor USCPR".¹²⁸
- iii. Civil society and activists have raised concerns about the use of restrictions on masking to deny privacy to protestors amid heightened surveillance and police presence. This has included the use of obscure laws originally intended to tackle the masking of the Ku Klux Klan¹²⁹. Congress also introduced a bill, which passed the House but not the Senate, that would have eliminated the tax exempt status of any non-profit organization engaged in advocacy that the government alleged supported terrorism—an overbroad effort clearly designed to stifle advocacy in support of Palestinian rights.¹³⁰ This followed a request by 16 members of Congress to the IRS requesting it investigate several of these organisations.¹³¹
- iv. In addition to state repression, non-profits and NGOs opposing the genocide have contended with private lawsuits by individuals alleging their advocacy is somehow connected to the attacks of October 7. Individual Israel plaintiffs have sued groups such as National Students for Justice in Palestine, American Muslims for Palestine, and UNRWA USA, among others, alleging they somehow share responsibility for the attacks.¹³²
- v. The federal government, via the U.S. Department of Justice, directly engaged in one of these private lawsuits by filing a Statement of Interest in a case filed against non-profit groups in March 2025.¹³³ The statement suggested that the FACE (Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances) Act, a law used to protect people seeking reproductive healthcare at clinics from attacks by anti-abortion extremists, could be used to protect access to religious institutions; however, rather than block access to faith-based gatherings, the organizations sued in the lawsuit had members who participated in a protest outside

¹²⁴ [Palestinian journalist at Detroit news station sues, alleges retaliation, racial discrimination](#)

¹²⁵ [Red Lines](#)

¹²⁶ [Crowd Counting Consortium: Three Things the Pro-Palestine Movement Is Not – Ash Center](#)

¹²⁷ [New York police arrest hundreds after Israel-Hamas protest at Grand Central | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

¹²⁸ [Pro-Palestinian views face suppression in US amid Israel-Hamas war | US news | The Guardian](#)

¹²⁹ [States Dust Off Obscure Anti-Mask Laws to Target Pro-Palestine Protesters | American Civil Liberties Union](#)

¹³⁰ [What to know about the House bill that could punish nonprofits over alleged 'terrorist' ties | PBS News](#)

¹³¹ [Ernst Demands Investigation Into Organizations Behind Antisemitic Protests](#)

¹³² [October 7 Survivors Sue Campus Protesters, Say Students Are "Hamas's Propaganda Division"](#)

¹³³ [Justice Department Files Statement of Interest Supporting Access to Places of Worship](#)

of a temple where a real estate sale of settlement housing in the occupied West Bank was being held.

- vi. Rather than uphold the U.S.'s own laws barring aiding and abetting and failure to prevent genocide, U.S. courts have ruled that even when there is a plausible case of genocide, as in Israel's attack on Gaza, they are precluded from adjudicating U.S. complicity because it implicates foreign policy.¹³⁴

Violations against Academic Freedom

Some of the largest assemblies and protests in solidarity with Palestine in the United States have taken place at universities. Demonstrations involving students made up more than 40% of all demonstration activity related to the genocide since October 2023. Over 94% of these demonstrations have been in solidarity with Palestine.¹³⁵ While attacks on engagement with international mechanisms have a drastic impact on the ability of human rights defenders to do their work, most concerning in terms of domestic suppression has been the executive order, described above, instructing the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights to use its investigatory powers to target Palestine solidarity activists on campuses, and encouraging the deportation of any foreign students engaged in such advocacy.¹³⁶ Mahmoud Khalil, a student who was active with Columbia University protests and who is a lawful U.S. permanent resident was arrested on March 8, 2025 and told his green card was revoked, then sent to immigration detention in Louisiana for a total of 104 days.¹³⁷ The Trump administration has also conditioned funding on endorsement of its policies on Israel, cancelling \$400 million in federal grants to Columbia University with the stated reason that the school had not taken sufficient action to police antisemitism—conflating it with protests and mobilizations calling for an end to Israel's genocide in Gaza.¹³⁸ In an effort to further repress organizing efforts on campuses, the Trump administration initiated a task force and stated plans to undertake investigations at ten universities;¹³⁹ As of March 2025, at least 60 universities have been targeted for investigation.¹⁴⁰

- i. The U.S. House of Representatives has held multiple hearings with university presidents, criticizing them for not being harsh enough in their crackdowns against student protests and resulting in several of them losing their positions.¹⁴¹ These hearings were followed by the opening of investigations that involve subpoenas for confidential documents.¹⁴² In turn, universities have increased their suppression and targeting of students and faculty in fear of further government backlash, leading to a string of faculty and student disciplinary procedures and suspensions, police presence on campuses and criminal charges against student organizers, and widespread chill against Palestinian solidarity organizing. These government attacks on universities encourage their administrations to increase self-censorship and restrictions on both students and faculty, up to and including firings and expulsions.¹⁴³ In New York State, Democratic Governor Hochul

¹³⁴ [Defense for Children International - Palestine v. Biden | Center for Constitutional Rights](#)

¹³⁵ [US Student Pro-Palestine Demonstrations Remain Overwhelmingly Peaceful | ACLED Insight](#)

¹³⁶ [Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism – The White House](#)

¹³⁷ [Judge orders Columbia activist Mahmoud Khalil released on bail](#)

¹³⁸ [Trump administration cancels \\$400 million in federal dollars for Columbia University](#)

¹³⁹ [Federal Task Force to Combat Antisemitism Announces Visits to 10 College Campuses that Experienced Incidents of Antisemitism | United States Department of Justice](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Education Department says 60 universities under investigation for antisemitism](#)

¹⁴¹ [Inside the Latest Congressional Hearing on Campus Antisemitism | The Nation](#)

¹⁴² [Republican-led House committee subpoenas Harvard officials for docs in antisemitism probe](#)

¹⁴³ [A Columbia professor criticized Israeli students. It put her job at risk. - The Washington Post](#), <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/third-student-expelled-barnard-college-columbia-pro-palestinian-activism>, and [REVERBERATIONS OF OCTOBER 7th: Mobilization against genocide undeterred by peak anti-palestinian repression](#)

recently moved to eliminate two Palestine studies positions at a public university that were open for hiring.¹⁴⁴

- ii. Although the campus protests have overwhelmingly never devolved into physical attacks, a number of public officials have condemned student protesters and contributed to narratives characterising campus demonstrations and sit-ins as “violent.”¹⁴⁵ Jill Biden, speaking on the popular television show “The View,” condemned students for “protesting the violence with violence,” suggesting there is somehow comparison to be drawn between Israel’s genocide in Gaza and mobilizations of student protestors.
- iii. University responses to protests have resulted in suspensions, expulsions (often with little notice and leaving students without a home),¹⁴⁶ and restrictions on organizing, including suspensions of campus chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine.¹⁴⁷ . National Students for Justice in Palestine was founded nearly two decades ago to develop the Palestinian solidarity movement among students in North America.¹⁴⁸ In Florida, state universities in coordination with Governor Ron DeSantis ordered public universities to deactivate SJP chapters, leading to a case against the Governor and the Florida university system by Palestine Legal and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on behalf of the SJP chapters.¹⁴⁹
- iv. Public condemnation of pro-Palestine protestors has allowed repressive measures against them to proliferate. Farida Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Education expressed concern at the harsh treatment of students and faculty voicing political opinions. “Pro-Palestinian protesters are disproportionately affected by the harsh response, allegedly for their antisemitic views, paradoxically, even if they self-identify as belonging to the Jewish community or represent Jewish student associations.” The Rapporteur’s concerns echoed those of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and its Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Expression (RELE) and on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (REDESCA) who noted the disproportionate force used by US police against students including flash grenades, tear gas and rubber bullets.¹⁵⁰ At least 3,100 arrests have been recorded at pro-Palestinian demonstrations on university campuses across the United States.¹⁵¹
- v. Many universities have instituted new rules promoting “neutrality,” effectively barring staff and faculty from taking political positions on any matter.¹⁵² Other universities have responded to the protestors with new regulations, such as New York University’s new guidelines around hate speech, which makes “Zionist” a protected identity class. The guidelines stated that “For many Jewish people, Zionism is a part of their Jewish identity. Speech and conduct that would violate the NDAH (non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy) if targeting Jewish or Israeli people can also violate the NDAH if directed toward Zionists”.¹⁵³ Faculty, staff and students responded to these new

144 [New York governor orders removal of Palestinian studies positions at Hunter College | Middle East Eye](#)

145 [Crowd Counting Consortium: An Empirical Overview of Recent Pro-Palestine Protests at U.S. Schools – Ash Center](#)

146 [As Trump Takes Office, Punishments for Pro-Palestine Protests Escalate , Civil Rights Orgs Warn Pomona College Unprecedented Suspensions of Students Are Unlawful, ‘Punishes the Act of Protest Itself’ — Palestine Legal, Statement by Two Palestinian Students Who Have Faced Severe University Retaliation for Protesting Israel’s Genocide in Gaza — Palestine Legal](#)

147 [Multiple pro-Palestine groups protest suspension of SJP, Graduate SJP on campus - Daily Bruin, ‘To shut us down, you have only made us stronger’: Hundreds of students, faculty protest suspension of SJP, JVP, Palestine Legal Condemns Wave of Campus Anti-Protest Policies Intended To Suppress Student Activism](#)

148 [About — National SJP](#)

149 [Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of Florida v. Raymond Rodrigues | American Civil Liberties Union](#)

150 [IACHR: United States must respect peaceful protest and academic freedom on campuses](#)

151 [Campus protests led to more than 3,100 arrests, but many charges have been dropped - University Business](#)

152 [What’s behind the push for “institutional neutrality”?](#)

153 [US: New York University adopts measures declaring ‘Zionists’ a protected class | Middle East Eye](#)

- guidelines with a statement condemning the new rules and the dangerous precedent they set in shielding ethnonationalist movements from criticism.¹⁵⁴
- vi. Students have often faced the full force of the US criminal justice system for their solidarity with Palestinians. 28 student protestors at CUNY were charged with felony offenses following the mass arrest of over 170 demonstrators. Of 28 facing felony charges, eight have refused plea deals, taking their cases to trial.¹⁵⁵ Nine cases were fully dismissed, and five have taken plea deals. A senior at Florida State University was charged with felony battery for allegedly spitting on a police officer's arm, and took a plea deal for eighteen months of probation.¹⁵⁶
 - vii. Conversely, universities have made little effort to respond to physical violence against protestors by right-wing attackers and supporters of Israel. Many campuses experienced coordinated attacks by right-wing counter protesters after encampments had grown.¹⁵⁷ After several individuals at Columbia University sprayed a chemical substance on protestors in an attack, the university paid the students who had attacked the encampment \$395,000 to settle their lawsuit.¹⁵⁸
 - viii. Students have similarly long experienced harassment from Israel-aligned organizations and hostile administrators and professors.¹⁵⁹ A professor at Columbia University was temporarily barred from the campus due to his harassment campaign against students.¹⁶⁰ Students have also experienced doxing and attempts to sabotage their future career through exposure and false narratives posted on the anonymous Canary Mission website set up to target student activists, funded by groups with ties to wealthy donors and Israeli government agencies.¹⁶¹
 - ix. U.S. authorities and universities have also used the immigration system to deport to punish and threaten protestors and chill solidarity actions.¹⁶² Momodou Taal, a British national studying and teaching at Cornell University was threatened with deportation after being suspended from his studying due to his involvement in campus protests in solidarity with Palestine. He has since won his appeal against the university.¹⁶³
 - x. In addition to the harassment and suspension of pro-Palestine academics, academic work in the U.S has also been subject to censorship. A journal article by Palestinian human rights lawyer and scholar Rabea Eghbariah was originally set to be published by the Harvard Law Review, before being blocked in an "unprecedented decision" by the Harvard Law Review Board.¹⁶⁴ Although the article was later accepted by the Columbia Law Review, further repressive measures saw the entire website temporarily shut down following the article's publication.¹⁶⁵

154 [Aug 25, 2024. Press Release: Responding to New Student Conduct Document](#)

155 [CUNY Palestine Protesters Vow to Continue Fighting Felony Charges at Pre-Arrest Press Conference | The Independent](#)

156 [Prosecutors Have Levied Serious Charges Against Pro-Palestine College Protesters](#)

157 [What's Really Happening on College Campuses, According to Student Journalists - POLITICO](#), [An End to "Safety", Why far-right groups are disrupting US campus protests: 'When there's so much attention, they show up'](#)

158 [Columbia settles \\$395K lawsuit over 'skunk spray' controversy at campus protest, report says - Gothamist](#)

159 [The Palestine Exception](#), [Today's Campus Protest Crackdowns Are All Too Familiar to Me](#)

160 [Shai Davidai: Columbia University temporarily bans pro-Israel professor after October 7 protest | CNN](#), and [Who Is Shai Davidai? The Columbia Professor Protesting Protesters | TIME](#)

161 [Who Is Funding Canary Mission? Inside the Doxing Operation Targeting Anti-Zionist Students and Professors | The Nation](#), [Who Funds Canary Mission? James Bamford on Group That Doxes Students & Profs for Palestine Activism | Democracy Now!](#), and [Canary Mission Blacklist Funded By Jewish Federation](#)

162 [Deporting international students involved in pro-Palestinian protests will escalate trauma and polarisation on US campuses: UN experts | OHCHR](#)

163 [Cornell international grad student says he won't be deported](#)

164 [The "Harvard Law Review" Refused to Run This Piece About Genocide in Gaza | The Nation](#)

165 [Why are America's elite universities so afraid of this scholar's paper? | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian](#)

- xi. Academics have been sanctioned for their support for Palestine, raising major concerns about academic freedoms at U.S universities. An investigation by The Intercept found that “dozens” of academic workers had been put under investigation, lost jobs or faced suspension due to their support for Palestine and both public and private universities.¹⁶⁶ Maura Finkelstein, a tenured Jewish Professor was fired from Muhlenberg College for a social media post asking people not to “cower to Zionism”. Her appeal was denied in September 2024¹⁶⁷ The University of Minnesota rescinded its offer to Raz Segal, a Jewish Israeli-American professor, to be the Chair of its Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies because he determined that Israel was committing a genocide in Gaza.¹⁶⁸ Columbia School of Law professor Katherine Franke was forced to retire following her comments in support of student protestors.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ [University Professors Are Losing Their Jobs Over “New McCarthyism” on Gaza](#)

¹⁶⁷ [A Professor Was Fired for Her Politics. Is That the Future of Academia? - The New York Times](#)

¹⁶⁸ [Holocaust Scholar Raz Segal Loses Univ. of Minnesota Job Offer for Saying Israel Is Committing Genocide | Democracy Now!](#)

¹⁶⁹ [Statement from Katherine Franke.docx](#) , [A Columbia professor criticized Israeli students. It put her job at risk. - The Washington Post](#) , and <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/12/activists-back-us-professor-forced-from-columbia-over-palestine-advocacy>

France

3.1 Background

- i. France is a long-standing ally to Israel. France was among the first countries to recognise the Israeli State¹⁷⁰ and cemented the relationship in the 1950s by deciding to become one of Israel's major arms suppliers.¹⁷¹ In a tribute to the French citizens killed on October 7, President Emmanuel Macron called the Hamas attack the "largest antisemitic massacre of the 21st century".
- ii. France has a history of repression of expressions of solidarity with Palestine. In 2021, the Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin asked prefects to ban protests linked to the Israeli bombing of Gaza at the time. In a tweet, Darmanin justified the requested ban by referencing "serious disturbances of public order" that had arisen during pro-Palestine protests responding to Israeli attacks on Palestine in 2014.¹⁷² Protests had taken place in 2014 despite attempts to ban them. French government officials have been criticised for using Islamophobic and racist rhetoric to demonise expressions of solidarity with Palestine.¹⁷³ Also in 2021, French Minister of Higher Education Frederique Vidal appeared on television warning the public of the dangers of "Islam-leftism". Although this rhetoric is not specifically associated with solidarity with Palestine, critics have argued that it has been used to stifle academic freedoms and political organising as well as stoking racist sentiments in French society.¹⁷⁴
- iii. Human rights defenders have raised the alarm about the creeping use of terrorism laws to restrict freedom of expression in France for a number of years. Following the Charlie Hebdo attacks in 2015, the French justice system has increasingly used the crime of "apology for terrorism" to clamp down on any positive reference to a terrorist act or group, even if that speech does not incite violence or uncritically promote the group. The criminal provision was enacted in 2014, and the French Constitutional Court has rejected challenges to the law on the basis that the laws are vague and curtail freedoms of expression.¹⁷⁵ In 2016, 20% of those investigated under this law were minors between the ages of 10 and 14.¹⁷⁶
- iv. President Macron called early parliamentary elections in June 2024, following the success of Marine Le Pen's right wing National Rally (RN) in the European Parliament elections. Positions on Israel and Palestine came into play in the election. Leader of the left-wing France Unbowed party (LFI), Jean-Luc Mélenchon was accused of antisemitism by both the centre and the right.¹⁷⁷ An RN spokesperson portrayed the election as a struggle between "those who love France...and those who love Hamas".¹⁷⁸ Meanwhile,

170 [France and Israel - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs](#)

171 https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000271219.pdf

172 <https://x.com/GDarmanin/status/1392828037473914883>

173 [Censuré! The crackdown on pro-Palestinian voices in France | Eurozine](#)

174 [How France wields 'Islam-leftism' as a tool to silence critics | Middle East Eye](#)

175 [Le Conseil constitutionnel valide les textes réprimant l'apologie du terrorisme](#)

176 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/30/frances-creeping-terrorism-laws-restricting-free-speech>

177 [Antisemitism comes to fore in French election campaign](#)

178 [How France's far-right National Rally plans to secure its absolute majority in parliament](#)

many expressed surprise at the involvement of the right wing RN in demonstrations against antisemitism in light of the right's long and public history of antisemitism.¹⁷⁹

- v. The City Council of Paris and the French parliament have adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism as their working definition.¹⁸⁰ There is currently no agreement on a working definition of Islamophobia in France.¹⁸¹

3.2 Documentation of Violations

The Role of Government Narratives including Censorship of Public Office Holders

- i. On October 10, 2023, the Minister of Justice Eric Dupond-Moretti sent a circular to the office of the public prosecutor asking for a “firm and rapid criminal response” to any statements presenting the Hamas attack as “legitimate resistance to Israel”. The Minister stated that statements in support of Hamas or recognising that their actions on October 7 took place in the context of resistance to settler colonialism would constitute the offence of apology for terrorism.¹⁸²
- ii. The French police have conducted numerous high profile investigations of public figures who have expressed solidarity with Palestine. Sitting politicians have also been vulnerable to repressive measures. In April 2024, left-wing politician Anasse Kazib was summoned by police as part of an anti-terrorism investigation following tweets that expressed solidarity with Palestine.¹⁸³ French MP Sebastian Delogu was suspended for 15 days and had his pay halved for two months after waving a Palestinian flag in the National Assembly.¹⁸⁴ Mathilde Panot, the leader of the left-wing France Unbowed party (LFI) in the lower house was summoned by police for investigation following LFI’s October 7 press release due to concerns that the statement constituted terrorism apology.

Violations against Journalists and Media Workers

- i. Actions have also been taken against journalists and cultural workers. On 12 May 2024, unions representing French public broadcaster, *Radio France*, called for strike action after comedian Guillaume Meurice was suspended and ultimately fired for joking about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on a live radio broadcast. In response to the call for strike action, programmes on *France Inter* were suspended for the entire day.¹⁸⁵ Another comedian, Blanche Gardin, also faced significant backlash following a controversial sketch she performed in July 2024, during an evening in support of Gaza, where she satirized how accusations of anti-Semitism are often used to stifle criticism of Israeli policy. The controversy gained traction over the following months, culminating in a resurfaced comparison of Gardin to the controversial comedian Dieudonné—first published on the Akadem website on 5 March 2025, and then shared by Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur on 8 March 2025. In response, Blanche Gardin published a long open letter on 12 March 2025, expressing her pain and defending her integrity amid what she described as a defamation campaign.¹⁸⁶ Journalist Zineb El Rhazoui also came under heavy fire for

¹⁷⁹ [Europe's far right joins rallying cry against antisemitism, unsettling some Jews | Reuters](#)

¹⁸⁰ [Paris becomes 1st capital outside Israel to adopt IHRA anti-Semitism definition, and France's IHRA resolution: Israel's lobby won the vote, but it won't silence support for Palestinians](#)

¹⁸¹ [French left divided over the term 'Islamophobia' after the murder of a Muslim in a mosque](#)

¹⁸² <https://www.justice.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2023-10/JUSD2327199C.pdf>

¹⁸³ ['Intimidation' Tactics - French Politician Summoned by Police Over Pro-Palestine Tweets](#)

¹⁸⁴ [French hard-left MP suspended for waving Palestinian flag in parliament | Reuters](#)

¹⁸⁵ [How France is cracking down on solidarity with Palestine](#)

¹⁸⁶ [Antisémitisme : passe d'armes entre l'humoriste Blanche Gardin et la rabbine Delphine Horvilleur – Libération](#)

her criticism of the genocide in Palestine. On October 15, 2024, France's National Unit for Combating Online Hate (PNLH) received a referral from the Interior Ministry regarding a video posted on YouTube channel. The referral, dated October 11, argued that her remarks in the interview could amount to "apology of terrorism." In that interview, El Rhazoui compared Israel to a "terrorist state, a successful ISIS," and declined to condemn Hamas's deadly attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. By December 2024, the president of the Île-de-France region moved to strip her of the Simone Weil Prize, which she had originally received in 2019 for her work defending secularism.¹⁸⁷

Violations against Activists, NGOs and Civil Society

- i. On October 12, 2023 the Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin called for a complete ban on all assemblies expressing solidarity with Palestine, stating that demonstrations were "likely to call public order disturbances" and any protests should "lead to arrests".¹⁸⁸ The French Council of State rejected an appeal on the ban, and agreed with the determination that pro-Palestine protests specifically were "likely to lead to public order disturbances".¹⁸⁹ However, they additionally stated that local authorities should evaluate the need for a ban on a case by case basis.¹⁹⁰
- ii. In most prefectures banning protests, the reasons given were related to public order. However, some prefectures gave additional reasons. In St. Étienne, the prefectural order banning pro-Palestine protests referred to the attendance of "individuals from the ultra-left movement" and determined that "Palestinian inscriptions and banners" constituted threats.¹⁹¹ The case of Nice is particularly emblematic with systematic prohibitions, systematically found illegal by administrative jurisdiction. The local section of LDH notes abuses around the process with last minute notification, lack of information.¹⁹²
- iii. Despite the ban, mass protests went ahead in cities across France including Paris, Grenoble, Strasbourg, Marseille, Lyon, and Lille. These protests were met with police violence, including the use of tear gas and water cannons. Many protestors were arrested, often using disproportionate force.¹⁹³ Taha Bouhafs, a journalist participating in a demonstration on October 14, 2023 noted *"There were very violent arrests, people were getting strangled by the police."*¹⁹⁴ A civil society actor interviewed for this report recounted his own experiences of policing in Paris: *"I have been fined 3 times, even when I was away from the [prohibited] demo, my flag and kouffyah [were] confiscated, I have been detained once although [I was] not protesting."*
- iv. Immigrants and foreigners have often borne the brunt of repressive measures, as the immigration system has been weaponized against those without French citizenship. The French Minister of the Interior called for the "immediate expulsion" of foreign perpetrators of antisemitic acts in October 2023, noting that a number of individuals were already being processed for deportation.¹⁹⁵ Since then, a number of activists and other individuals have been slated for deportation. These include the Palestinian activist Mariam Abu Daqqa who was put under house arrest and ultimately deported following

187 [L'affaire El Rhazoui ou la fracture identitaire du Printemps républicain - Sophie Boutière-Damahi](#)

188 [France orders ban on all pro-Palestinian protests](#)

189 [Manifestations de soutien à la cause palestinienne : il revient aux préfets d'apprécier, au cas par cas, si le risque de troubles à l'ordre public justifie une interdiction - Conseil d'État](#)

190 [France's pro-Palestine protest ban is OK, top court rules – POLITICO](#)

191 [We asked: How is the Suppression of Palestinian Solidarity Unfolding in France? - Lefteast](#)

192 [Les manifestations « pour une paix juste et durable entre palestiniens et israéliens » : une saga niçoise - LDH](#)

193 [Concerns about rule of law in France as protests met with brutality - Civicus Monitor](#)

194 [Ibid,](#)

195 [Gérald Darmanin demande l'« expulsion immédiate » des auteurs étrangers d'actes antisémites](#)

the October 7 Hamas attack.¹⁹⁶ Abu Daqqa's detention was linked to her relationship with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which the European Union categorises as a terrorist organisation.

- v. Organisations advocating for Palestine and Palestinians have come under repeated attack. In 2022, Gérald Darmanin announced the dissolution of two Palestine solidarity groups – the Palestine Action Committee (CAP) and the Collectif Palestine Vaincra (CPV) – on the grounds of incitement to hatred and provocation to commit terrorist offences.¹⁹⁷ These allegations were based on speech such as “calling for support for the ‘resistance’ of the Palestinian people, for boycotting Israel and for fighting ‘Zionist imperialism’ and argued that they fell afoul of Article L212-1 of the Internal Security Code.”¹⁹⁸ Two interim rulings issued by the Council of State found that the dissolution decrees violated the organisations’ rights to freedom of association and expression.¹⁹⁹ However, in February 2025 the Council of State upheld the dissolution order against CPV.²⁰⁰ In April 2025, Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau announced plans to dissolve Urgence Palestine, a national coalition that has been at the heart of French protests in solidarity with Palestine.²⁰¹
- vi. The Palestinian solidarity movement and particularly activism from Palestinians has been met with intense stigmatisation. As one civil society actor interviewed for this report noted, *“I think we Palestinians in France have suffered from a form of global oppression in this country.”* He further reported *“threats by the authorities concerning our mobilization depicting us as terror supporters and antisemites.”*

Violations against Academic Freedom

- i. Expressions of solidarity with Palestine have been greatly restricted at universities. Numerous talks by the European parliamentarian Rima Hassan which were scheduled to be held at French universities have been cancelled. In November 2024 Science Po cancelled a talk Hassan was scheduled to give at a conference, citing public order concerns.²⁰² Previously, the University of Lille and the University of Paris-Dauphine also blocked Hassan from speaking at conferences. The University of Paris-Dauphine's decision was later overturned by the courts.²⁰³
- ii. Talks and conferences by pro-Palestine voices have been repeatedly cancelled. In December 2023, a talk by Judith Butler, the prominent American gender studies scholar was cancelled by the Mayor of Paris.²⁰⁴ In March and July 2023, the same conference due to be held at the University of Aix-Marseille was cancelled twice – even after organisers had heavily censored and reworked the original programme following the initial cancellation.²⁰⁵
- iii. The French government has often contributed to the repression of pro-Palestine protests at universities. Students across France occupied buildings and blocked entryways calling

¹⁹⁶ [Gaza activist on speaking tour in France faces deportation | Reuters](#)

¹⁹⁷ <https://elsc.support/case/french-highest-administrative-court-upholds-the-legality-of-two-palestine-solidarity-groups/>

¹⁹⁸ [Décret du 9 mars 2022 portant dissolution d'une association - Légifrance](#)

¹⁹⁹ <https://elsc.support/case/french-highest-administrative-court-upholds-the-legality-of-two-palestine-solidarity-groups/>

²⁰⁰ [Another outrageous act of the French judiciary: Collectif Palestine Vaincra dissolution upheld by Council of State | Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network](#)

²⁰¹ [Stop the dissolution of Urgence Palestine: Take action now to confront France's complicity in genocide! | Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, Bruno Retailleau veut dissoudre Urgence Palestine, le principal collectif mobilisé en faveur du peuple palestinien](#)

²⁰² [Pro-Palestinian European Parliament member blasts Paris university for cancelling her scheduled conference – Middle East Monitor](#)

²⁰³ [La justice annule l'interdiction d'une conférence avec Rima Hassan à Dauphine - The Times of Israël](#)

²⁰⁴ [Censuré! The crackdown on pro-Palestinian voices in France | Eurozine](#)

²⁰⁵ [Censuré! The crackdown on pro-Palestinian voices in France | Eurozine](#)

for an end to the genocide and for their universities to cut ties with Israeli institutions and businesses. Emmanuel Macron condemned pro-Palestinian students blocking campus entrances “with the utmost firmness” and stated that he would be in favour of security forces evacuating protesting students at the universities’ request.²⁰⁶ The administrations at the Sorbonne and Science Po brought in riot police, and one student witness stated that the university administration at Science Po spoke about government pressure to end the student demonstrations.²⁰⁷ This government pressure was made public prior to October 7, 2024, when the French government asked universities to “prevent any risk of unrest”. The French Minister for Higher Education, Patrick Hetzel, emphasised the responsibility of universities to maintain order and also “strongly condemned” the actions of protesting students, stating that protests went “against the principles of neutrality and secularism of the public higher education service”.

206 French president condemns pro-Palestinian students’ blockades in universities – Middle East Monitor

207 France deploys riot police, cuts funding to quell campus protests over Gaza | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera

CHAPTER 4

Germany

4.1 Background

- i. The relationship between Germany and Israel is shaped profoundly by the history of the holocaust.²⁰⁸ Israel now considers Germany its second most important strategic partner in the world, behind only the USA. German government officials have gone so far as to call Israel's security Germany's "reason of state" or *Staatsräson*, an ambiguous yet powerful turn of phrase implying that Germany's very existence is dependent on ensuring Israel's defence regardless of the context or price.²⁰⁹ This idea was first articulated by Angela Merkel in her speech before the Israeli parliament, and was used to support the German export of Dolphin-class submarines to Israel despite intelligence suggesting that Israel was very likely to arm these submarines with nuclear warheads.²¹⁰
- ii. Germany's "Staatsräson" has often meant defending Israel within Germany's borders with measures that many civil society actors and human right observers have critiqued as substantially limiting freedoms of expression and assembly.²¹¹ In 2017, Germany officially adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism. In 2019, the Bundestag voted to condemn the Boycott, Divest and Sanction movement as well as *proximity* to the movement as antisemitic.²¹² There have been attempts to censor numerous Jewish critics of Israel, including well known campaigns against awards given to Israeli-German lawyer Felicia Langer in 2009 and Judith Butler in 2012.²¹³ In September 2023, Amnesty International expressed concern about the blanket banning of pro-Palestine solidarity protests on Nakba day as well as the ostracising language used in the bans, again pointing to Muslim participants of pro-Palestine demonstrations.²¹⁴
- iii. The concept of "imported antisemitism" began to gain currency in the early 2000s as concerns about a "new antisemitism" linked the 2nd Palestinian intifada began to take hold of Germany's political imaginary. This concept of imported antisemitism was linked primarily to migrant Muslims living in Germany. German concerns about antisemitism, and especially "imported antisemitism" escalated during a time in which far-right racism within Germany, directed against Muslims and people of colour as well as Jews has itself escalated.²¹⁵ In 2017, there were 28 antisemitic physical attacks recorded, 95% of which were carried out by white right-wing German nationalists. In the same year, there were almost 2000 attacks on refugees and around 900 attacks on German Muslims.²¹⁶ The problem of violent right-wing nationalism had long been significant in Germany, leading to hundreds of deaths of people of colour, refugees and migrants in the 80s and 90s and leading the city of Dresden to declare a "Nazi state of emergency" in November 2019.²¹⁷

208 [Bilateral relations | Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

209 ["Reason of State": The True Story Behind Merkel's Promise to Israel - DER SPIEGEL](#)

210 [Israel Submarine Capabilities](#)

211 ["We Are All Israelis": The Consequences of Germany's Staatsräson | Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#), [Germany's Crackdown on Civil Liberties — The Dial](#), and [Why Is Germany Cracking Down on Pro-Palestine Protest? | The Nation](#)

212 [Germany designates BDS Israel boycott movement as anti-Semitic | Reuters](#)

213 [German campaign against Documenta 15 p76](#)

214 [Germany: Protect the Protest: Against blanket bans of demonstrations for the rights of Palestinians - Amnesty International](#)

215 Anna-Esther Younes, *Fighting Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Germany*, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 5:2 (2020), and [Germany Falling Short in Curbing Anti-Muslim Racism | Human Rights Watch](#)

216 [Fighting antisemitism in Germany p257](#)

217 [Fighting antisemitism in Germany p251](#)

- iv. Human rights observers have made note of the increase in anti-Muslim racism within Germany and have argued that the German government is falling short in addressing it. Incidences of anti-Muslim hate crimes were not recorded until 2017 and there has been little effort made to understand the link between religious intolerance and racism.²¹⁸ Germany has not yet adopted a working definition of Islamophobia.

4.2 Documentation of Violations

The Role of Government Narratives including Censorship of Public Office Holders

- i. Following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, numerous German officials began to raise alarms about “imported antisemitism” in Muslim communities. Thomas Haldenwang, head of Germany’s Federal Office for the Protection stated that antisemitism was part of the DNA of “Islamist” structures.²¹⁹ A few days later Güner Balci, the integration commissioner for Neükolln, an ethnically diverse neighbourhood in Berlin, stated that antisemitism was widespread in Muslim communities and that many Muslims in Neükolln harbored sympathies with groups Germany has deemed terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah and Hamas.²²⁰
- ii. The rhetoric of Israel’s security as Germany’s Staatsräson came back into force in Germany’s response to the Hamas attack on Israel and Israel’s bombardment of Gaza. On October 12, 2023, the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz once again emphasised that “Israeli security is Germany’s ‘reason of state.’”²²¹ This characterisation of German political life has had far reaching effects that push back against any expression of solidarity with Palestine. In June 2024, Germany amended its citizenship laws by expanding the questions on its naturalisation test to include questions about Jewish life in Germany and to require an explicit declaration regarding Israel’s right to exist.²²²

Violations against activists, NGOs and Civil Society

- i. Many protestors took to the streets in Germany despite widespread bans on protests, some of which were later overturned by courts.²²³ About half of all pro-Palestine demonstrations have been banned.²²⁴ Many of the protests that have gone ahead have been violently policed, with protestors reporting being punched, choked and kicked by police.²²⁵
- ii. Court rulings and policing of protests have been inconsistent across the country. Courts across the country have differed in their determinations of whether the chant “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” should be criminalised. While a Munich court found that criminalising the slogan breached individual rights to freedom of speech, protestors have been fined for using the slogan in Bremen and Berlin.²²⁶ In May 2024, the German Federal Ministry for Justice declared the slogan to be a “Hamas slogan” and therefore

218 [Germany Falling Short in Curbing Anti-Muslim Racism | Human Rights Watch.](#)

219 CAGE Report p13

220 [Muslim Anti-Semitism in Berlin: “Wide Swaths of Arab-Speaking Population Harbor Sympathies for Terrorists” - DER SPIEGEL](#)

221 [“Reason of State”: The True Story Behind Merkel’s Promise to Israel - DER SPIEGEL](#)

222 [Germany demands new citizens accept Israel’s right to exist | CNN, Germany imposes Israel ‘loyalty’ test with new citizenship law – Middle East Monitor, and BMI - News - New law on nationality takes effect](#)

223 [Pro-Palestinian protest erupts in Frankfurt despite city ban | Euronews](#)

224 [Verbote von pro-palästinensischen Demos in Berlin - richtig oder falsch? | rbb24](#)

225 [Punched, choked, kicked: German police crack down on student protests | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

226 [German court convicts activist for leading ‘from the river to the sea’ chant | Germany | The Guardian](#)

punishable.²²⁷ The Berlin government has also banned Palestinian flags and keffiyehs from schools.²²⁸

- iii. A civil society member from Munich interviewed for this report spoke about the climate of repression in the capital city of Bavaria: *"There's a serious abuse of power going on in the municipality of Munich and Germany in general, resulting in a very dangerous and violent police force. In a country that prides itself on its freedom of speech, we have felt extremely suffocated. Media in Germany feeds even more into the propaganda used to criminalise and villainise the Palestinian solidarity movement."* They also noted active repression of speech at protests *"I was arrested at a protest, after a speech in which I said 'we demand an end to the occupation, from the Jordan (river) to the sea.' The charges were dropped though, probably because it wouldn't hold up in court."*
- iv. Pro-Palestinian civil society organisations have been hit particularly hard by repressive measures in Germany. Germany banned the organisation "Samidoun", a Palestinian solidarity network that advocates for prisoners held in Israeli jails. Prior to the ban, integration commissioner Güner Balci stated that Samidoun promoted "hatred" and its influence among Arab communities.²²⁹ In a statement, Samidoun called the move an act of partnership with Israeli war crimes.²³⁰ In April 2024, the German authorities raided the "Palestinian Congress" - a conference organised by pro-Palestine activists in Berlin. Prior to the event, two of the invited speakers, British-Palestinian doctor Ghassan Abu-Sitta and former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, were banned from entering the country.²³¹ The police cut off power and evacuated the premises on the grounds that a British-Palestinian activist whose activities in Germany had been banned in Germany participated via video call.²³²
- v. One civil society member interviewed reported a possible attempt by German intelligence services to infiltrate the Palestinian solidarity movement: *"I was followed by the German Domestic Intelligence Services for a while, and was approached by one of them in order to get me to collaborate with them and give out information on a group that organises most protests in Munich. Their 'story' was that they were making a report for the Minister of Internal Affairs about the repressions toward the Palestinian solidarity movement, and they needed activists to talk to them. When I declined, he tried to scare me by implying he knew where I worked and lived."*
- vi. German cultural institutions have also been hit hard by repressive measures. Cultural institutions such as Oyouun, a decolonial, queer, feminist and migrant centred organisation lost their funding due to their support for Palestine.²³³ Prizes have been withheld from a number of cultural workers due to their support of the Palestinian cause. In October 2023 the Frankfurt Book Fair cancelled the award ceremony of Palestinian writer Adania Shibli as well as the speech she had been scheduled to deliver.²³⁴ In March 2024, the German Photography Biennale cancelled its tour following the refusal of Shahidul Alam, the Biennale's co-curator, to delete pro-Palestinian content German organisers deemed antisemitic.²³⁵

227 <https://elsc.support/news/the-case-of-daria-next-trial-in-the-attempted-criminalisation-of-the-slogan-palestine-will-be-free-from-the-river-to-the-sea-in-germany>

228 German cultural institutions turn on pro-Palestinian voices | Euronews

229 Muslim Anti-Semitism in Berlin: "Wide Swaths of Arab-Speaking Population Harbor Sympathies for Terrorists" - DER SPIEGEL

230 Statement: Germany announces ban on Samidoun Network — we remain steadfast!

231 German police shut down pro-Palestinian conference – DW – 04/13/2024

232 Police raid Berlin conference as repression of Palestine activism escalates in Germany – Mondoweiss

233 German cultural institutions turn on pro-Palestinian voices | Euronews

234 Frankfurt book fair: cancelled prize ceremony for Palestinian author is part of a long history of political zigzagging

235 German cultural institutions turn on pro-Palestinian voices | Euronews

- vii. Ranjit Hoskote, a prominent Indian poet and curator, resigned from the six-member Finding Committee for documenta 16 in November 2023 after controversy over his 2019 signature on a BDS India petition, which German officials deemed antisemitic. Hoskote rejected the accusation, calling it a conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism. His resignation was followed by that of Israeli artist Bracha Ettinger and, soon after, the remaining four members, who collectively stepped down citing a hostile and polarized atmosphere.²³⁶
- viii. The German authorities' drive to silence dissenting voices over the conflict reached new extremes when politicians denounced the speech of Yuval Abraham (Israeli) and Basel Adra (Palestinian), co-directors of the documentary *No Other Land*, which addresses apartheid in Israel and the occupied territories and calls for a ceasefire in February 2024. MP Helge Lindh described the applause that followed as "shocking," declaring: "I am ashamed to see that, in my country, people today applaud accusations of genocide against Israel." Berlin's mayor, Kai Wegner, likewise condemned the reaction on his X account, insisting: "Antisemitism has no place in Berlin, and that applies to artists as well," and demanding accountability from the festival's leadership. Chancellor Olaf Scholz added that "such a one-sided stance cannot be tolerated, and that in any debate on this issue, it is essential to keep in mind the event that triggered this latest escalation of the conflict in the Middle East."²³⁷ At the 2025 Berlinale, the State Security Police of the Federal Criminal Police Office opened an investigation into Hong Kong director Jun Li. While presenting *Queerpanorama*, which premiered in Berlin's Panorama section on Saturday, the director delivered a speech on behalf of the film's protagonist, Erfan Shekarriz, who, he said, boycotted the festival this year in protest against the German government and its cultural institutions, including the Berlinale, for supporting "apartheid, genocide, and the brutal extermination of the Palestinian people."²³⁸

Violations against Academic Freedom

- i. German universities have been subject to considerable scrutiny from the government. Pro-Palestine demonstrations have been met with heavy policing, and in March 2024 a new law was introduced to the legislature that would give universities the power of expulsion of students for disciplinary reasons.²³⁹ In May 2024, more than 300 academics from Berlin universities penned an open letter supporting pro-Palestinian student protestors at the Free University of Berlin.²⁴⁰ Over 2000 academics then demanded the resignation of the German Education Minister due to the "unprecedented attacks" on scholar's fundamental rights to freedom of expression including the withdrawal of funding of pro-Palestine academics.²⁴¹ Investigations had found that the German Ministry of Education had drawn up lists of academics who stood in solidarity with Gaza, including details of academics who had refused to inform on their colleagues.²⁴² In February 2024, Germany's ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD), led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz, together with the opposition Christian Democratic Party (CDU), instructed high schools in Berlin's Neukölln district to distribute brochures titled *"The Myth of Israel"*

²³⁶ Documenta committee resigns in wake of antisemitism claims – DW – 11/17/2023

²³⁷ Israeli director receives death threats after officials call Berlin film festival 'antisemitic' | Movies | The Guardian

²³⁸ Berlin film festival faces new antisemitism accusations – DW – 02/20/2025

²³⁹ Punched, choked, kicked: German police crack down on student protests | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera

²⁴⁰ Over 2,000 academics demand resignation of German Education Minister over repression

²⁴¹ Over 2,000 academics demand resignation of German Education Minister over repression

²⁴² German ministry of education draws up lists of pro-Palestinian academics | Middle East Eye

1948.” The material, aimed at students, described the 1948 Nakba as a “myth” and further asserted that criticism of Israel’s illegal settlements constitutes antisemitism.²⁴³

- ii. This climate of repression has also affected prominent international intellectuals and artists. In February 2024, the artist, musician, and filmmaker Laurie Anderson withdrew from a guest professorship in Germany after officials objected to her support for the 2021 *Letter Against Apartheid* signed by Palestinian artists.²⁴⁴ Two months later, in April 2024, Jewish American philosopher Nancy Fraser was disinvited from taking up a prestigious professorship at the University of Cologne after signing a letter expressing solidarity with Palestinians and condemning Israeli attacks on Gaza.²⁴⁵ The pressure continued into 2025: in February, following intervention by Berlin’s mayor, a lecture at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese was canceled, as was another scheduled event at the Free University of Berlin with Albanese and Eyal Weizman, the British-Israeli director of the research agency Forensic Architecture.²⁴⁶

4.3 Trends around the World

- i. While the violations within the four countries considered above are of significant concern on their own merits, they are also representative of much broader trends in the repression of pro-Palestine solidarity across the world. These trends include excessive use of police force against those expressing solidarity with Palestine, restrictions on symbols associated with Palestine including the Palestinian flag and the keffiyeh, limitations on actions in support of Palestine according to inappropriately vague references to “public order”, censorship and policing of pro-Palestine speech, racist and Islamophobic targeting of individuals and communities, denial of support and resources for pro-Palestine activities, and the use of broad counter-terrorism legislation and the use of immigration laws to stigmatise and delegitimize pro-Palestine speech and action.
- ii. In Belgium, the host country of the European Union, these trends have become increasingly visible, especially in Brussels, where peaceful demonstrations have been met with multifaceted repression, including illegitimate and violent policing. The use of force as a preventive, deterrent, and punitive tool has intensified and is expected to escalate further in 2024.
- iii. Initial spontaneous demonstrations in October 2023 near Brussels’ Bourse and Central Station were met with heavy-handed police responses. By December, tactics such as containment (“kettling”), chokeholds, and arbitrary arrests had become routine. In May 2024, the repression intensified further: on May 28, peaceful demonstrators outside the Israeli embassy were assaulted with water cannons aimed directly at their faces, causing serious injuries including eye trauma and facial fractures²⁴⁷. On May 31, protesters were kettled and beaten in narrow stairwells near Arts-Loi metro station. At least 40 people were arrested, officially for identification purposes.²⁴⁸
- iv. Over the summer, repression extended to minor infractions such as wearing keffiyehs or filming police conduct, which resulted in arrests and fines of up to €500²⁴⁹. Many individuals received legal summons for allegedly “belonging to a group

²⁴³ [Germany: Berlin schools asked to distribute leaflet describing the 1948 Nakba as a ‘myth’ | Middle East Eye](#)

²⁴⁴ [Laurie Anderson ends German professorship after criticism of Palestine support](#)

²⁴⁵ [German university rescinds Jewish American’s job offer over pro-Palestinian letter | Higher education | The Guardian](#)

²⁴⁶ [Germany: Second talk by top UN official canceled – DW – 02/19/2025](#)

²⁴⁷ [BRUXELLES DES VIES : LA POLICE RÉPRIME LA MANIFESTATION POUR LA PALESTINE FACE À L’AMBASSADE ISRAËLIENNE](#)

²⁴⁸ [BRUXELLES DES VIES : MANIFESTATION POUR LA PALESTINE EN FACE DE L’AMBASSADE DES ÉTATS-UNIS RÉPRIMÉE](#)

²⁴⁹ [Des nouvelles de la Cellule Radicalisme – De nouvelles personnes convoquées pour avoir critiqué la police en ligne – Bruxelles Dévie](#), [La Cellule Radicalisme d’Ixelles enquête... sur des stories Instagram ! Symptôme d’une police obsédée par la surveillance – Bruxelles Dévie](#)

- promoting racial discrimination,” with some facing multiple charges. Protesters were subjected to surveillance, including potential facial recognition and online monitoring, with administrative sanctions imposed for posts critical of the police. Several students faced university disciplinary proceedings in parallel.
- v. University campuses have become key sites of mobilization. Student-led occupations at UGent, ULB, VUB, KULeuven, and ULiège demanded an end to partnerships with Israeli institutions. These occupations were repeatedly disrupted by police interventions. In the case of ULB, police expelled students without a court order ²⁵⁰, a move later ruled unlawful, highlighting the erosion of procedural safeguards in the suppression of student activism.
 - vi. Beyond repression of demonstrations, Belgium has taken administrative and legal actions targeting Palestinian refugees and activists. On January 19, 2023, the Belgian state was taken to court for imposing impossible conditions on humanitarian visa applications for Palestinians from Gaza²⁵¹. In August 2023, the Immigration Office ordered several municipalities to revoke the Belgian nationality of children born in Belgium to Palestinian parents ²⁵². On October 20, 2023, the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) announced a freeze on certain protection decisions for Palestinians; a move criticized by sectoral actors who argued that Belgium should have “swiftly and broadly granted international protection to these Palestinians.”
 - vii. On December 4, 2024, Nicole de Moor, Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration (CD&V), requested the revocation of refugee status for Mohammed Khatib, the European coordinator of Samidoun, a network supporting Palestinian political prisoners. The justification, allegations of “incitement to hatred”, came amid mounting Israeli pressure to ban Samidoun across Europe ²⁵³.
 - viii. The stigmatisation and de-legitimation of pro-Palestinian viewpoints are evident not least within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel itself. There is significant evidence that journalists reporting on the crimes against humanity occurring in Palestine have been deliberately targeted. According to the UN, the number of Palestinian journalists killed by Israel since the start of the war stood at 248 by 4 September 2025.²⁵⁴ according to the Costs of War Project, this is the single deadliest conflict for journalists in all known conflicts in the history of the world.²⁵⁵
 - ix. Expressions of solidarity with Palestine Israel are also heavily repressed. On October 10, 2024, a screening of the film *Lyd* co-directed by the Palestinian Israeli citizen Rami Younis and American Sarah Ema Friedland was banned, on grounds of “public order”. This was the latest in the steady growth in censorship of pro-Palestine movies.²⁵⁶ Further censorship in Israel has taken the form of laws that allow teachers who “show sympathy for a terrorist organisation” to be stripped from their jobs as well as repeated attacks on the freedom to fly the Palestinian flag in public. ²⁵⁷ In November 2024, the Israeli government further sanctioned Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, banning government funding bodies from communicating with or placing advertisements in the newspaper.²⁵⁸ A civil

250 [Répression du mouvement étudiant pour la Palestine : 90 personnes convoquées pour être auditionnées, des moyens colossaux utilisés – Bruxelles Dévif](#)

251 [La Belgique citée en justice pour sa politique en matière de visas humanitaires pour les Palestiniens](#)

252 [Belgique : des communes retirent la nationalité belge d'enfants nés de parents palestiniens](#)

253 [Mouvement Palestine à Bruxelles : entre ingérence israéliennes, perquisitions anti-terroriste et agressions physiques](#)

254 [States must stop Israel before all journalists in Gaza are silenced: UN experts | OHCHR](#)

255 [War in Gaza the 'Worst Ever Conflict for Reporters'](#)

256 [Israël. La chasse aux « mauvais juifs » est ouverte](#)

257 [Israel security minister bans Palestinian flag-flying in public](#)

258 [Israel sanctions Haaretz due to articles that 'hurt' Israeli state](#)

society actor living in occupied Palestine interviewed for this report noted that “We weren’t able to protest at all since the war started. I couldn’t take part in any action against the war.”

- x. Limitations on Palestine solidarity protests and police violence against pro-Palestine protesters have been recorded across the globe and follow many of the same patterns. While the Arabic speaking world has historically been associated with solidarity and even allyship with Palestine, recent shifts in geo-political allegiances²⁵⁹ have left the populations of numerous nations at odds with their governments and vulnerable to brutal crackdowns on their expressions of pro-Palestine solidarity. There have been numerous reports in Saudi Arabia of worshipers at holy sites including Mecca and Medinah being harassed and detained for expressions of solidarity with Palestine including wearing a keffiyeh, using prayer beads in the colours of the Palestinian flag and even for praying for the children of Gaza.²⁶⁰ Egyptian authorities have cracked down on a range of expressions of solidarity with Palestine, leading to widespread arrests. According to FIDH member organisation The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), since the beginning of the war, Egyptian security forces have arrested 186 individuals across 16 Supreme State Security cases. All are accused of “terrorism” charges based on peaceful expressions of support for Palestinians in Gaza—whether through demonstrations, raising banners, or simply contributing to relief efforts.²⁶¹ In June 2025, during the Global March to Gaza, Egyptian authorities detained and questioned over 200 people who had arrived in Cairo to take part in the international action aimed at challenging Israel’s blockade of the territory. According to the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), a member organisation of FIDH, this response reflects a broader clampdown on expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people.²⁶² In Jordan, protesters have been stopped from protesting near the Israeli-Jordanian border or the Israeli embassy.²⁶³ In April 2024, Amnesty International reported that the Jordanian authorities had arrested at least 1,500 people since October 7 in connection with pro-Palestine protests. Police violence against protestors in Jordan included the use of tear gas, batons and beating protestors.²⁶⁴ Many protestors have been targeted using overly broad and repressive cyber-crime laws for social media posts in support of Palestine.²⁶⁵ Similarly in Morocco, peaceful demonstrations have been violently dispersed by police and symbols of solidarity with Palestine such as the flag have been removed from protestors.²⁶⁶ Although the approaches used to stifle pro-Palestinian viewpoints are similar around the globe, the reasons behind this repression are not the same everywhere. In the MENA region, the restrictions are part of a context of total closure of the public space and systemic repression of freedom of expression and protest. The authorities in these countries are motivated in their restrictions by the fear that protests in solidarity with Palestinians will be diverted to demand democracy and human rights within these same countries.

259 [Guerre Israël-Palestine : les régimes arabes ont trahi Gaza. Il est temps de changer de cap](#)

260 [Guerre Israël-Palestine : l’Arabie saoudite arrête des fidèles priant pour Gaza dans les lieux saints | Middle East Eye édition française](#)

261 [New arrests on charges of solidarity with Palestine: total number of detainees reach 150 since the outbreak of the genocidal war | Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights](#)

262 [Egypt: Actions Against Gaza March Reflect Broader Crackdown on Dissent](#)

263 [Palestine and the Limits of Permissible Protest in Jordan - MERIP](#)

264 [Jordanie. La répression des manifestations pro-Gaza doit cesser et les personnes inculpées parce qu’elles ont exercé leurs droits aux libertés de réunion et d’expression doivent être libérées - Amnesty International](#)

265 <https://www.chroniquepalestine.com/depuis-attaque-7-octobre-pouvoir-jordanie-a-emprisonne-milliers-protestataires/>

266 [Maroc: une association dénonce la répression par le Makhzen d’un sit-in de solidarité avec la Palestine](#)

4.4 Legal Analysis of Human Rights Violations

- i. The global trends in the suppression of solidarity with Palestinians and protests against Israel's atrocities in Gaza and the West Bank show a deeply concerning movement towards unabashed disregard for human rights in service of the legitimisation of Israel's settler colonial project and the complicity of Israel's allies across the world in supporting and furthering that project²⁶⁷. In addition to the gravity of the crime of genocide and the devastation the world has witnessed in Gaza and the West Bank, the fragility of fundamental human rights including freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of association and peaceful assembly has been laid bare in States that have previously claimed leadership within the international human rights system. Israel's ongoing atrocities and the complicity of its allies therefore presents a profound test of those institutions tasked with upholding international law that is likely to have far reaching consequences

Analysis of Violations to the Rights of Freedom of Opinion and Expression

- i. The rights of freedom of opinion and expression are integral to the healthy development of individuals and societies and essential for the promotion and protection of human rights more generally. Attacks on these rights are therefore troubling both on their own merits and due to the consequences that an erosion of these rights will have on the strength of the human rights system more generally.
- ii. As Irene Khan, the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion and Expression clearly laid out in her report on Global threats to freedom of expression arising from the conflict in Gaza, erosion of the rights of freedom of expression and opinion is evident in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and beyond. Israel's targeted attacks on journalists are a particularly "egregious form of censorship"²⁶⁸ that deliberately silences Palestinians who work tirelessly to document and share their stories and the crimes that have been perpetrated against them. Under international law, journalists as well as media facilities and equipment should rightfully be protected from military attack as they are civilians and civilian objects. Journalists and media facilities may only be attacked if they directly participate in hostilities. Claims of this nature put forward against journalists must be carefully investigated and substantiated. Israel has repeatedly accused journalists of being part of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives.²⁶⁹ However, these claims have not been adequately substantiated. International humanitarian law protects all civilians and civilian objects from both offensive and defensive attacks.²⁷⁰ In cases where there is doubt on whether an object is being used to make an effective contribution to military action, there is a legal presumption that the object is not so used.²⁷¹ Both Israel's targeting of journalists and media facilities and its failure to investigate, prosecute and punish serious crimes against journalists and media facilities therefore present violations of the fundamental rights to freedom of opinion and expression.
- iii. Media censorship has also proliferated within the four countries explored in detail in this report. Journalists and other media and cultural workers in the UK, US, France and Germany have documented widespread attempts to restrict the expression of individuals and limit the viewpoints expressed within the media landscape more generally. In addition to the obligation to uphold freedoms of opinion and expression themselves,

267 Francesca Albanese, Situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, 1 October 2024

268 Irene Khan, p6

269 'Legitimization Cell': Israeli unit tasked with linking Gaza journalists to Hamas

270 Protocol 1 Geneva Conventions, Arts. 48 and 52

271 Protocol 1 Geneva Conventions, Art.

States also have an obligation to ensure that persons are protected from acts of private entities that would impair the enjoyment of these freedoms. Media censorship can take the form of direct censorship by governments or other external entities and censorship by media companies.²⁷² Reports of systematic bias in reporting, restrictions on the kinds of language used to describe Israel's atrocities,²⁷³ increased oversight and editing aimed at the suppression of pro-Palestinian opinions²⁷⁴ all point to restrictions on the press' freedom of expression.

- iv. Other indirect forms of censorship can be just as harmful to the enjoyments of the freedoms of opinion and expression as direct forms of censorship. The harassment and sanctions faced by those journalists who express solidarity with Palestinians and condemn Israel's actions in Gaza and the West Bank creates a hostile environment that promotes self-censorship and restricts freedom of expression. States are required to "put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression."²⁷⁵ In the cases we have documented in this report, the States concerned have not only failed to put protective measures in place but have often spearheaded attacks against journalists through the criminal justice system. While restrictions on the freedom of expression may be permissible in limited circumstances, these restrictions must be necessary and proportional to any legitimate aims. Justifications of public order and national security cannot be used to put the right to freedom of expression itself in jeopardy.
- v. Social media has been a further site of censorship that has not been adequately addressed by many States. Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, two of the largest social media sites globally, has been found to have censored Palestinian content and groups.²⁷⁶ An investigative report by The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media found evidence of discriminatory practices that impede freedom of expression online.²⁷⁷ A further report by the BBC showed that Meta's actions have led to a sharp decline in audience engagement for newsrooms based in occupied Gaza and the West Bank.²⁷⁸ Palestinian journalists and social media users have reported "shadow bans" on their content, a means by which social media companies restrict the visibility of certain pages and posts online and thereby reduce the number of people who might have access to that information. Freedom of access to media is part of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. State parties are required to take all necessary steps to foster the independence of online media and ensure that individuals have access thereto.²⁷⁹
- vi. The right to freedom of opinion and expression includes political discourse. The right to political participation requires free communication of information and ideas about political issues between citizens, candidates and elected representatives.²⁸⁰ Undue restrictions on the right to freedom of opinion and expression on representatives therefore has knock-on effects on the health of a society's democracy overall. In the violations documented in this report, we can see a clear trend of restricting the speech of elected representatives when that speech is supportive of the Palestinian struggle.

272 Nadia R. Sirhan (auth.) - Reporting Palestine-Israel in British Newspapers_ An Analysis of British Newspapers (2021, Palgrave Macmillan) p125-127

273 [Leaked NYT Gaza Memo Tells Journalists to Avoid Words "Genocide," "Ethnic Cleansing," and "Occupied Territory"](#)

274 [BBC staffers reveal editor's 'entire job' to whitewash Israeli war crimes](#)

275 CCPR/C/GC/34, paragraph 23

276 [Meta: Systemic Censorship of Palestine Content](#)

277 [New 7amleh Report: Meta's Role in Amplifying Harmful Content Against Palestinians During Genocide in Gaza](#)

278 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/meta-censorship-devastating-palestinian-news-sources>

279 General Comment Right to Freedom of Expression paragraph 15

280 General Comment Right to Freedom of Expression paragraph 20

Representatives at various levels of government in the UK, US, and France as well as elsewhere have been censored and punished for their speech and even symbolic actions in solidarity with Palestine.

- vii. Academic freedoms are also grounded in the right to freedom of opinion and expression, among other rights. Members of the academic community must be free to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, individually or collectively.²⁸¹ This freedom is fundamental to the workings of a healthy, democratic society and human development. Despite the importance of these rights to society at large, academics and academic institutions often face pressure to curtail free expression. This is particularly true of expressions of solidarity with Palestine and critiques of Israel's settler-colonial violence, both of which have long been subject to censorship and repression within university spaces in the Western world. A 2015 report by Palestine Legal, The Bertha Foundation and the Centre for Constitutional Rights describes universities as "ground zero in the clash between advocates for Palestinian human rights and the counter-campaign to silence criticism of Israel".²⁸² This reality has long given rise to human rights concerns about restrictions and censorship faced by scholars and students who seek to voice these opinions and the harassment and sanctions many scholars and students face when doing so. These concerns have heightened since the escalation of Israel's genocidal violence in Gaza in October 2023, as greater numbers of the academic community – particularly students - have been pushed to speak out to demand an end to the atrocities. Many Palestinian and Jewish members of the academic community have been among those subject to censure by academic institutions in all four countries covered in this report. There is considerable evidence that many academic institutions have failed to uphold their autonomy and respect the principle of non-discrimination within the academic community. Scholars have been subject to investigation, suspension and numerous other forms of harassment due to their speech in support of Palestine. Academic journals have refused to publish work in support of Palestine, particularly by Palestinian scholars. The hostile environment created by these practices also leads to self-censorship. These measures have a deleterious effect on the ability of the academic community to develop knowledge and transmit ideas freely.
- viii. Assaults on the right to freedom of expression in the media, online, in political discourse and in academic communities have often been justified by States and institutions by pointing to the fight against antisemitism. There are clear standards put forward within international law for combatting speech that advocates national, religious or racial hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.²⁸³ These standards apply to antisemitic speech that constitutes incitement and must be upheld to address all kinds of national, religious or racial hatred. As Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of expression notes "It is vital that the fight against antisemitism be framed according to international human rights standards, so that there is a shared understanding of the problem and its root causes and, consequently, more effective responses to eradicate it."²⁸⁴
- ix. Unfortunately, the clarity of these aims has become muddled through the conflation of antisemitism with criticism of the State of Israel and its policies and actions. In many cases, this has meant that even Jewish critics of Israel have been accused of antisemitism in efforts to suppress their speech.²⁸⁵ This lack of clarity stands in the way

281 A/75/261

282 [The Palestine Exception](#)

283 ICCPR 20(2) see also A/79/319

284 A/79/319

285 [Award ceremony suspended after writer compares Gaza to Nazi-era Jewish ghettos | Germany | The Guardian](#)

of efforts to combat antisemitism while also leading to a multiplicity of human rights violations, including violations of the right to freedom of expression. Political speech about Israel should not be conflated with hate speech. The US, UK, Germany and France have each pushed for the use of the “working definition” of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance against the pushback and concerns put forward by civil society and human rights activists. The IHRA definition contravenes international human rights standards on freedom of expression and on discriminatory speech more generally. The definition limits criticism of Israel’s actions and has been instrumentalised and highly politicised by its proponents.²⁸⁶ The previous Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance noted that the “politically motivated instrumentalization of the fight against antisemitism ... is increasingly linked to the adoption, promotion and implementation by States of the [IHRA] working definition of antisemitism”²⁸⁷. She noted its “highly controversial and divisive” use and cautions against reliance on the definition.²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the US, UK, Germany and France have each pushed for the use of the “working definition” of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance against the pushback and concerns put forward by civil society and human rights activists.²⁸⁹ The definition has been adopted formally by government bodies in the UK, Germany and France. In the UK, the Secretary of State for Education additionally threatened to withhold funding from universities that refused to adopt the definition, which resulted in 75% of universities adopting it. These measures and similar measures in other States present a threat to freedom of opinion and expression not only due to the use of the IHRA definition itself but also through the coercive pressure exerted on educational and cultural institutions.

- x. Similarly, many assaults on the right to freedom of expression have rested on the need to counter support for terrorism. The four states considered closely in this report all designate Hamas a terrorist organisation under their domestic anti-terrorism laws, contrary to the United Nations. This has created room for broad attacks on pro-Palestinian activists and other supporters by conflating support for Palestinian liberation with support for terrorism. Counter-terrorism legislation falls within the remit of domestic legitimate objectives of national security. However, as the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism has explained, the misuse of counter-terrorism measures has worsened considerably over the past two decades.²⁹⁰ This not only affects the rights of suspected terrorists but also jeopardises the freedoms of all rights bearers. The Security Council has failed to recognise the gravity of this issue. Meanwhile, “[d]ouble standards and selectivity by major powers in the enforcement of human rights generally is also eroding the credibility and legitimacy of and public confidence in the international human rights system.”²⁹¹ In many cases, the States that have claimed leadership in the human rights space, including those States that are the focus of this report, have perpetrated significant human rights violations in the name of counter-terrorism. The use of counter-terrorism measures to silence legitimate criticism of Israel or support for Palestinians and their struggle for liberation has created a host of new rights violations against individuals, communities and organisations. Numerous States, including but not limited to the UK, US, France and Germany have arrested and investigated individuals who publicly support Palestine using counter-terrorism legislation. This has included journalists, activists

286 Linda Tatour p5

287 A/77/512 par.71

288 A/77/512 par.72

289 [Open letter to European Commission in anticipation of strategy on combating antisemitism](#)

290 A/HRC/55/48

291 Ibid,

and politicians. In many cases the legislation used is concerningly vague and terms used poorly defined, meaning that this legislation fails to uphold the principle of legality. This harassment has a deleterious effect on freedom of expression within society at large as well as on individual rights.

- xi. Counter-terrorism measures alongside charges of antisemitism have often been weaponized against marginalised communities, particularly Palestinian and Muslim communities although also affecting many other marginalised groups. This not only raises concerns about freedom of expression within these groups but also creates violations against the right of non-discrimination. The stigmatisation of Muslim and other racialized communities as well migrant communities in the Western world as antisemitic and terrorist supporting is cause for significant concern. This is especially true given the already high levels of discrimination and violence faced by these groups in the four countries we examine here. Human rights observers have raised the alarm about a surge of Islamophobia around the world in recent decades.²⁹² This has led to many instances of horrific violence against groups and individuals in the UK, US, France and Germany, particularly those from Muslim, migrant and racialised backgrounds. The General Assembly has emphasised that “States have an obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against persons belonging to religious minorities, regardless of the perpetrator”.²⁹³ In this context, accusations of antisemitism and support for terrorism by State actors against entire communities constitutes a failure to uphold the obligation to prevent violence against marginalised groups. Additionally, the overrepresentation of Muslim, Arab and individuals from other marginalised groups among those harassed and arrested for solidarity with Palestine is cause for significant concern.

Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

- i. The right to peaceful assembly and association is closely linked to the rights to freedom of opinion and expression. Peaceful assemblies allow individuals, communities and other organisations to express themselves collectively and to participate in shaping the societies in which they live. These rights are vital to the full expression of individual political participation and also for the development of individuals and societies more generally. A peaceful assembly is any assembly that does not have violence as its primary aim, even if the assembly causes significant disruption. Human rights observers have found that the vast majority of assemblies in support of Palestine in four countries of focus in this report have been peaceful.²⁹⁴ Despite this, many countries including the UK, US, France and Germany have responded to pro-Palestine solidarity assemblies with repressive measures. States have an obligation to respect and ensure peaceful assemblies. This means that States must not interfere with peaceful assemblies outside of those restrictions legitimated by international law.
- ii. States around the world have failed to meet their obligations to ensure and respect peaceful assemblies that are aimed at expressing views supportive of Palestine and the Palestinian struggle for liberation. In many cases, repressive measures have been promulgated with reference to fighting antisemitism, counter-terrorism, public order and national security. As above, any measures used to fight antisemitism must adhere to international legal guidelines that protect the rights of all those involved. Prevention of the expression of political viewpoints that are offensive to some is not a legitimate aim in repressing or policing peaceful assemblies, and should suppression of these viewpoints

292 E/CN.4/2006/17

293 A/RES/64/164

294 A/79/319; Gina Romero Recommendations for universities worldwide for the second semester of 2024

cannot be justified by accusations of antisemitism that do meet international standards for discriminatory speech. Instead, assemblies with a political message should enjoy a heightened level of accommodation and protection.²⁹⁵ Counter terrorism measures should not be overbroad or applied in a discriminatory manner.

- iii. Public order and national security are among the few legitimate aims that States may pursue when restricting the right to peaceful assembly. However, in order to invoke public safety as a ground for restrictions on peaceful assembly, it must first be established that the assembly would constitute a significant risk to the safety of persons or of serious damage to property.²⁹⁶ When making this determination, there must be a presumption in favour of considering assemblies to be peaceful.²⁹⁷ Any restrictions must pertain to legitimate ends necessary in a democratic society, and they must conform to the requirements of necessity, legality and proportionality.²⁹⁸ Restrictions must be content neutral, and the prohibition of entire assemblies is permissible only as a last resort.²⁹⁹
- iv. Within this framework, the measures used against protests in solidarity with Palestine are highly concerning. Blanket bans on pro-Palestine protests such as those put forward in France and Germany do not meet the requirements of necessity or proportionality. Without considerable evidence that violence has been planned at these protests, the justification of maintaining public order also fails. Blanket bans made at the local level are subject to the same scrutiny as those made at the national level. States have a responsibility to ensure that local administrators are trained in human rights frameworks and receive adequate resources to make decisions based on these frameworks.
- v. Assemblies often exist in order to express political viewpoints, using either speech or symbols. Here the right to peaceful assemblies is once again closely linked to freedom of expression. Speech and symbols that express solidarity with Palestine or criticism of Israel are therefore valued and protected under international human rights law. Attempts to criminalise this speech at peaceful assemblies or elsewhere present clear violations of the right to freedom of expression. Banning phrases such as “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” neither meets the requirement of necessity nor proportionality. Further, vague statements such as Suella Braverman’s letter suggesting police might consider the chant “an expression of a violent desire” also fails to meet the requirement of legality. Any restrictions must be passed by law and protestors must be given clear and adequate notice about changes to restrictions on speech. The same is true for restrictions on symbols such as the Palestinian flag, watermelons or the keffiyeh. Reports of protestors being arrested or harassed by police for displaying these symbols of solidarity are clear examples of rights violations that must end.
- vi. The nature of the policing of Palestine solidarity protests in the streets and on campuses is further cause for concern. Reports of police escalating the violence at protests by harassing protestors, using teargas, batons and unnecessary force are contrary to the standards put forward by relevant human rights frameworks. As one civil society member interviewed for this report noted *“The authorities hit the demonstrators through the police and make sure to implement fear among the people so people would stay silent. The authorities should commit to their alleged democracy.”*
- vii. Law enforcement officials are obligated to extinguish all non-violent means before resorting to physical force and must give prior warning when threatening to use physical

²⁹⁵ CCPR/C/GC/37, 32

²⁹⁶ CCPR/C/GC/37, 43

²⁹⁷ CCPR/C/GC/37, 17

²⁹⁸ CCPR/C/GC/37

²⁹⁹ CCPR/C/GC/37

force. The use of arbitrary detention to harass protestors also fails to meet States' obligations to respect peaceful assemblies. The military should not be used to police assemblies. Reports of military technologies and tactics used by police forces against protestors, particularly in the United States, are cause for concern and efforts must be made to demilitarise the policing of peaceful assemblies.

- viii. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly and association has called special attention to the importance of safeguarding these rights as they pertain to campus protests. All four of the countries of focus in this report have seen powerful campus protests erupt in response to Israel's genocidal violence in Gaza and the West Bank, calling for an end to the genocide and divestment of their universities from Israel. Most of these protests have been led by students. Attempts to suppress these movements using a variety of tactics including but not limited to suspension and disciplinary procedures, arrest and even police violence present clear violations of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, and peaceful assembly. These movements, which represent the important contributions of the academic space to social and political discourses, must be protected by States in line with their human rights obligations.
- ix. Civil society organisations are also a vital part of the fabric of a democratic society and are protected under the right to freedom of association. States have an obligation to enable an environment that allows civil society organisations to conduct their operations effectively. In a number of States, notably Germany, organisations in the public sphere have been subject to surveillance, harassment, defunded, and even banned from operating entirely. Supporting the opportunity to access funds is a necessary part of ensuring an environment that enables civil society to operate effectively.³⁰⁰ Human rights framework recognise the right of associations to seek, receive and use financial resources. Any impediments on this right must therefore meet the requirements of necessity, legality and proportionality subject to a legitimate State aim. In some cases, States have justified impediments on funding by reference to the aim of countering the financing of terrorism. The civil society and charity organisation Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network has been targeted on these grounds by Germany and the United States, among other States. The United States has further listed Samidoun as a terror organisation. Restriction on legitimate civil society activity under broad designations of terrorist activity constitutes a violation of the right to freedom of association. The Special Rapporteur on the freedom of peaceful assembly and association has repeatedly raised concerns about the overregulation of the civil society sector on grounds of countering terrorism. Designating an organisation as "terrorist" can be used to maliciously target legitimate civil society organisations, as has been the case with Israel's designation of multiple Palestinian civil society and human rights organisations as terrorist organisations.³⁰¹ In September 2025, the United States imposed sanctions on three prominent Palestinian human rights organisations – Al-Haq, Al Mezan, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR)– all members of FIDH. By freezing their assets and criminalising transactions with them, these measures have effectively isolated the organisations, hampered their ability to collaborate with partners, and stigmatised their legitimate efforts to document serious violations, including before the International Criminal Court (ICC).³⁰²

300 A/HRC/50/23

301 FIDH, OMCT and CIHRS stand in solidarity with attacked Palestinian human rights groups

302 FIDH denounces heinous U.S. sanctions against leading Palestinian human rights organisations

- x. Finally, the stigmatisation of peaceful assemblies and associations also presents a violation of the right to peaceful assembly and association.³⁰³ This includes but is not limited to the designation of civil society organisations as terrorist organisations. Numerous governments, including in all four of the UK, US, France and Germany have contributed to negative narratives about pro-Palestine movements. References to peaceful assemblies as “hate marches”, accusations of antisemitism and unfounded claims of support for terrorism all work to create an increasingly dangerous environment for pro-Palestine solidarity movements. Stigmatising narratives are particularly harmful when they are directed at already marginalised groups. Claims that pro-Palestine solidarity movements are friendly to antisemitism or terrorism are often intertwined with similar claims aimed at already marginalised communities such as Muslims, Arabs and racialised migrants. These narratives fuel Islamophobic and racist sentiments in States that are already experiencing increasing levels of racist and anti-migrant violence.

303 A/79/263

Conclusion

At the time of finalizing this report, remarkable waves of citizen-led solidarity continue to emerge across the world in support of the Palestinian people. Emblematic initiatives, such as the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, the Global March to Gaza, the March to Brussels, and the Soumoud land caravan from Tunisia and the Global Sumud Flotilla have taken shape in direct response to the persistent failure of states and governments to lift the unlawful blockade and end the isolation of Gaza.

These mobilizations reflect a universal demand for justice, freedom, and human dignity. They are also powerful indicators of a growing global awareness of ongoing genocide and systematic violations of international law, and of the critical need for citizen action where governments remain complicit or inert.

Yet, as this report demonstrates, such expressions of solidarity are being met with widespread repression, not only under authoritarian regimes, but also in liberal democracies that have long claimed to uphold human rights.

Through an analysis of legal frameworks and practices in France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany, this report reveals the dangerous instrumentalization of counter-terrorism legislation and anti-Semitism discourse to suppress freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. It exposes the growing criminalization of dissent: journalists, human rights defenders, activists, students, artists, and even elected officials who speak out against Israel's violations in Gaza and the West Bank face censorship, surveillance, legal intimidation, or public delegitimization.

This report assesses these violations in light of international human rights standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and other binding obligations. It finds that these restrictions are neither necessary nor proportionate and often rest on vague and overbroad interpretations of national security or public order.

Ultimately, the crackdown on solidarity with Palestinians reveals a profound crisis: not only of human rights in the occupied territories, but of freedom itself, in societies that claim to be democratic. The legitimacy of the international human rights framework is at stake. Whether these states choose to uphold their principles or betray them in favor of political expediency will have far-reaching consequences, not only for Palestinians, but for the future of rights and freedoms worldwide.

Recommendations

General Recommendations

Compliance with International Obligations

- Fully comply with Articles 19, 21, and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as well as Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), by repealing or amending any legislation that disproportionately restricts freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.
- Establish strengthened, systematic, and expedited judicial review of any restriction on freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, to strictly ensure compliance with the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality³⁰⁴. This review should include:
 - A detailed justification requirement for any restriction by the competent authority, specifying the legal basis, the legitimate objective pursued, and a demonstration of necessity and proportionality.
 - Effective and rapid access to an independent judge through emergency procedures (urgent interim relief, provisional injunction) allowing for a decision within a very short timeframe.
 - Thorough substantive review by the judge, covering not only formal legality but also the concrete proportionality of the measure, with the possibility of annulment and remedies (compensation, reinstatement, lifting of the ban, etc.).
 - Publication and transparency of judicial and administrative decisions to promote the development of clear and consistent case law.
 - Creation or strengthening of independent oversight bodies (ombudsman, monitoring commissions) mandated to track restrictions on fundamental rights, with the power to refer cases to the courts.

Non-Discrimination and Equal Treatment

- Prevent and sanction any discrimination based on political opinion, national origin, or religious affiliation, in line with Article 26 of the ICCPR and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
- Develop and implement national action plans to combat Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism, including mandatory training for public authorities, systematic collection and publication of disaggregated data on restrictions and sanctions, as well as independent, accessible, and binding complaint mechanisms.
- Ensure that equal treatment is effectively upheld in the exercise of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, by ensuring that no group is disproportionately targeted by bans, disciplinary sanctions, police or judicial measures on the basis of their political opinions or real or perceived membership in certain communities.

³⁰⁴ Although judicial review mechanisms already exist in most of the countries concerned (*référé-liberté* and administrative courts in France, judicial review in the United Kingdom, administrative appeals in Germany, constitutional review and federal remedies in the United States), they often prove insufficient. Proceedings are frequently too slow in the face of urgent infringements (for instance, bans on demonstrations decided the day before), too costly or inaccessible for those affected, or limited to a merely formal review of legality without a thorough examination of necessity and proportionality. It is therefore essential to strengthen these mechanisms so that they ensure a systematic, swift, accessible, and substantive review of restrictions on fundamental freedoms, by reversing the burden of proof and requiring the authorities to demonstrate the strictly necessary nature of any restrictive measure.

Strict Limitation of Anti-Terrorism Laws

- Reform counterterrorism legislation to explicitly exclude any application to protected forms of political expression, making clear in law that criticism of a state, participation in peaceful demonstrations, or expression of political slogans cannot, in themselves, be equated with a terrorist offense.
- Create independent and pluralistic oversight bodies (parliamentary, judicial, and civil society) tasked with regularly reviewing measures adopted in the name of national security, with a mandate to suspend or annul those that unduly infringe on fundamental rights.
- Impose a transparency requirement: regular publication of reports detailing measures taken under the guise of “counterterrorism,” including disaggregated statistics on affected groups or communities, to identify and correct discriminatory practices.
- Guarantee rapid and effective remedies for any individual or organization sanctioned under counterterrorism legislation, with full reparation in cases of abuse.

Academic and University Freedom

- Protect academic freedom in accordance with Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation, ensuring that educational institutions remain spaces for pluralistic debate.
- Establish independent complaint and remedy mechanisms for students and faculty members abusively sanctioned for their political opinions, including annulment of sanctions, reinstatement, and, where appropriate, compensation.
- Guarantee rapid and effective remedies (independent mediation, emergency procedures) in cases of infringements on academic freedom.

Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, and Artists

- Ensure effective protection of human rights defenders, journalists, and artists, in line with the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
- Establish specific mechanisms for prevention and protection against harassment, censorship, and abusive prosecutions targeting these actors.

Definitions of Antisemitism and Freedom of Expression

- States, regional institutions (EU, Council of Europe), and international organizations referring to the IHRA working definition of antisemitism should:
- Limit the use of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism to awareness-raising and training functions, and exclude its incorporation into binding laws, regulations, or disciplinary procedures.
- Interpret any reference to IHRA in light of international obligations, particularly Article 19 of the ICCPR and Article 10 of the ECHR, which only allow restrictions on freedom of expression in cases of direct incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence (Art. 20 §2 ICCPR).
- Retain from IHRA only the elements relating to actual manifestations of antisemitism targeting Jewish people as such, and explicitly discard examples that equate criticism of the State of Israel with antisemitism.
- Affirm the principle already contained in the IHRA text itself, namely that “criticism of Israel, similar to that leveled against any other country, cannot be regarded as antisemitic.” This caveat should be recalled in all official references and prevail over the examples, in order to prevent misuse of the definition against legitimate political expression.

Specific Recommendations

United Kingdom

- *Freedom to protest:*
 - Repeal Section 11 of the Public Order Act 2023 authorizing suspicionless searches during demonstrations, and review the use of “public nuisance” orders to ensure strict compliance with necessity and proportionality principles.
- *Counterterrorism and national security:*
 - Revise Section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to explicitly exclude protected political opinions and solidarity slogans from its scope.
 - Reform the PREVENT program to ensure it does not discriminatorily target students and Muslim communities.
- *Independent oversight:*
 - Establish an independent body to oversee policing practices during demonstrations, modeled on the Police Ombudsman in Northern Ireland, with investigative and sanctioning powers.

United States

- *Freedom of expression and political mobilization:*
 - Repeal federal and state laws requiring non-boycott (BDS) certifications, contrary to the First Amendment and Article 19 of the ICCPR.
- *Security and counterterrorism repression:*
 - Repeal the provisions of the January 29, 2025 Executive Order providing for surveillance and expulsion of foreign students for participating in political demonstrations.
 - Strictly limit the application of the FACE Act (18 U.S.C. § 248) to its original purpose of protecting clinics, and prevent its abusive use against Palestine solidarity organizations.
- *Academic freedom:*
 - Establish an independent university ombudsman tasked with protecting academic freedom, swiftly addressing complaints related to repression of political expression on campuses, and guaranteeing effective remedies against abusive sanctions.

France

- *Freedom of expression and assembly:*
 - Reform Article 421-2-5 of the Penal Code (apology for terrorism) to align it strictly with the necessity and proportionality principles developed by the ECHR.
 - Review the October 10, 2023 circular of the Minister of Justice to ensure that the “firm criminal response” applies only to cases of direct incitement to violence or strict advocacy of terrorism, not to protected political expression.
 - Limit the use of Article L212-1 of the Internal Security Code to cases of absolute necessity, and ensure that no association is dissolved on the basis of legitimate political opinions.
- *Independent oversight:*
 - Create a national monitoring mechanism for protest bans, requiring prefects to provide detailed and proportionate justifications for any ban, and guaranteeing rapid recourse before a judge.

Germany

- *Freedom of expression and assembly:*
 - Revoke the Bundestag resolution of May 17, 2019 equating BDS with antisemitism, contrary to Article 5 of the Basic Law and Article 10 of the ECHR.
 - Review the Federal Ministry of Justice’s decision (May 2024) equating the slogan “From the river to the sea” with terrorist incitement, to ensure that only expressions constituting direct incitement to violence are sanctioned.
- *Non-discrimination and equal treatment:*
 - Repeal the 2023 administrative ban by the Berlin government prohibiting the wearing of the keffiyeh and displaying the Palestinian flag in schools, a discriminatory measure contrary to Article 3 of the Basic Law, and ensure that no other Land adopts similar measures.
- *Independent oversight:*
 - Establish a federal mediation body for the freedom to protest, tasked with swiftly reviewing appeals against bans on pro-Palestinian demonstrations and vested with binding recommendation powers.

Other Recommendations

To Regional and International Institutions

- *European Union:*
 - Integrate the issue of repression of solidarity mobilizations with Palestine into the Commission’s annual Rule of Law report.
 - Condition funding of security cooperation programs on strict compliance with fundamental rights (Article 2 TEU).
- *Council of Europe:*
 - The Council of Europe, following the Venice Commission’s guidelines on freedom of peaceful assembly, should develop interpretive standards on the use of antisemitism definitions and their compatibility with Article 10 of the ECHR.
 - Similarly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe should, following its thematic resolutions on freedom of expression and non-discrimination, adopt a resolution clarifying that the use of antisemitism definitions, including IHRA, cannot result in restricting legitimate criticism of a state’s policies.
- *United Nations:*
 - The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should, following the 2012 Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of incitement to hatred, develop guidelines clarifying the compatibility of instruments and policies against antisemitism—including the IHRA working definition—with protection of freedom of expression under Article 19 of the ICCPR.

To Universities and Academic Institutions

- Adopt internal charters protecting academic freedom, with explicit commitments against discrimination toward students and faculty expressing solidarity with Palestine.

- Establish mediation mechanisms to resolve disputes between students, faculty, and administration without disproportionate disciplinary sanctions.
- Develop training programs on academic freedom and the distinction between political criticism, antisemitism, and Islamophobia.

To Media and Digital Platforms

- Adopt transparent editorial guidelines ensuring that coverage of Palestine is not censored under political or economic pressure.
- Platforms (Meta, X/Twitter, TikTok, YouTube) should publish detailed transparency reports on content removal related to Palestine, with disaggregated statistics.
- Create an independent external appeal mechanism allowing users to challenge the removal of Palestine-related content.

To Trade Unions, NGOs, and Civil Society

- Strengthen strategic litigation before national and international courts (ECHR, CJEU, UN Committees).
- Establish national observatories on repression of solidarity with Palestine, collecting and publishing regular data.
- Develop awareness campaigns to clarify the distinction between criticism of Israeli policies and antisemitism, in cooperation with Jewish, Palestinian, and human rights organizations.

To Donors and Philanthropic Institutions

- Condition any financial support to educational, media, or cultural organizations on effective respect for freedom of expression.
- Support the creation of solidarity funds for individuals prosecuted or dismissed because of their pro-Palestinian expression.

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Fondée en 1898



October 2025 | N°846a

Solidarity as a Crime: Voices for Palestine Under Fire

A Report on the violations of the rights
to freedom of assembly, association and
expression in the context of the repression
of the palestinian solidarity movement

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Dépôt légal juillet 2025 - FIDH (English ed.) = ISSN 2225-
1804 - Fichier informatique conforme à la loi du 6 janvier
1978 (Déclaration N°330 675)

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