# Former Israeli PM Olmert brands Gaza military campaign 'very close to a war crime'



A former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, has raised significant concerns regarding Israel's military operations in Gaza, stating that the actions currently being undertaken are "very close to a war crime." In an interview with the BBC, Olmert expressed that the visible consequences of the campaign disproportionately affect the Palestinian population, describing the high casualty rates as both "obnoxious and outrageous." His remarks were made alongside similar criticisms from the leader of Israel's centre-left Democrats party, who characterised the nation as a “pariah” for its treatment of civilians, particularly highlighting the ongoing ramifications of the crisis on innocent lives.

Recent developments have intensified scrutiny on Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip, which the United Nations and humanitarian organisations like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have condemned. These organisations have pointed out that such blockades not only obstruct essential food supplies but also deny basic humanitarian assistance to a vulnerable population already suffering from the dire impacts of ongoing conflict. MSF described the limited aid that was allowed into Gaza as inadequate and a misleading attempt to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, labelling it a “smokescreen” for the continued siege.

Responses from the international community have been swift. The UK government has suspended discussions regarding a new free trade agreement with Israel, while the European Union, as Israel's largest trading partner, has announced a review of existing agreements with the nation. Such diplomatic actions reflect growing unease among global powers with regard to Israel's military tactics and their humanitarian implications.

While Olmert has unequivocally condemned the current government's strategy, he has previously voiced concerns over similar issues from his time in office, notably relating to the Second Lebanon War and the 2009 Gaza offensive. His past statements have often grappled with the ethical ramifications of military operations and the necessity for a two-state solution, highlighting the urgency of renewed peace negotiations. Indeed, he stressed during an interview with Vatican Media the need for a credible political process that acknowledges both Israeli and Palestinian aspirations for self-determination and security.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza has drawn comparisons to previous crises, with MSF illuminating the critical shortages of medical care and resources necessitated by the ongoing blockade. Their operations focus on providing surgical care, maternal and child health services, and addressing severe water and sanitation issues, all which have been exacerbated by the restrictions on supplies.

Moreover, a controversial US-backed aid initiative is poised to complicate the humanitarian landscape further. The plan, spearheaded by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, proposes to replace traditional UN roles in aid distribution with large, centralised distribution hubs, guarded by Israeli forces. Critics within the international community have voiced concerns that this approach could not only politicise the delivery of aid but also inadvertently displace or endanger vulnerable populations, as access to these hubs may require long and perilous travel for many Gazans.

As the situation continues to unfold, the actions taken by Israel and the responses from the international community suggest an urgent need for a reassessment of strategies aimed at addressing both immediate humanitarian concerns and the long-standing political impasse in the region. The call for a two-state solution and the need for humanitarian assistance parallel the ongoing discussions regarding the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations, underlining the complexity and urgency of the issues at hand.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraphs 1, 2, 5
3. Paragraph 2
4. Paragraph 2
5. Paragraphs 1, 4
6. Paragraph 4
7. Paragraph 3, 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/21/first-thing-israel-very-close-to-committing-war-crimes-says-countrys-former-pm> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/21/first-thing-israel-very-close-to-committing-war-crimes-says-countrys-former-pm> - Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stated that Israel's actions in Gaza are 'very close to a war crime.' He criticized the high number of Palestinian casualties and described the situation as 'obnoxious and outrageous.' Olmert's remarks followed similar criticisms from Israel's center-left Democrats party leader, who labeled the country a 'pariah nation' for its actions. The United Nations has also condemned Israel for blocking food supplies to Palestinians, while Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) described the allowed aid as insufficient and a 'smokescreen' to pretend the siege is over. In response to Israel's actions, the UK suspended talks over a new free trade deal, and the EU announced a review of its agreement with Israel. Additionally, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert criticized the current government's approach to the Palestinian conflict, emphasizing the need for a two-state solution.
3. <https://www.msf.org/israeli-authorities-must-stop-use-aid-tool-war-gaza> - Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) condemned the Israeli-imposed siege on the Gaza Strip, which deprives Palestinians of basic services and critical supplies, including access to water due to electricity cuts. MSF criticized the use of humanitarian aid as a bargaining chip in ceasefire negotiations and called for an immediate end to the blockade, urging Israel's allies, including the United States, to refrain from normalizing such actions.
4. <https://www.msf.org/msf-operations-gaza> - Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has been providing medical and humanitarian assistance in Gaza, including surgical care, wound and burn treatment, maternal and pediatric care, physiotherapy, vaccination, and mental health support. MSF has also been distributing clean water and addressing water and sanitation issues exacerbated by the conflict. However, the blockade imposed by Israeli authorities has severely limited the delivery of essential supplies, leading to a worsening humanitarian crisis.
5. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2025-04/interview-ehud-olmert-israel-palestine-peace-gaza.html> - In an interview with Vatican Media, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert discussed Israel's internal crisis and criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government for the country's polarization. Olmert emphasized the need for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and expressed concern over the current government's approach to peace negotiations.
6. <https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Olmert-brushes-aside-accusations-of-war-crimes-in-Gaza-Lebanon-conflicts-419827> - Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert dismissed concerns over potential war crimes charges related to Israel's actions during the Second Lebanon War and the 2009 Gaza offensive. Despite accusations from human rights organizations, Olmert stated he was not worried about possible charges and criticized Prime Minister Netanyahu's approach to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, describing him as a 'genuine, serious, and trustworthy partner for peace negotiations.'
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/ae191ff4-916c-4cc3-8a93-631754bcba90> - A contentious US-backed aid initiative targeting Gaza is set to replace the UN's traditional role in managing aid distribution during the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The plan, spearheaded by the Swiss-incorporated Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), proposes to deliver food and medicine through large distribution hubs guarded by Israeli forces and private US security contractors. The foundation, led by former US Marine Jake Wood, claims it will deliver 300 million meals within 90 days at $1.30 each, but it lacks transparency and confirmed funding sources. Although reportedly advised informally by figures like Tony Blair and David Beasley of the World Food Programme (WFP), both have denied formal involvement. The UN and aid agencies condemn the plan as a tool of displacement due to centralized distribution hubs located mostly in southern Gaza, forcing Palestinians to travel far for aid. Critics argue the scheme militarizes aid and risks politicizing survival, with some alleging it is designed to avoid aid diversion to Hamas. Despite operational shortcomings and unresolved logistics, the US and Israel support the model as the sole viable aid channel. The international community fears the plan could exacerbate suffering and displacement for over 2 million Palestinians.