# Protests in Northern Ireland amplify calls for Gaza ceasefire amid personal losses and political criticism



As the humanitarian crisis in Gaza remains urgent, public demonstrations across Northern Ireland continue to draw attention to the dire situation. Recently, several dozen protesters gathered outside the Northern Ireland Office in Belfast, contributing to a wave of rallies that have unfolded over the past 19 months. These ongoing protests reflect a significant mobilization of support for the Palestinian cause, echoing sentiments that have resonated throughout various communities across Ireland.

During this latest protest, participants were moved by the poignant words of Dr Ali Al Najjar, a Sligo-based paediatrician who tragically lost nine nieces and nephews in a recent Israeli airstrike. The gathering remembered the deceased children by calling out their names, underscoring the profound personal impact of the conflict. This somber moment highlighted the human cost of ongoing hostilities, reminding attendees of the tragic losses suffered on all sides.

Reflective of a growing frustration with the UK government's stance, chants directing condemnation towards Prime Minister Keir Starmer resonated among demonstrators, who accused him of complicity in what they termed genocide. Such expressions of dissent are not isolated; they are part of a broader narrative that has seen widespread protests across Ireland, including recent rallies in Dungannon and Dublin. Sinn Féin's vice president, Michelle O'Neill, emphasised the need for international intervention and an immediate ceasefire during her remarks at a Dungannon event, showcasing the political engagement surrounding this humanitarian crisis.

The protests also featured poetry, with the words of the late activist and poet Refaat Alareer echoing through the crowd: “If I must die, let it bring hope, let it be a story.” His work bears the weight of personal loss, having been killed in an airstrike himself. This sentiment captures the essence of a generation of Palestinian voices advocating for peace and justice amid violence. Activists from various organisations, including the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign, have found solidarity in shared expressions of grief and hope, further galvanising public sentiment around the need for change.

On October 28, a larger gathering saw hundreds unite in Belfast, marching from Writer's Square to City Hall under banners proclaiming “Free Palestine” and calling for an immediate ceasefire. Such mobilisations have become emblematic of a community deeply concerned with the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza, as they not only stand in solidarity with those affected but also challenge political narratives that may overlook the complexities of the conflict.

Criticism of media coverage has also been a recurring feature of these protests, evidenced by recent anger directed at the BBC for perceived biases in its reporting. Demonstrators argue that the portrayal of the conflict frequently leans toward narratives that favour Israel, thus neglecting the broader implications of the violence and the plight of Palestinians. The BBC, for its part, has defended its coverage, asserting that its reporting offers a comprehensive view of the crisis.

As the situation in Gaza evolves, these demonstrations serve as stark reminders of the potent connection between local activism in Northern Ireland and global humanitarian issues. They challenge not only governmental inaction but also call upon the Irish public to remain engaged and informed, fostering a dialogue that may drive positive change in the pursuit of peace.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/gaza-if-i-must-die-let-it-bring-hope-let-it-be-a-story-N4TLQOCDCVDWNBQ2R3P2K77G6I/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/10/22/news/rallies_held_across_ireland_to_protest_air_strikes_blockade_of_gaza-3718153/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/gaza-if-i-must-die-let-it-bring-hope-let-it-be-a-story-N4TLQOCDCVDWNBQ2R3P2K77G6I/), [[3]](https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2023/10/28/rallies-held-across-ireland-to-call-for-ceasefire-in-gaza/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/10/22/news/rallies_held_across_ireland_to_protest_air_strikes_blockade_of_gaza-3718153/), [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-67234424)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://belfastmedia.com/gallery-thousands-attend-rally-for-palestine-on-saturday), [[5]](https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/you-are-not-forgotten-thousands-attend-pro-palestinian-protest-in-belfast/3021024)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2023/10/28/rallies-held-across-ireland-to-call-for-ceasefire-in-gaza/), [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-67234424)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/gaza-if-i-must-die-let-it-bring-hope-let-it-be-a-story-N4TLQOCDCVDWNBQ2R3P2K77G6I/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/10/22/news/rallies_held_across_ireland_to_protest_air_strikes_blockade_of_gaza-3718153/> - On October 21, 2023, rallies were held across Ireland, including Belfast, to protest Israel's bombing and blockade of Gaza. Protesters marched from Belfast City Hall to the BBC headquarters, expressing solidarity with Palestinians and calling for an immediate ceasefire. Sinn Féin vice president Michelle O'Neill attended a rally in Dungannon, Co Tyrone, urging the Israeli government to halt its actions in Gaza and calling for international intervention. The BBC faced criticism for its coverage, with protesters alleging bias against Palestinians. The BBC defended its reporting, stating it provided comprehensive coverage of the conflict.
3. <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2023/10/28/rallies-held-across-ireland-to-call-for-ceasefire-in-gaza/> - On October 28, 2023, hundreds gathered in Belfast and Dublin to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Demonstrations also took place in counties across Ireland, including Cork, Limerick, Armagh, Clare, and Sligo. In Dublin, protesters marched from the GPO on O’Connell Street, while in Belfast, they marched on Royal Avenue before gathering at City Hall. Crowds chanted 'Free Palestine' and 'stop Gaza genocide,' with some carrying signs reading 'it’s ethnic cleansing not conflict' and 'end Israeli apartheid.'
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-67234424> - On October 28, 2023, approximately 3,000 protesters gathered in Belfast city centre for a rally organised by the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign. The demonstration followed an upsurge in conflict between Hamas and Israel. Protesters marched from Writer's Square along Royal Avenue to City Hall, with speakers including Sinn Féin's Declan Kearney, SDLP's Paul Doherty, Green Party's Anthony Flynn, and Gerry Carroll from People Before Profit. The rally called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and highlighted the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict.
5. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/you-are-not-forgotten-thousands-attend-pro-palestinian-protest-in-belfast/3021024> - On October 15, 2023, thousands of pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathered in Belfast city centre to show solidarity with Palestinians amid escalating violence in the Middle East. The rally included a march along Royal Avenue, culminating in speeches at Belfast City Hall. Protesters chanted slogans against Israel and carried Palestinian flags and signs with messages such as 'You are not forgotten, you are not abandoned' and 'Stop Arming Israel.'
6. <https://belfastmedia.com/gallery-thousands-attend-rally-for-palestine-on-saturday> - On October 21, 2023, a large crowd marched to the BBC in Belfast to protest the corporation's coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict. Organised by Caidre Palestine, Belfast Stands With Palestine, and Belfast Palestine Solidarity Campaign IPSC, protesters marched from City Hall to the BBC headquarters, voicing anger at the BBC for alleged bias in favour of Israel. The BBC defended its coverage, stating it provided comprehensive reporting on the conflict.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/10/08/news/palestinian_supporters_stage_protest_in_belfast_over_growing_violence-3679423/> - On October 8, 2023, members of the Palestinian community in Belfast protested outside City Hall in response to escalating violence in southern Israel. The rally was prompted by a surprise rocket attack by Hamas fighters into Israel, resulting in numerous casualties. Protesters called for an end to the violence and highlighted the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Speakers at the event included representatives from the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association, who emphasised the need for negotiations and an end to the conflict.