

Jewish staffers of Amnesty International criticize the movement's genocide report

We are a group of Jewish staffers of Amnesty International from sections around the world who wish to raise our voice in concern about AI's new report, which accuses Israel of genocide (*You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza*). We find that the main accusation of the report - that Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza strip - is not well substantiated, that the process of crafting the report was flawed, and that this output risks politicizing professional human rights work.

While we represent different opinions on how to label what is going on in the Gaza strip - with many of us agreeing that the Israeli atrocities there may have crossed the threshold of crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing - we find that the report does not substantiate its claim of intent by Israel to destroy the Palestinians, which is a mandatory component for establishing the crime of genocide according to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Article II).

While AI acknowledges the possibility that the devastation in Gaza may have been a by-product of Israel's military goals (e.g. destroying Hamas, rescuing the hostages), they argue that this still qualifies as intent to destroy the Palestinians (rather than, as AI puts it, "a callous disregard for their lives"); however, by its nature a by-product is usually not intentional. Amnesty's strained reasoning suggests that it has reached a predetermined conclusion rather than drawing a reasonable conclusion based on an objective review of the facts and the law. It is also not in line with the consensus of scholarship on the crime of genocide. While showing little or no regard to the lives of people of any group is a moral bankruptcy in and of itself, it does not qualify as a special intent to destroy and thus is not a genocide. In professional human rights work, different crimes should not be conflated.

From its inception, the report was represented in internal correspondence as "the genocide report" - even while the research was still in its preliminary phase. This is a strong indication of bias and also a factor that can cause further bias (imagine how hard it is for a researcher to work for months on a report titled "the genocide report" and conclude that it was "only" about crimes against humanity - the name sets the expectations). This way of naming a report in advance is not typical of other investigations conducted by Amnesty International. For example, the planned report on the October 7 massacre, which is in its final stages of work, is simply titled "the October 7 report" in internal correspondence, without hinting which crimes are (yet to be) found.

All in all the report seems driven out of a will to support a popular narrative amongst AI's target audience, rather than an objective assessment of the facts and the law. This sets a very dangerous precedent for external influence on professional research. These sorts of predetermined conclusions and outputs risk politicizing AI's human rights work at large. We are concerned that the inclination to support a predetermined conclusion is based on internal and personal politics rather than support for universal human rights. It may actually be