CRIMINOLOGICAL ENCOUNTERS

Vol 7(1) 2025
ISSN 2506-7583
DOI 10.26395/CE.2025.1.15

Forum: Palestine & Gaza - Editorial

Hannah Wilkinson
University of Nottingham
hannah.wilkinson@nottingham.ac.uk

Teresa Degenhardt
Queen's University Belfast
t.degenhardt@qub.ac.uk

This forum on Palestine and Gaza responds to the call from De Backer et al. (2023) for critical criminologists to address the substantial imbalances of power between the Israeli state and Palestinians, and to actively avoid reproducing these inequalities by clearly analysing ongoing violence within the long continuum of occupation, apartheid and colonialism (Wilkinson and Degenhardt, 2024).

At the time of writing, the world is witnessing the final stages of Israel's near total destruction – genocide (United Nations, 1948, Article II; UN, 2025; ICJ, 2024a) – of the Palestinian peoples (Green, 2023; Al-Hindi, 2025). Although journalists and media news teams are being denied access to film the mass decimation of life and land in Gaza (BBC, 2025), satellite images evidence the truth about the widespread scale of destruction (Garman, Murphy and BBC the Visual Journalism Team, 2025). Whole cities, homes, schools, hospitals, libraries, shops, and places to play have been bombed to rubble, further than the eye can see. The bombing, killing and destruction have not stopped, even at times of ceasefire (Amnesty International, 2025b).

Since the brutal and widely reported Hamas attacks on 7th October 2023, child deaths have increased by 180% (UNICEF, 2025) and Amnesty International (2025a) reports that 90% of the heavily concentrated population of Gaza's 2 million+ peoples have been forcefully displaced. The blocking of international aid in 2024-25 has led to the World Health Organisation (2025) reporting one in five children are now acutely malnourished, with research by Medical Aid for Palestinians (2025) finding over 40% of mothers in conditions of severe malnutrition and unable to breast feed their babies. In April 2024 the United Nations reported deep concerns about 'scholasticide' (OHCHR, 2025) - a term referring 'to the systemic obliteration of education through the arrest, detention or killing of teachers, students and staff, and the destruction of educational infrastructure' – after more than 80% of schools in Gaza were destroyed (UN, 2024). Journalists have also been targeted and killed by Israel at the highest rate recorded since the establishment of the Committee to Protect Journalists in 1992 (Allan et al., 2024).

Many of us are haunted by the images and videos of destruction in Gaza and the West Bank, and inspired by the resilience of Palestinians. Many criminologists who may have been frustrated by the use of the label of 'criminality' in the context of the state, are now resorting to the label of international criminality and invoking the international criminal justice system as a possible resource to intervene - as a tactic to manifest some form of moral response to enact a ceasefire, and to counter-act the censure by powerful western states.

This special issue forum on Palestine and Gaza connects contexts of activism and protest to aggressive attempts by state institutions, law-makers and policing forces to suppress the global swell of solidarity against genocide. All contributions explore new aspects of genocide, expanding the remit of the discipline to address issues of war relating to artificial intelligence (AI), ecocide, attacks to freedom of speech within academia, and the potential uses of international institutions by Global South states, such as the International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court to meaningfully intervene in state crimes.

Fiametta Bonfigli provides an overview of the recent mobilizations by states and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to account for the violation of international law and international criminal law by the state of Isreal in Palestine. Despite the shortcomings and discrediting of the judicial institutions at international levels, Bonfigli (2025) argues that international justice is still seen as a valuable venue to challenge long term processes of colonization such as those perpetrated by Isreal in Palestine (ICJ, 2024a; ICJ 2024b; ICC, 2024). If international justice is currently mostly utilised by states in the Global South, there is an increased mobilization also within the Global North with countries such as Ireland, Spain and Slovenia joining the legal charges brought against Isreal.

Lambros Fatsis's piece evidences the need to resist practices of silencing and the complicity of our academic institutions in the normalization and acceptance of the destruction and erasure of some people. The powerful intervention speaks of recent concerns raised within the European Society of Criminology (ESC) annual conference about the need to professionally stand in opposition to war crimes and genocide, forms of supreme crimes. Fatsis (2025) rightly dismantles the ESC's excuse of 'scientificity' used to block motions and dismiss widespread concerns, recognising that any social science cannot shy away from issues that demand a political and moral conscience, especially at times of urgent violations of international criminal law such as the ones carried out by Israel. The issue of genocide in Palestine

should be especially important to criminologists, as a disciplinary study involving critical analysis of the role of power in socially constructing crime. We thank Lambros Fatsis for such a crucial intervention from his experience at the ESC conference in Athens this year. We support the request that the Society takes a stand on the issue (Criminologists for Palestine, 2025).

Iva Ramuš Cvetkovič researches the use of artificial intelligence (AI) powered tech in the context of the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Cvetkovič (2025) argues that the AI powered technology constitutes evidence of the *means rea* required for the adjudication of the crime of genocide. The design of the technology with the time set in between detonations indicate not the aim of precision, but rather that of mass destruction. The mass production of targeting implicit in the design of the AI technology prove not just the genocidal intent from the Israeli army, but also that responsibility reaches to the very top of the chain of command. Analysing the use of AI powered tech as a genocidal tool is key to arresting its use in other contexts, an important issue if we are to limit the destructivity of future conflicts. Cvetkovič further argues that failing to charge Isreal of genocide could weaken the international criminal law apparatus, and threaten the future of humanity.

White's (2025) article further evidences the mass destruction of Palestine as part of Israel's long-term colonisation project and a strategy of war by design. Through analysing the social and legal parameters of ecocide, White argues that Israel's mass destruction, contamination and degradation of Palestinian trees, water, soils, infrastructure and ecosystems contributes directly to the ongoing genocide and continues to be internationally denied and facilitated. As White (2025) argues, occupation, ecocide and genocide must be understood and analysed together as a colonial process. Israel's intent is not only to destroy Palestinian lives in whole or in part, but to make the land unliveable. White concludes that documentation and recognition of mass environmental harm as ecocide is vital to achieving interventions from international courts, as well as contributing evidence to the urgency of demanding an end to war and occupation, and the need for reparations and restoration of Palestinian land rights. This article offers important future directions for green criminology, as well as zemiology and those researching harms of the powerful.

At the time in which these analyses were written, Western states are aggressively targeting groups and individuals involved in protesting the ongoing destruction in Palestine (Abuqamar, 2025; Curreri and Piché, 2025; Pali and Pallister-Wilkins, 2025). Protesters are demanding that international institutions be active in ceasing their material and discursive support of the Israeli government. This movement is not just limited to some states - it is an issue that is taken up by people across the globe, with different intensity and including calls to boycott corporations complicit in genocidal regimes (Polya, 2023; Sutrisno, 2024; Varman et al., 2025).

As this forum and the artistic intervention (Ali and Sharma, with ASHTAR Theatre, 2025) powerfully convey, there is an urgency to engage in action and call for an immediate ceasefire and reparations. Our collective solidarities stand with all those harmed by ongoing genocides, wars and state violence.

Bibliography

Abuqamar, D. (2025). 'The West's crackdown on the pro-Palestinian movement: A case of punitive torture?'. *Torture Journal*, *35*(2-3), pp.188-202: https://tidsskrift.dk/torture-journal/article/download/156964/202124/355935

Al-Hindi, M. (2025). 'Border Creation and the Hangover of Empire: The Genocide of Palestine and the Historical Construction of the Palestinian Threat'. In Pessoa Cavalcanti,R., Fonseca, D. S., Vegh Weis, V., Carrington, K., Hogg, R., and Scott, J. (Eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Criminology and the Global South*, Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, (pp. 1-27)

Allan, D., Bishara, A., Bisharat, G., Mansour, S., & Mushtaha, M. (2024). Roundtable: On Gaza and the War on Palestinian Journalism. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *53*(3), 118–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919X.2024.2415270

Ali, R. & Sharma P., with ASHTAR Theatre. (2025). ASHTAR Theatre's The Gaza Monologues: Documentary Theatre as Counter-Archive of Palestinian Life under Occupation and Genocide, *Criminological Encounters*

Amnesty International. (2025a). *Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Available at* https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/report-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/

Amnesty International. (2025b). Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza continues unabated despite ceasefire. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/11/israels-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza-continues-unabated-despite-ceasefire/

Bonfigli, F. (2025). "I never ever want to hear you lecture us on human rights and international law again": some reflections on the limits and potentialities of international prosecution in the Palestine-Israel context.", *Criminological Encounters*

BBC. (2025). 'Watch: BBC's Jeremy Bowen goes onboard a plane dropping aid into Gaza' [Video], *BBC News,* Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/clyj4gnzxgno

Criminologists for Palestine (C4P). (2025). Motion to the ESC General Assembly, available at https://criminologists4palestine.wordpress.com/

Cvetkovič, I. R. (2025). "If machines could speak: What can the AI-powered technologies used in Gaza tell us about Israel's genocidal intent**?",** *Criminological Encounters:* https://criminologicalencounters.org/index.php/crimenc/article/view/171

Curreri, L. S. & Piché, J. (2025). 'The Megaphone in Genocidal Times: On the Sonic Silencing and Illegalization of (Amplified) Political Dissent and Resistance', *Criminological Encounters, https://criminologicalencounters.org/index.php/crimenc/article/view/167*

De Backer, M., Melgaço, L., & Volinz, L. (2023). 'Editorial: War and Criminology', *Criminological Encounters,* 6 (1): DOI 10.26395/CE.2023.1.01

Fatsis, L. (2025). 'Science Without Conscience. Or how a criminology conference bared the discipline's dead soul', *Criminological Encounters: https://criminologicalencounters.org/index.php/crimenc/article/view/184*

Garman, B., Murphy, M., and the [BBC] Visual Journalism Team. (2025). 'Israel levelling thousands of Gaza civilian buildings in "controlled demolitions"', *BBC News,* 18th July 2025, Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-33fccfbe-abcc-4af1-bdd2-632b2787cf59

Green, P. (2023). 'Preface: Israel's Genocide of the Palestinian People', *State Crime Journal:* Special Issue on Abolitionism, Settler Colonialism and State Crime (2023),12 (2): 123-125

International Criminal Court (ICC). (2024). Press release. Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I rejects the State of Israel's challenges to jurisdiction and issues warrants of arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant. Available at https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-state-palestine-icc-pre-trial-chamber-i-rejects-state-israels-challenges

International Court of Justice (ICJ). (2024a). Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel): Latest Developments, I.C.J Case 192: https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192

International Court of Justice (ICJ). (2024b). ICJ's Advisory Opinion – Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. 19th July, Available at https://www.un.org/unispal/document/advisory-opinion-icj-19jul24/

Medical Aid for Palestinians. (2025). 'Nearly half of mothers screened by MAP's local partner in Gaza are suffering from severe malnutrition', *Medical Aid for Palestinians: News,* 28th July 2025: https://www.map.org.uk/news/archive/post/1759-nearly-half-of-mothers-screened-by-mapas-local-partner-in-gaza-are-suffering-from-severe-malnutrition

Pali, B. & Pallister-Wilkins, P. (2025). 'From police violence to (self) censorship: Mapping the continuum of criminalization of student-led Palestine solidarity activism in the Netherlands'. *Criminological Encounters*: https://criminologicalencounters.org/index.php/crimenc/article/download/178/116

Polya, G. (2023). Stop Genocidal Gaza Massacre: World Must Boycott Apartheid Israel & Its Racist Western Supporters, *Counter Currents,* Available at: https://countercurrents.org/2023/10/stop-genocidal-gaza-massacre-world-must-boycott-apartheid-israel-its-racist-western-supporters/

Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (referred to in-text as, OHCHR). (2025). 'UN experts deeply concerned over 'scholasticide' in Gaza', 18 April 2024. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza

Sutrisno, A. (2024). International legal analysis of the boycott products suspected of supporting genocide. *Iblam Law Review*, *4*(1), pp.497-504

UN. (2024). 'UN experts deeply concerned over 'scholasticide' in Gaza', *United Nations, Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner: Press Release,* 18th April 2024: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza

UN. (2025). *Definitions of Genocide and Related Crimes*. United Nation Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. Available at https://www.un.org/en/genocide-prevention/definition

UNICEF. (2025). UNICEF in the State of Palestine Escalation Situation, January to June, Report n 40. Available at https://www.unicef.org/sop/reports/unicef-state-palestine-escalation-humanitarian-situation-report-no40

Varman, R., Chatzidakis, A. & Kerrigan, F. (2025). 'Marketing Theory Amid a Genocide', *Marketing Theory*, p.14705931251365350

White, R. (2025). 'The Ecocidal Destruction of Palestine', *Criminological Encounters,* https://criminologicalencounters.org/index.php/crimenc/article/view/168

Wilkinson, H. & Degenhardt, T. (2024). 'Call for papers: We must persist! Towards a global criminology of war', *Criminological Encounters: https://criminologicalencounters.org/index.php/crimenc/announcement/view/15*

World Health Organisation. (2025). 'Malnutrition rates reach alarming levels in Gaza, WHO warns', *News Release,* 27th July 2025: https://www.who.int/news/item/27-07-2025-malnutrition-rates-reach-alarming-levels-in-gaza--who-warns

Hannah Wilkinson is an Assistant Professor in Criminology at the University of Nottingham. Her research explores the areas of war, state violence and harm. Hannah has published about the experiences of ex-soldiers who delivered British state violence and colonial occupation in the 'war on terror', and is a member of the British Society of Criminology and the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control.

Teresa Degenhardt is Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Criminology at Queen's University Belfast. She is the author of the monograph *War as Protection and Punishment: armed international intervention at the 'end of history'* (Routledge, 2023), and is generally interested in processes of criminalization and securitization at transnational level.

How to cite this article (APA– 7th ed.):
Wilkinson, H. & Degenhardt, T. (2025). Forum: Palestine and Gaza – Editorial. *Criminological Encounters*. 7(1). 171-176. https://doi.org/10.26395/CE.2025.1.15

© The author(s), 2025 | Licensed under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.