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<https://www.thejc.com/news/israel/masorti-rabbi-leads-open-letter-accusing-israel-of-using-starvation-as-a-weapon-of-war-p5ef54of>

A Letter from Rabbis Worldwide – Please Sign

Dear colleague,

Deeply distressed by the news from Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, we are circulating this letter to rabbis around the world. We ask you to sign and forward it to colleagues and rabbinic groups of which you are a part.

With berakhot and hope for better news,

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, London

Rabbi Arthur Green, Boston

Rabbi Ariel Pollak, Tel Aviv

The Jewish People face a grave moral crisis, threatening the very basis of Judaism as the ethical voice that it has been since the age of Israel's prophets. We cannot remain silent in confronting it.

As rabbis and Jewish leaders from across the world, including the State of Israel, we are deeply committed to the wellbeing of Israel and the Jewish People.

We admire Israel's many and remarkable achievements. We recognise, and many of us endure, the huge challenges the State of Israel relentlessly confronts, surrounded for so long by enemies and facing existential threats from many quarters. We abhor the violence of such nihilistic terrorist organizations as Hezbollah and Hamas. We call on them immediately to release all the hostages, held for so long captive in tunnels in horrendous conditions with no access to medical aid. We unequivocally support the legitimacy of Israel's battle against these evil forces of destruction. We understand the Israeli army's prioritization of protecting the lives of its soldiers in this ongoing battle, and we mourn the loss of every soldier's life.

But we cannot condone the mass killings of civilians, including a great many women, children and elderly, or the use of starvation as a weapon of war. Repeated statements of intention and actions by ministers in the Israeli government, by some officers in the Israeli army, and the behaviour of criminally violent settler groups in the West Bank, often with police and military support, have been major factors in bringing us to this crisis. The killing of huge numbers of Palestinians in Gaza, including those desperately seeking food, has been widely reported across respectable media and cannot reasonably be denied. The severe limitation placed on humanitarian relief in Gaza, and the policy of withholding of food, water, and medical supplies from a needy civilian population contradict essential values of Judaism as we understand it. Ongoing unprovoked attacks, including murder and theft, against Arab populations in the West Bank, have been documented over and over again.

We cannot keep silent.

In the name of the sanctity of life, of the core Torah values that every person is created in God's image, that we are commanded to treat every human being justly, and that, wherever possible, we are required to exercise mercy and compassion;

In the name of what the Jewish People has learnt bitterly from history as the victim, time and again, of marginalisation, persecution and attempted annihilation;

In the name of the moral reputation not just of Israel, but of Judaism itself, the Judaism to which our lives are devoted,

We call upon the Prime Minister and the Government of Israel

To respect all innocent life;

To stop at once the use and threat of starvation as a weapon of war;

To allow extensive humanitarian aid, under international supervision, while guarding against control or theft by Hamas;

To work urgently by all routes possible to bring home all the hostages and end the fighting; To use the forces of law and order to end settler violence on the West Bank and vigorously investigate and prosecute settlers who harass and assault Palestinians;

To open channels of dialogue together with international partners to lead toward a just settlement, ensuring security for Israel, dignity and hope for Palestinians, and a viable peaceful future for all the region.

'I am a Jew because our ancestors were the first to see that the world is driven by a moral purpose, that reality is not a ceaseless war of the elements, to be worshipped as gods, nor history in a battle in which might is right and power is to be appeased. The Judaic tradition shaped the moral civilisation of the West, teaching for the first time that human life is sacred, that the individual may not be sacrificed for the mass, and that rich and poor, great and small, are all equal before God.' Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Radical Then, Radical Now* (London 2000).

Currently enrolled rabbinical students are welcome to sign.

To see current signers, click here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sckSNs00qYo7dFdEw0YU42AN_eadds3BuZ2VtEt8b-A/edit?usp=sharing