

UK: Lawyers urge David Cameron to impose sanctions on Netanyahu and his war cabinet

Today, lawyers have written to David Cameron asking the UK Foreign Office (“FCDO”) to apply Magnitsky sanctions against Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant, and other members of the war cabinet. The letter states that sanctions be applied to *“members and observers of Israel’s War Cabinet, as Involved Persons (“IPs”), under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 and the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020”* or *Magnitsky*, for involvement in war crimes, violations of international humanitarian law, and human rights abuses committed during the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

The letter alleges that since October 2023, attacks coordinated and ordered on Gaza have directly caused the deaths of an estimated 14,000 individuals, including around 10,000 women and children. It cites evidence of indiscriminate attacks that have caused an unprecedented amount of death, injuries, and damage to civilian infrastructure. Ten days into air strikes, the UN reported that *“there are daily indications of violations of the laws of war and international human rights law.”*

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR)* has asked the FCDO to apply sanctions in the form of a travel ban to stop these ministers from travelling to the UK and freeze any assets they have here on the basis that they are *“involved persons”* responsible for serious violations of the right to life. Previously Magnitsky sanctions have been applied to those accused of extreme human rights abuses from Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, North Korea and in 2022 in relation to Vladimir Putin’s supporters.

The letter further states that the actions of these officials have led to the forced displacement of people from northern to southern Gaza, primarily as a result of Israel’s bombing residential areas, hospitals, and schools in Gaza. According to a UNICEF statement dated 31 October 2023: *“Gaza has transformed into a burial ground for thousands of children, representing an unbearable existence for the rest”*.

Sanctions against Benjamin Netanyahu are appropriate in his role as leader of the Israeli War Cabinet, which has blockaded the Gaza Strip withholding vital supplies like food, medicine, and fuel. AOHR maintains that Mr Netanyahu and his war

cabinet members should be held accountable for air strikes on civilian areas which have reportedly resulted in the removal of entire families from the civil registry.

After meeting with the Israeli leadership, Foreign Secretary David Cameron recently [stated](#), *"I stressed over and over again that they [Israel] must abide by international humanitarian law, that the number of casualties are too high, [...]I made very clear yesterday, that the settler violence, you know, people actually targeting and, on occasion, killing Palestinian civilians, is completely unacceptable, and those people responsible for that, it's not good enough just to arrest them – they need to be arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned - these are crimes."* It is now up to the Foreign Secretary to follow through on his word and apply Magnitsky sanctions, in line with international humanitarian law.

.....

Mohamed Jamil of AOHR commented:

"Netanyahu has turned Gaza from an open-air prison into a mass graveyard where women and children are paying the heaviest price. With over 2 million civilians suffering, it is high time for accountability. We call on David Cameron to apply the law and impose Magnitsky sanctions on Netanyahu and his cabinet for committing war crimes and collective punishment that have resulted in unspeakable human suffering."

Sue Willman, solicitor, Deighton Piece Glynn said:

"The Magnitsky sanctions regime is a vital tool for the UK to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law. This is an opportunity for the new Foreign Secretary to show that those involved in the gravest human rights violations will be held accountable, as the government promised when they launched the scheme."

Note to editors

- The Arab Organisation for Human Rights ("AOHR"), is a non-governmental organisation focused on promoting human rights in the Arab world. AOHR represents British families based in the UK who have lost relatives in Gaza and who are waiting for news of survivors trapped there.
- The UK operates global anti-corruption sanctions under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018. Such regimes, which exist in the US, EU and around the world, are named *Magnitsky* after the Russian anti-corruption lawyer who was tortured and murdered in a Russian jail. See further <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-sanctions-relating-to-global-anti-corruption>
- AOHR has instructed solicitors Sue Willman and Ahmed Ali of Law firm, [Deighton Pierce Glynn](#) (DPG).
- A letter requesting sanctions has been sent by DPG to the FCDO in relation to members of Israel's War Cabinet: Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant, Benjamin Gantz, Gadi Eisenkot and Ron Dermer.