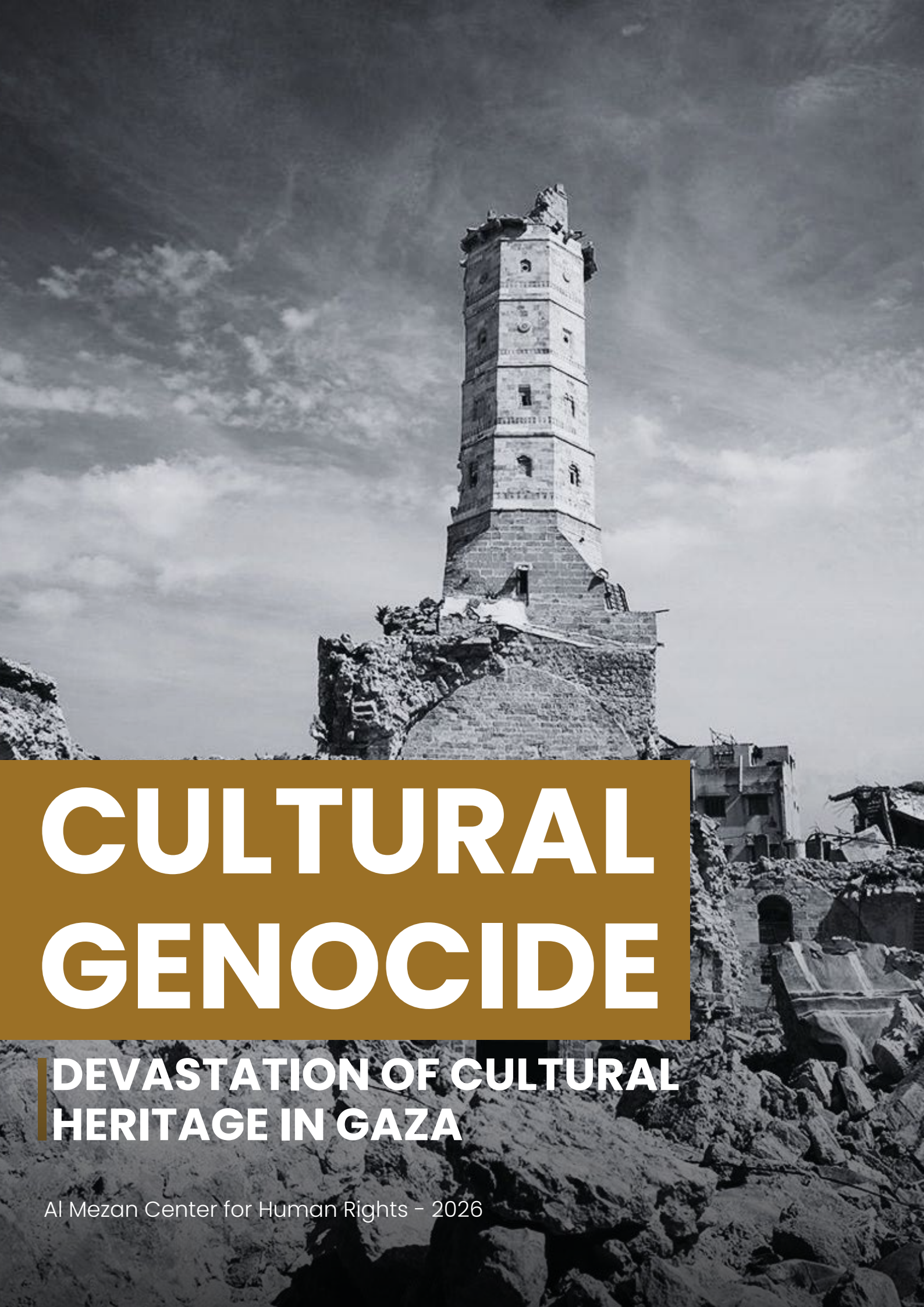




CULTURAL GENOCIDE

**DEVASTATION OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE IN GAZA**

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights – 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents and analyses field research conducted by Al Mezan regarding damage to archaeological and historical landmarks in the Gaza Strip between 7 October 2023 and 31 December 2025. The findings are shocking: as an integral component of the ongoing genocide, during which approximately 71,000 Palestinians were killed and two million displaced, Israeli occupation forces also damaged or destroyed more than 70% of Gaza's total documented cultural heritage.

71,000 PALESTINIANS WERE KILLED

2,000,000 DISPLACED

Of approximately 316 identified sites of historical significance in the Gaza Strip, Al Mezan documented **226 cases** of cultural destruction. These 226 sites were either damaged or entirely destroyed, leaving less than one third intact. They include places of worship, cemeteries, historic residences, traditional markets, archaeological sites, museums, libraries and historic educational institutions.

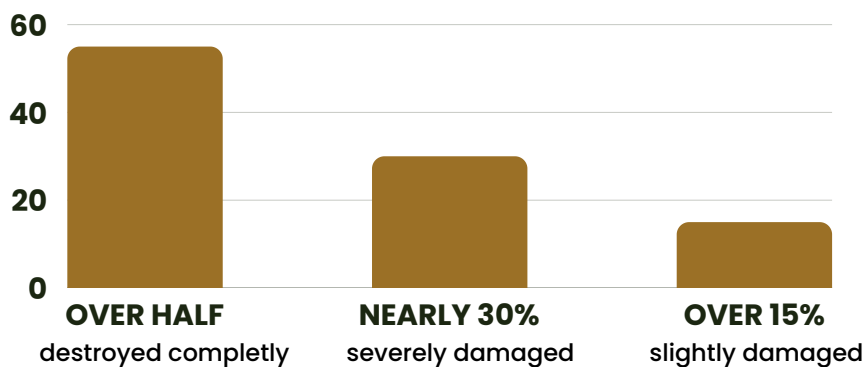
The report examines data obtained through field visits, interviews and review of documents, and provides a structured assessment of the scale, distribution and forms of damage, identifying patterns across different categories of sites, modes of attack and geographic areas. Various quantitative and qualitative tools are employed to monitor and analyse patterns of systematic destruction of archaeological and historical landmarks.

The scope of this report includes the entire Gaza Strip, incorporating the 63 sites situated behind the Israeli yellow line, which demarcates a new buffer zone comprising at least 60% of the Gaza Strip.¹ However, since the recent restrictions on the entry of Palestinians to this area imposed by Israeli occupation forces, Al Mezan has not been able to access those sites in order to conclusively determine their current status; accordingly, the full extent of the destruction is likely to be even greater.

The report examines the extent to which individual incidents of cultural destruction reveal discernible patterns of conduct rather than isolated or random events, and concludes that the destruction can only be the result of a systemic and deliberate policy. Evidence for this includes the scale of the attacks on cultural heritage sites, recurring patterns in the targeting and methods of destruction, including a number of sites being subjected to repeated and escalating attacks, and the fact that sites attacked were clearly identified as cultural or religious landmarks.

Over half of the 226 sites documented had been destroyed completely, nearly 30% severely damaged and over 15% slightly damaged. Only one third remain unscathed. Nearly half (46.4%) of all the attacked sites were historical homes. Over 72% of the attacked sites are situated in the Gaza Governorate, which includes Gaza City, the oldest city in the Gaza Strip and historically its economic and cultural centre. Wanton destruction has been accompanied by the theft of artefacts – including clocks, gemstones, pieces of marble, statues, decorated stones, ancient columns and other architectural elements – by Israeli forces during incursions.

EXTENT OF DAMAGE



PRESERVED HERITAGE



46,4%

**of all the attacked sites
were historical homes**



Over 72%

**of the attacked sites are
situated in the Gaza
Governorate**



The physical destruction in Gaza takes a psychological and cultural toll on its population. Memories of the Gaza Strip as it was fade as its inhabitants become accustomed to the new landscape. Gaza has suffered severe social, educational, medical and infrastructural collapse, making cultural recovery challenging. The deaths of artists, writers, journalists and scholars further threaten Palestinian contemporary culture and identity. The cultural devastation weakens Palestinian society's links with its past and hence its capacity to recover.

This catastrophic destruction is examined in the context of applicable international legal frameworks, including international humanitarian and human rights law. Particular reference is made to obligations regarding the protection of cultural property, the prohibition of attacks on civilian objects and the duty to prevent destruction, pillage and misappropriation. Relevant provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention, the Geneva Conventions and other applicable norms such as the UN Genocide Convention are highlighted. In particular, Article 53 of the 1st Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, considered to be binding on Israel under customary international law, prohibits “any acts of hostility directed against historic monuments, works of art, or places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples”.

Finally, the report presents a set of recommendations including: the adoption of immediate measures to ensure the protection of cultural heritage in accordance with international legal obligations; the establishment of independent, impartial and transparent mechanisms of investigation; measures to safeguard, document and preserve remaining cultural heritage sites; initiatives to support restitution, reconstruction and appropriate forms of reparation; specific international cooperation and monitoring to ensure the protection of cultural property in situations of armed conflict.



METHODOLOGY

This report was written on the basis of quantitative and qualitative research conducted through a descriptive-analytical methodology to monitor and analyse patterns of systematic destruction of archaeological and historical landmarks. This statistical assessment of violations is then analysed from the perspective of international law, as well as that of the individual and social experience of harm to cultural identity and heritage.

The study (including the final stages of report preparation) covers the period from 7 October 2023 to 31 December 2025, and encompasses all officially recognized archaeological and historical landmarks within the geographical boundaries of the governorates of the Gaza Strip. However, due to restrictions recently imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on access of Palestinians to the so-called ‘yellow zone’ – a buffer zone comprising at least 60%² of the Gaza Strip – Al Mezan was not able to comprehensively and conclusively determine the current status of the 63 sites located in that area. Since Israeli occupation forces are visibly carrying out extensive bombardments and explosions in the yellow zone, the extent of the damage to sites in that area is likely to now be even greater.

Al Mezan, in preparing this report, employed the following methods:

1. Violation documentation form and database

A questionnaire was designed to gather primary data from the relevant official authorities – including the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Palestinian Ministry of Culture, and municipal councils – whose responsibilities included recording the incidents and the extent of damage to archaeological and historical landmarks in the Gaza Strip. This standardized process of documentation captured the details of each violation and identified the responsible party or parties. Field researchers then entered this into a database to facilitate statistical analysis and the identification of indicators. Researchers completed 226 questionnaires, which were subsequently reviewed, verified and analysed to derive findings for this report.

2. Field visits

The field research team conducted approximately 200 visits to damaged archaeological and historical landmarks for verification and documentation purposes, as far as permitted by the field conditions amid the ongoing attacks. Some sites required multiple visits.

3. Interviews

Personal interviews were used to collect detailed information from specialists and testimonies from affected individuals. Overall, 35 interviews were conducted with experts in history, archaeology and Palestinian heritage as well as officials responsible for archaeological and historical sites, including with representatives of municipal councils, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and Ministry of Culture.

4. Desk (documentary) review

Reports, studies and references related to Palestinian archaeology and global heritage were examined and referenced to strengthen the theoretical framework and support analytical findings.

INTRODUCTION

This report examines the cultural and historical devastation of the Gaza Strip which has accompanied the profound humanitarian crisis and genocide unleashed by violent Israeli attacks since October 2023. As of the end of December 2025,³ reported casualties included approximately **70,942 people killed**, including **18,592 children** and nearly **12,400 women**. In addition, approximately **11,000 people are reported missing**; an estimated **171,195 have been injured**.

Displacement has occurred on a massive scale, with nearly **two million** people internally displaced and approximately **100,000 having left the Gaza Strip**. At least 60% of the Strip is now under complete Israeli control.⁴ These developments have contributed to a cataclysmic demographic and social crisis.

The conflict has led to a significant decline in the population of the Gaza Strip. Estimates indicate a reduction of approximately **254,000 people**, representing approximately 10.6% of the pre-conflict population, bringing the total population to approximately **2.13 million**.

REPORTED CASUALTIES

As of the end of December 2025



70,942
PEOPLE KILLED



18,592
CHILDREN



nearly **12,400**
women



11,000
PEOPLE
REPORTED
MISSING



171,195
INJURED

DISPLACEMENT



nearly
2 MILLION
INTERNALLY
DISPLACED

approx.
100,000
HAVE LEFT
THE GAZA
STRIP

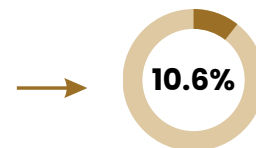


at least **60%** OF THE STRIP IS NOW
UNDER COMPLETE ISRAELI
CONTROL

POPULATION REDUCTION



254,000
PEOPLE
REDUCTION



10.6%
OF THE PRE-CONFLICT
POPULATION

2,13 MILLION
TOTAL POPULATION ESTIMATE

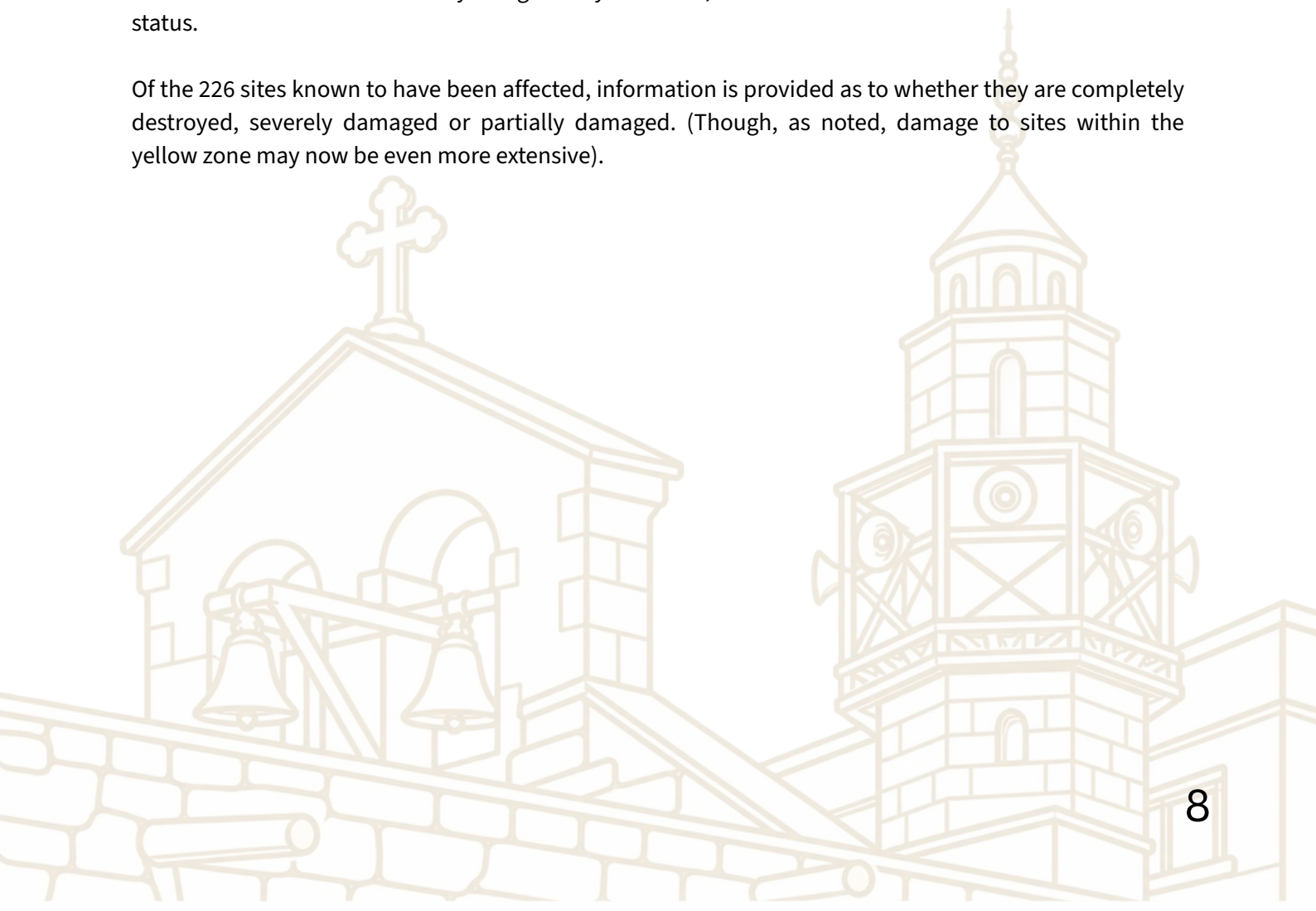
The use of heavy explosive weapons has caused widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, health centres, universities, schools and cultural institutions. Notwithstanding the announcement of a ceasefire in October 2025,⁵ reports indicate that bombardment, blockade measures and restrictions on the entry of essential goods and fuel have continued. As a result of these conditions, the humanitarian situation has further deteriorated, and initiatives promoting recovery and normalization have been undermined.

The hostilities have also severely impacted cultural heritage, a fundamental component of identity and collective memory. This is the focus of this report.

The Gaza Strip is an area of exceptional cultural and historical significance. It featured on trade routes as a result of its strategic geographic position. It was ruled by the Roman and Egyptian empires. Greeks, Persians, Nabataeans and Assyrians have at various points settled in Gaza. Significant sites include the Greek-Roman port of Anthedon, the Monastery of St Hilarion (third century CE) (a UNESCO World Heritage Endangered Site), and the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Porphyrius (fifth century CE) bear witness to the layered and interconnected nature of this heritage. Wanton attacks on such sites constitute attacks on the cultural heritage of the world and of the historical record itself.

Available documentation indicates that almost three quarters of all cultural and historical sites in the Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed by Israeli occupation forces since October 2023. These include places of worship, cemeteries, historic residences, traditional markets, archaeological sites, museums, libraries and historic educational institutions. Of approximately 316 identified sites of historical significance,⁶ 226 have reportedly sustained damage, leaving less than one third intact. The actual figure may be even higher, since Al Mezan's researchers have been unable to visit 63 significant sites situated within the recently designated yellow line, and therefore cannot determine their current status.

Of the 226 sites known to have been affected, information is provided as to whether they are completely destroyed, severely damaged or partially damaged. (Though, as noted, damage to sites within the yellow zone may now be even more extensive).



Cultural heritage is defined in the 1972 Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage as “monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science”.⁷

The destruction of cultural heritage has significant implications for social cohesion and identity. Damage to religious and historical landmarks affects both Muslim and Christian communities and contributes to the erosion of shared cultural identity. The loss of heritage sites also weakens connections to history and ancestry, particularly for displaced populations, and undermines collective memory and cultural continuity. The destruction extended to cultural heritage, which comprises one of the most fundamental components of Palestinian identity. Heritage is “our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations” and our cultural and natural heritage represent “irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration”.⁸

This report is issued in the context of Al Mezan’s ongoing monitoring of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, with a particular focus on economic, social and cultural rights. It provides an overview of the scale of destruction, documents selected cases of damage to cultural heritage and examines the broader implications of such damage.

This report considers the destruction of cultural artefacts in Gaza in the context of Israel’s international law obligations, including in relation to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which states that “damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world”.⁹ Israel, in ratifying the Convention in 1957, undertook to refrain from any hostility aimed at cultural property and from acts of theft, pillage and misappropriation. As far as international humanitarian law is concerned, Israel ratified the Geneva Conventions in 1951. The Conventions specifically protect civilian objects. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defines the war crime of: “intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives.”

The report also considers whether the acts of cultural destruction and appropriation can be considered as evidence of genocidal intent under the Genocide Convention.

1. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Al Mezan's collation of facts makes apparent Israel's organized, methodical approach to the destruction of cultural heritage across the Gaza Strip. Approximately 44 archaeological and historical sites were repeatedly targeted, suggesting premeditated intent. In some cases, Israeli forces completed the destruction, initially carried out by air bombardment, by bulldozing and levelling the site and burying the ruins.

The numbers tabulated below indicate the scale of the damage, but they can only hint at the depth of psychological, social and cultural harm that has been caused. Mosques, shrines, zawiyas,¹⁰ churches, cemeteries, mosaic floors, palaces, fortresses, houses, khans,¹¹ pathways, shops, markets, archaeological excavation sites, museums, archaeological properties and other historical landmarks will, at best, take many years and vast amounts of money to repair. At worst, they are irreplaceable.

Some historic residential homes date back to the Ottoman period and were inhabited by hundreds of residents who had inherited them from ancestors. This targeting constitutes a violation of the right to housing and safe refuge, while also destroying family legacies.

Distinctive markers, such as crescents, minarets or domes on Islamic mosques and crosses and bells on Christian churches, were clearly visible on approximately 40% of targeted sites. Any claims of ignorance as to these sites' cultural and historical importance would consequently not be credible.

The following figures have been arrived at through Al Mezan's field surveys, as well as their documentation database and desk analysis. All research results pertain to events within the geographic and temporal parameters of this report, as outlined above.

Site	Extent of Damage			Total
	Complete	Severe	Partial	
Mosque	9	4	4	17
Maqam (Shrine)	1	7	0	8
Church	1	1	1	3
School	1	1	0	2

Cemetery	4	1	2	7
Archaeological Mounds	9	1	9	19
Market / Shop	6	4	5	15
House	71	30	4	105
Bathhouse	1	0	0	1
Palaces and Fortresses	2	5	2	9
Archaeological Artefacts	2	0	0	2
Mosaic Floors	0	3	0	3
Museums	1	2	0	3
Hospital	0	1	0	1
Sabil (Water Fountain)	1	0	0	1
Excavation Site	8	1	6	15
Ports	0	1	0	1
Other ¹²	6	6	2	14
Total	123	68	35	226

Table 1: the extent of the damage inflicted on archaeological and historical landmarks

Israeli occupation forces completely destroyed 123 archaeological and historical landmarks, accounting for 54.5% of the targeted sites; 29.8% of sites sustained severe damage; 15.7% incurred partial or minor damage.

Historical homes were the most affected category of sites, constituting 46.4% of targets. Archaeological mounds ranked second at 8.4% and mosques third at 7.5%, while bathhouses, hospitals, water fountains and ports were the least affected, each representing 0.4% of targets.

Governorate	Number of Sites
North Gaza	8
Gaza	164
Central Gaza	17
Khan Younis	28
Rafah	9
Total	226

Table 2: Location of archaeological and historical sites by governorate

The Gaza Governorate has been the primary focus of cultural destruction, accounting for 72.5% of attacks. Khan Younis ranks second at 12.4%, followed by Central Gaza at 7.6%, Rafah at 3.9% and North Gaza at 3.6%. Gaza City, the oldest city in the Gaza Strip, has historically been its economic and political centre, with the highest concentration of archaeological and historical institutions and sites. Khan Younis is the second most important city in these terms.

Forms of targeting	Number
Bombing (aerial and ground bombardment)	177
Explosives	25
Bulldozing	24
Total	226

Table 3: forms of targeting

Throughout the genocide, the Israeli occupation forces have relied heavily on warplanes to drop large quantities of highly destructive explosives and to launch missiles, levelling neighbourhoods, residential homes and archaeological and historical sites. Air bombings account for 78.4% of damage to cultural sites. Large areas of the Gaza Strip were also subject to ground incursions, including raids, bulldozing and other means of large-scale obliteration of public and private properties. Sites damaged by explosives detonated by dismounted military personnel or robotic systems account for 11% of all those affected, while 10.6% of sites were bulldozed.

Means of Attack	Number
Military forces using bulldozers	59
Helicopter/Warplane	164
Tanks	2
Military forces without heavy machinery ¹³	1
Total	226

Table 4: means of attack

Helicopters and warplanes were the most frequently used means of destruction, accounting for 72.6% of attacks, followed by military forces, including bulldozers, at 26.2%. Tanks were used in 0.8% of the destruction, while military forces alone were responsible for 0.4% of the damage.

The pattern of destruction of cultural sites by Israeli occupation forces

The Israeli occupation forces' attacks on archaeological and historical sites in the Gaza Strip have followed a particular pattern. Initially, they bombed surrounding buildings, causing varying degrees of damage to nearby heritage sites. This was followed by the deliberate and direct targeting of archaeological and historical landmarks. At a later stage, after ground incursions across the Gaza Strip, they began bulldozing and burying these sites, and subsequently levelled entire historic neighbourhoods, particularly in Gaza City.

Other violations

Not only have sites been both specifically targeted and damaged as a result of disproportionate and recklessly deployed military force, they have also been subjected to looting and theft, particularly in areas where incursions occurred. Stolen artefacts include clocks, gemstones, pieces of marble, statues, decorated stones, ancient columns and other architectural elements. Notably, these sites were in areas fully controlled by the Israeli forces at the time of the thefts.

Since the ceasefire agreement announced in October 2025, the IOF have remained within a 'yellow zone', which extends from Beit Lahia in the north to the eastern border and then turning south to include parts of Khan Younis and Rafah, and comprises at least 60% of the Gaza Strip.¹⁴ There are an estimated 63 archaeological and historical sites within this zone, including eight mosques, one church, eight archaeological hills, seven ruins, two mosaic floors, two cemeteries, one museum, 32 houses and four shops. Researchers from Al Mezan were able to access some of these sites during periods of ceasefire but not all, and have been unable to access the area since the establishment of the yellow zone. Consequently, the full extent of damage here remains unclear and the documentation of this area is considered preliminary until Israeli forces withdraw and researchers can regain access.

2. CASE STUDIES

2.1 Tel Al-Ujul Burial Site



LOCATION

THE TOWN OF AL-MUGHRAQA, NORTH
OF WADI GAZA, GAZA GOVERNORATE.



SIZE

APPROXIMATELY 4000 M²



SIGNIFICANCE

Tel al-Ujul is considered one of the most important ancient burial sites in Gaza of the Middle to Late Bronze Age (c. 1500 BCE). Finds here have included burials sites with valuable grave goods,¹⁵ the remains of several private residences and the largest palace discovered to date in Palestine.¹⁶ Among the grave goods discovered is a significant collection of gold jewellery and painted pottery, linked to the palaces of the ancient Canaanite city.



**COMPLETELY
DESTROYED**



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The site, including unexcavated graves, was completely destroyed by bulldozers and heavy machinery.¹⁷



Tel Al-Ujul Burial Site

2.2 Tel Rafah



LOCATION
ALONG THE SHORELINE NEAR THE
EGYPTIAN BORDER, RAFAH GOVERNORATE



SIZE
5,100 M²



SIGNIFICANCE

The archaeological site of the ancient settlement Tel Rafah dates back several decades. Features include a mound of debris and a brick wall. Excavation has unearthed large quantities of pottery fragments and a hoard of over 1,000 Greek coins inside a clay jar¹⁸ – a clear marker that the site is rich with buried antiquities.



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The site was subjected to airstrikes and extensive bulldozing, causing severe damage,¹⁸ including the large-scale levelling of the hilltop. It lies within the yellow zone, where daily shelling and demolition take place, so the full extent of damage remains unknown.



SEVERE DAMAGE



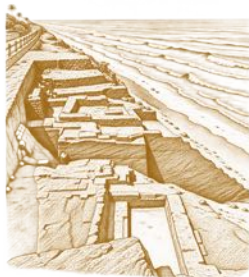
2.3 Al-Balakhiyah Archaeological Site



LOCATION
WITHIN THE SHATI REFUGEE CAMP, GAZA
GOVERNORATE



SIZE
800 M²



SIGNIFICANCE

Historically, the site is known as Anthedon (Greek for 'City of Flowers'). It served as Gaza's port during the Greek and Roman periods and as one of Gaza's ancient gates. It is mentioned in classical sources and by early historians such as Josephus (first century CE). Features of the site include the remains of historic walls, stone cisterns and a unique Byzantine cemetery with intricately decorated tombs.²⁰



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The site was subjected to extensive bulldozing by Israeli military vehicles accompanying invading forces. Al Mezan's team observed heavy vehicles in the archaeological area causing the obliteration of surface features and the destruction of mosaic floors and pottery.



EXTENSIVE
Bulldozing

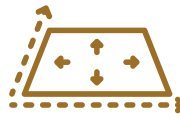


2.4 Byzantine–Roman Cemetery



LOCATION

EAST OF SALAH AL-DIN STREET IN THE CITY OF JABALIA, NORTH GAZA GOVERNORATE



SIZE
670 M²



SIGNIFICANCE

The cemetery sits on a hilltop 48 metres above sea level. It contains 134 graves dating from between the first century BCE and second century CE, making it the earliest documented complete cemetery in Gaza. Features include rock-cut graves, tombs built from solid stone blocks and instances of a style of burial jar designated for children. Artefacts discovered in graves include Byzantine gold coins, Roman jewellery, perfume bottles, oil lamps and pottery vessels.²¹



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The site was subjected to extensive bulldozing during the ground incursion in December 2023 and lies within the yellow zone controlled by Israeli forces.²²



EXTENSIVE
BULLDOZING



Byzantine-Roman Cemetery

2.5 St. Porphyrius Church



LOCATION

AL-AMADAN STREET, ZEITOUN NEIGHBOURHOOD
GAZA CITY, GAZA GOVERNORATE



SIZE

2,000 M²
(1,200 M² BUILT AND
800 M² OPEN AREA)



SIGNIFICANCE

The Greek Orthodox St Porphyrius Church is the third oldest church in the world, originally founded under the supervision of Bishop Porphyrius in 425 CE during the Byzantine period. The current structure was rebuilt in the 12th century and underwent extensive restoration in 1856. The church features a unique architectural style with massive walls reinforced by marble and granite columns and cross-vaulted ceilings, reflecting the artistry of the medieval period.²³

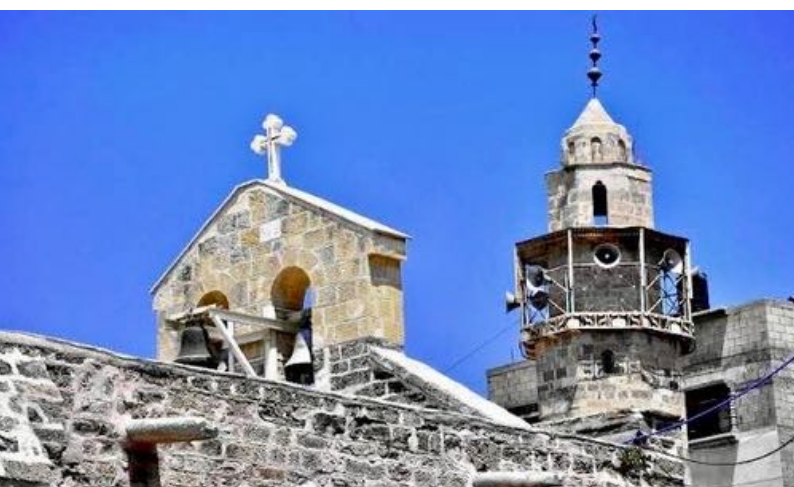


SEVERE DAMAGE



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The church was subjected to a series of direct airstrikes, the most severe occurring on 19 October, 2023. The bombardment caused the complete collapse of the adjacent historic Church Agents building and severe damage to the halls, historic pavements and open courtyards.²⁴ It also resulted in the massacre of displaced families (both Christian and Muslim) who were sheltering within the church's precincts.



St. Porphyrius Church prior to attack



St. Porphyrius Church showing damage sustained from attack

2.6 Al-Omari Grand Mosque



LOCATION

OMAR AL-MUKHTAR STREET, AL-DARAJ
NEIGHBOURHOOD, GAZA GOVERNORATE



SIZE

APPROXIMATELY 4,100 M²
(3,500 M² BUILT AND 1,190–
1,500 M² OPEN COURTYARD)



SIGNIFICANCE

The building was pivotal throughout the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic Rashidun, Mamluk and Ottoman periods. It was originally established in the seventh century CE on the ruins of a Byzantine church and underwent major expansions under the Mamluk Sultan al-Zahir Baybars. The mosque features a majestic architectural style, supported by 38 marble columns and cross-vaulted ceilings. Its library is one of the most important archaeological libraries in Palestine, once housing 132 rare manuscripts.²⁵



SEVERE DAMAGE



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The mosque was severely damaged by multiple direct attacks, affecting the historic arcades, the main prayer hall, the minaret and the archaeological library.²⁶



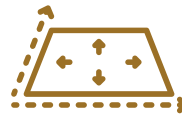
Al-Omari Grand Mosque after attack

2.7 Barquq Castle



LOCATION

GAMAL ABDEL NASSER STREET, KHAN YOUNIS



SIZE

16,000 M²



SIGNIFICANCE

The castle was built in 1387 CE as a complete governmental complex. It was a fortified and solid structure with high walls, containing a mosque and a well. A garrison of horsemen resided in the castle and a lodge was established to receive travellers, with stables for horses and four watchtowers. Until as recently as 1956, most of the internal buildings of the castle were still standing, but they have gradually been lost over time, leaving only one of the gates, the minaret, and parts of the wall.²⁷



SEVERE DAMAGE



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The site was directly bombed, causing severe damage, including the collapse of the remaining structures such as the walls, the gate and the minaret.

Barquq Castle after attack

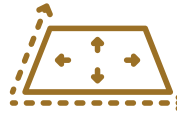


2.8 Al-Pasha Palace



LOCATION

AL-WEHDA STREET, AL-DARAJ
NEIGHBOURHOOD, GAZA GOVERNORATE



SIZE

2,860 M² (760 M² BUILT
ACROSS TWO FLOORS AND
2,100 M² OPEN AREA)



SIGNIFICANCE

The palace's foundations date back to the Mamluk era, when it served as the residence of the city governor; it continued to be used during the Ottoman era. Napoleon Bonaparte stayed there in 1799 CE. Notable architectural elements include stone façades decorated with two opposing lions, star-shaped motifs and geometric ornaments. The palace was later converted into a national museum housing rare artefacts, including manuscripts such as a Qur'an written on parchment paper, the Psalms of David, pottery jars, 900 metal coins, weapons and military helmets.²⁸



SEVERE DAMAGE



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The palace was directly bombed in December 2023 and January 2024, causing extensive destruction to parts of its historic buildings and archaeological vaults. During the ground invasion, Israeli occupation forces also looted rare artefacts from the museum.



Al-Pasha Palace before attack



Al-Pasha Palace after attack

2.9 Al-Qaysariyya²⁹ Market (Gold Market)



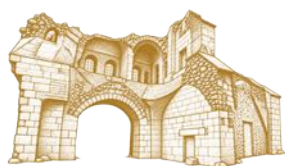
LOCATION

OMAR AL-MUKHTAR STREET, AL-DARAJ
NEIGHBOURHOOD, GAZA GOVERNORATE



SIZE

APPROXIMATELY 500 M²



SIGNIFICANCE

The market is one of the most prominent surviving economic landmarks from the Mamluk era, with a history spanning around 600 years. It consists of a narrow passage covered by a cross-vaulted ceiling and lined with 44 shops. Historically, it was a centre of trade for textiles and valuable goods, and today it is the renowned Gold Market.³⁰



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The site was directly bombed multiple times, sustaining severe damage. Some shops were destroyed, and serious cracks threaten the collapse of the main vaulted roof.



SEVERE DAMAGE



Al-Qaysariyya²⁹ Market (Gold Market) after attack

2.10 Hammam al-Sammara³¹ Archaeological Bathhouse



LOCATION

AL-AMDAN STREET, AL-ZAYTOUN
NEIGHBOURHOOD, GAZA GOVERNORATE



SIZE

APPROXIMATELY 500 M²

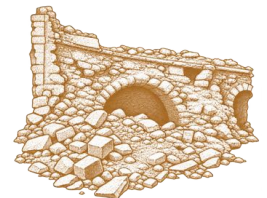


SIGNIFICANCE

Al-Sammara is the only surviving historical bathhouse in the Gaza Strip. An inscription indicates that its first restoration dates back to the early Mamluk era, when King Sanjar ibn Abdullah al-Mu'ayyadi renovated it in 1286 CE.³² Records of the Nablus Sharia Court state that in 1656 CE, the bathhouse belonged to Murad Pasha, one of the dignitaries of the Ottoman Turkish state. In 1893 CE, it required restoration and reconstruction, and continued in use until 1975, when it was abandoned and closed until it was rehabilitated in 1996.³³ The bathhouse was designed for gradual movement from the hot room to the warm room and then to the cold room; it had a domed roof with circular stained-glass inlays and a coloured marble floor³⁴



COMPLETE DESTRUCTION



DAMAGE / CURRENT CONDITION

The site was directly bombed in January 2024, resulting in its complete destruction.

Hammam al-Sammara³¹ Archaeological Bathhouse before attack



Hammam al-Sammara³¹ Archaeological Bathhouse after attack



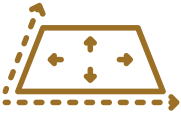
2.11 Abasan al-Kabira Mosaic



LOCATION
KHAN YOUNIS

● SIGNIFICANCE AND CURRENT CONDITION

This floor mosaic is unique, reflecting the artistic style of the southern Palestinian school during the Byzantine period.³⁵ It was subjected to direct bombardment, which shattered the floors and nearby icons.



SIZE
420 M²

2.12 Al-Bureij Mosaic



LOCATION
DEIR AL-BALAH
GOVERNORATE

● SIGNIFICANCE AND CURRENT CONDITION

Discovered in 2022, the mosaic dates back to a Byzantine church and features rare geometric and animal motifs depicting society and the living environment of the time.³⁶ It was subjected to systematic demolition and bulldozing by military vehicles, damaging the floors.



SIZE
450 M²

2.13 Gaza Port Mosaic



LOCATION
NEAR GAZA
CITY'S PORT

● SIGNIFICANCE AND CURRENT CONDITION

Discovered in 1966, the mosaic dates back to the early 6th century CE and documents commercial and social activity at the port.³⁷ Bombardment damaged its upper layers.



SIZE
APPROXIMATELY
400 M²

3 . THE HUMAN IMPACT OF THE SYSTEMATIC DESTRUCTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

This report's findings strongly suggest that Israel has carried out its destruction of Palestinian cultural heritage sites systematically and with the intent to eradicate Palestinian heritage. This heritage takes both tangible forms – ancient buildings, cemeteries, mosaics, markets, bath houses and so on – and intangible ones, such as the sense of belonging that arises from living among the material culture of a civilization that has endured for centuries. The extensive damage to these sites is not merely collateral – the unintended result of attacks against military objectives. It is a genocidal method that contributes to the erasure of a people. The impact of such an attack on heritage is manifold and profound.

3.1 Loss of landmarks and buildings

Destruction of heritage sites followed a pattern as the genocide progressed. First the damage appeared to be incidental, as a result of bombing surrounding buildings; but then the targeting was openly deliberate, culminating in the levelling of entire historic neighbourhoods, particularly in Gaza City. Among the most prominent landmarks destroyed are the al-Omari Grand Mosque, Pasha Palace, the administrative building of St. Porphyrius Church, the Byzantine church in Jabalia and al-Samra Bathhouse. Add to this the numerous historic mosques and residential buildings and sites dating back to the Mamluk and Ottoman periods that have now gone, this makes for huge tracts of rubble where once people lived, worshiped, honoured their dead and went about their lives.



Parliament building



Al-ghussein cemetery

3.2 The undermining of historical civilizational presence

Gaza is considered one of the oldest continuously inhabited areas in the world, dating back to at least the 15th century BCE. This land of the Canaanites, the ancestors of the Palestinians, has been claimed by many empires, including the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians and Romans. Other civilizations, such as the Greeks, Persians and Nabataeans, settled along the coast. And, due to its strategic geographic location, Gaza has long been an important node on trade routes linking Eurasia to Africa. Each civilization has left behind its own cultural traces, and it is this significant, and irreplaceable, historical record that the Israeli forces have deliberately targeted.

3.3 Attempted erasure of cultural identity

People become accustomed to new landscapes of rubble. Mental images of what stood before fade from the collective memory. A new norm establishes itself.

The horror of cultural erasure lies not just in the annihilation of the past, but in obstacles it poses to recovery in the future. The scale of destruction inflicted on Gaza is multivalent and catastrophic. Compounded by widespread social, educational, medical and infrastructural devastation across Gaza, it is easy to see how this cultural destruction could remain unaddressed for generations. Palestinians are in danger of losing their sense of belonging and of continuity with the past altogether. Contemporary culture, too, is under threat, with so many contemporary artists, writers, journalists, scholars and cultural producers of all forms and disciplines killed during the genocide.³⁸ And any view onto a hopeful future is difficult to locate in such a landscape of ruins.

3.4 Attempted erasure of cultural and family memory

The destruction of 101 historic homes has dislocated long-established families, breaking bonds with their ancestors and alienating them from their city. This also poses enormous legal and financial challenges to these homeowners, who, faced with huge restoration costs, may have to abandon these sites altogether.

Bulldozers and explosives damage not only architecture and economies. They also eradicate the historical layers that bear traces of daily life over centuries. Covered alleyways, bathhouses, homes and market places embody social rituals, local economies, neighbourhood relationships and personal presence. They are a diary of the neighbourhood and its residents; and they are social facilities where generations of people have gathered in joy and sorrow. These sites reflect an entire society. Erasing them weakens a people's ability to maintain personal and collective narratives. Demolition affects not only the site itself, but also the memories of lived experiences within and around it.

4 . LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The attacks by Israeli occupation forces on civilian objects, including archaeological and historical sites in the Gaza Strip, are in clear violation of international conventions and agreements related to the protection of world heritage, cultural identity and archaeological property.

4.1. The 1954 Hague Convention

The international community adopted an international instrument specifically designed to protect cultural objects during war, under the auspices of UNESCO. The Preamble to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict states that “damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world.”³⁹ Israel became a party to this treaty in 1957. Cultural property is defined under Article 1 of the Convention as “movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people”. Examples given include “monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular”, archaeological sites, works of art, museums and libraries. The Convention notes that cultural property may bear a distinctive emblem to facilitate its recognition, and in Article 16, sets out what form such an emblem shall take.

Under Article 4 of the Convention, parties undertake to respect cultural property, including by “refraining from any act of hostility” directed against it, as well as to “prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism” directed against it, and to refrain from reprisals against it. An occupying power must, under Article 5, support the competent national authorities in safeguarding and preserving its cultural property, and take measures to preserve it.

The cultural property damaged and destroyed since October 2023 by the IOF clearly falls within the definitions in the 1954 Hague Convention as being “of great importance to the cultural heritage” of the Palestinian people. Further, their nature as such was clearly indicated: Al Mezan’s research established that approximately 40% of the targeted sites bore visible markers, such as crescents, minarets, domes, or crosses or bells, indicating that they were religious buildings.

It is equally evident that the IOF has not taken measures to “refrain from any act of hostility” against such cultural property – and in fact has destroyed or damaged 71.5% of the total documented cultural heritage of the Gaza Strip. Far from supporting the competent national authorities in safeguarding and preserving cultural property, as well as attacking it directly, there is evidence that the IOF has carried out or permitted other actions prohibited under the Convention, such as theft and pillage.

4.2. International Humanitarian Law and War Crimes

International Humanitarian Law confirms the prohibition on attacks on cultural property. Israel is a party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which contain wide provisions protecting civilian objects. For instance, the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that civilian objects are entitled to special protection, emphasizing that they must not be attacked or damaged due to their importance for human survival. Article 53 of the Convention stipulates that "any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons ... is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations."⁴⁰ Extensive destruction of property not justified by military necessity is a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions⁴¹ and can amount to a war crime.⁴² Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions more specifically addresses cultural property. Article 53 prohibits any acts of hostility directed against historic monuments, works of art or places of worship that "constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples".⁴³ While Israel is not a party to Protocol I, Article 53 is widely considered to reflect customary international law and violations may amount to war crimes.⁴⁴

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territories concluded, in its report of 6 May 2025, that the attacks committed by Israeli security forces on cultural sites were intentional, disproportionate and not justified by military necessity, and therefore amounted to war crimes.⁴⁵

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) also addresses the protection of cultural heritage and establishes the war crime of "intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives".⁴⁶ In a case involving attacks against historical monuments and buildings dedicated to religion, including mausoleums and a mosque in the ancient city of Timbuktu, a Malian, al-Mahdi, was charged and found guilty of war crimes on the basis of this provision.⁴⁷ Recognizing the particular importance of investigating and prosecuting crimes against cultural heritage, the Court's Office of the Prosecutor issued a Policy on Cultural Heritage in 2021.⁴⁸ While Israel is not a party to the Rome Statute, the ICC has jurisdiction over crimes committed in Gaza due to the fact that Palestine is a state party. Following a referral by Palestine and other states, the ICC Prosecutor opened an investigation into crimes committed in Palestine since June 2014.⁴⁹

4.3. Genocide

In her October 2024 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the oPt analyses caselaw of the ICJ and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which establishes that conduct such as destruction of the cultural, educational and economic structures that tie a people to the land can be indicative of the presence of genocidal intent.⁵⁰ Genocide is defined in the 1948 Genocide Convention as certain acts "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such", including by "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part".⁵¹

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territories has also concluded that Israeli forces have committed several underlying acts of genocide in Gaza since October 2023, and that they demonstrated the requisite genocidal intent.⁵²

In its December 2023 Application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), initiating a case later joined by other states,⁵³ South Africa demonstrated that the systematic destruction of cultural heritage in Gaza is evidence of Israel's genocidal intent to destroy Palestinian cultural identity. In its Application, in a section on the 'destruction of Palestinian life in Gaza',⁵⁴ South Africa describes in detail the targeting and destruction of Gaza City's main library, numerous centres of Palestinian learning and culture, the museum of Palestinian heritage housing hundreds of cultural and archaeological artefacts, and other archaeological, historic and religious sites, describing these actions as aiming to destroy the very fabric and basis of Palestinian life in Gaza, thereby deliberately inflicting on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction.⁵⁵ Convinced that there was a "real and imminent risk that irreparable prejudice will be caused to the rights found by the Court to be plausible",⁵⁶ the ICJ ordered provisional measures pending its final decision, deciding that Israel must "take all measures in its power to prevent" all acts under the Convention.

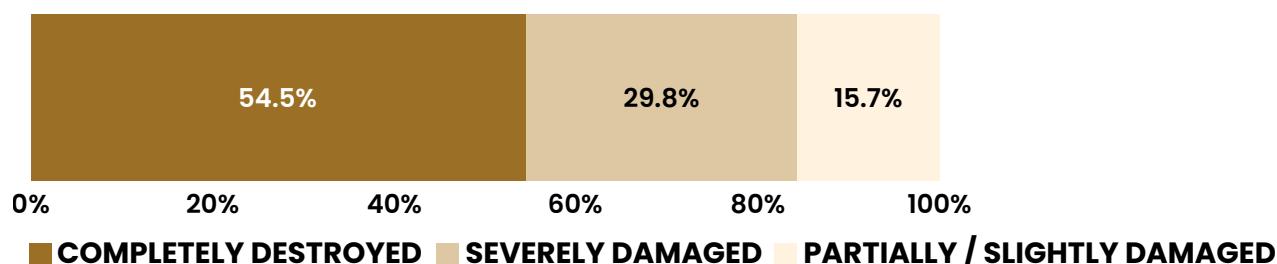
5 . SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The field study conducted by Al Mezan for this report found that Gaza lost an astounding 71.5% of its total documented cultural heritage during this war. Al Mezan documented damage to 226 archaeological and historical sites out of 316 recognized heritage sites in the Gaza Strip. Limited access to sites located in the area behind Israel's so-called "yellow line" mean that the total picture is likely to be even more devastating. The scale and nature of the damage inflicted on the cultural and world heritage in the Gaza Strip cannot be justified by military necessity, nor can it be merely incidental or a byproduct of Israeli military operations. Rather, the only possible conclusion that can be drawn is that the acts described in this report constitute a deliberate, systematic and organized destruction of archaeological and historical sites – a conclusion already reached by UN experts. The destruction targeted the roots of Palestinian presence from the Canaanite and Bronze Ages through to the modern era, with the clear aim of severing the emotional and material connection of the Palestinian people to their land and civilizational history, and in clear violation of the applicable international law.

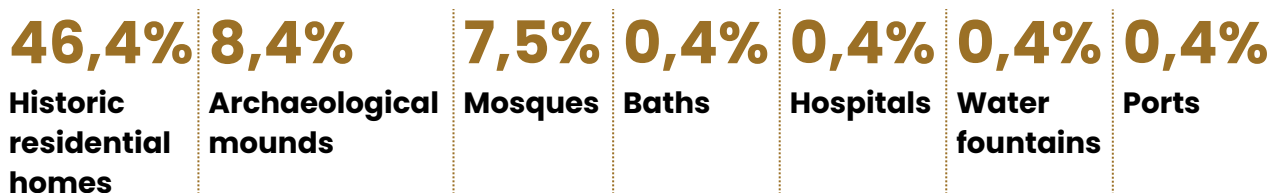
The main findings of the research were that:

- Israeli occupation forces completely destroyed 123 archaeological and historical sites in the Gaza Strip, representing 54.5% of the total documented sites; 29.8% were severely damaged and 15.7% were partially or slightly damaged.

DAMAGE TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SITES IN THE GAZA STRIP



- Of the sites damaged, 46.4% were historic residential homes, archaeological mounds represented 8.4%, and mosques 7.5%. Baths, hospitals, water fountains and ports, each accounted for 0.4%.

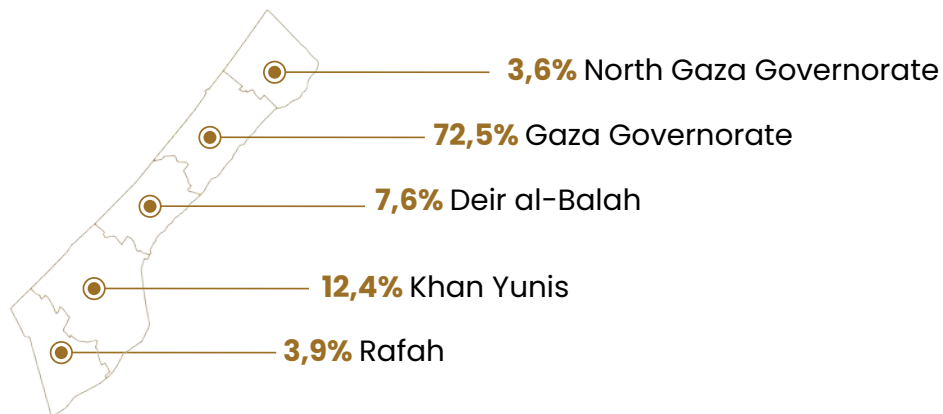


· The 105 historic residential homes that were targeted date back to the Ottoman period onwards, and had been inhabited by hundreds of residents who inherited them from their ancestors. Beyond the destruction of historical buildings, and the personal and intergenerational history and memories that they are part of, this constitutes a violation of the right to housing and deprives residents of a safe refuge. Al Mezan's researchers documented the complete destruction of 71 historic homes.

105 Historic residential homes targeted

71 Completely destroyed

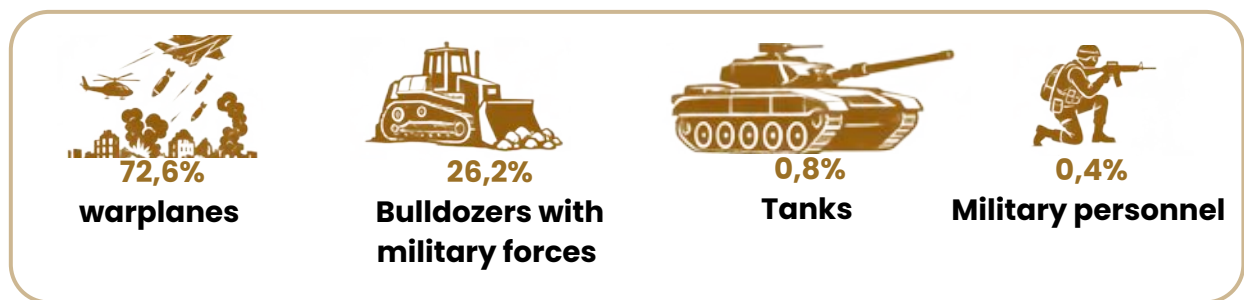
· In terms of locations targeted, 72.5% of the archaeological and historical sites were in Gaza Governorate, 12.4% were in Khan Yunis Governorate, 7.6% in Deir al-Balah, 3.9% in Rafah and 3.6% in North Gaza Governorate. Gaza City is the oldest city in the Gaza Strip and has historically been the economic and political centre hosting most institutions, followed by Khan Yunis.



· The main method used to attack archaeological and historical sites was aerial and ground bombardment, which accounted for 78.4%, another 11% were damaged by explosives and the remaining 10.6% by bulldozing, as large areas of the Gaza Strip experienced ground incursions, including raids, widespread levelling, and destruction of public and private properties.



- In terms of the means used in the attacks, warplanes of various types destroyed 72.6% of the sites, while bulldozers accompanied by military forces were used in 26.2% of cases, tanks account for 0.8% and military personnel for 0.4%.



- Around 44 archaeological and historical sites had been already targeted multiple times by the IOF during previous aggressions against the Gaza Strip. This confirms the premeditated intent to deliberately destroy these sites, with some being further demolished, levelled or buried after ground incursions into the area.

44 Sites



- The so-called “yellow zone” of Gaza occupied by the IOF, containing around 63 archaeological and historical sites, is now inaccessible and Al Mezan has not been able to clearly determine the full extent of the damage to these sites.

63 Sites



- Of the targeted sites, approximately 40% bore visible markers, such as crescents, minarets, domes, or crosses or bells, indicating that they were religious buildings.

≈ 40%



In addition to the destruction of archaeological and historical sites:

- Approximately 11 archaeological sites were subjected to looting, theft and plundering, especially in areas that experienced incursions. The stolen artefacts included clocks, gemstones, pieces of marble, statues, decorated stones, ancient columns and other architectural elements. These sites were located in areas under the full control of the Israeli occupation forces at the time of the thefts, and no one other than their forces could enter or exit these areas.
- Israeli occupation forces converted archaeological and historical sites into military barracks, from which they opened fire on Palestinian civilians. They also imposed collective punishments, particularly on displaced people who had sought refuge in these sites following forced displacement under fire and shelling. These forces targeted locations such as the Church of St. Porphyrius while civilians were sheltering there, demonstrating a blatant violation of international humanitarian law which prohibits attacks on both civilians and civilian sites.

These findings clearly demonstrate that, as concluded by UN mechanisms and many other legal experts, the destruction of cultural heritage in Gaza can only have been the result of deliberate targeting, and the deliberate and systematic intent of the IOF to inflict maximum harm on these sites and to erase their physical, civilizational and cultural presence, in violation of international law.

As Israel is responsible for these unlawful acts and violations, Israel is obliged to halt its aggression in the Gaza Strip, restore conditions to their pre-war state and provide reparations for material and moral damages through reconstruction and financial compensation. Furthermore, Israel holds criminal liability, requiring the prosecution and accountability of its leaders and soldiers for crimes committed, classified as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

6 . RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this report, Al Mezan calls upon:

- 1- The international community to work to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories and enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination, in accordance with the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in June 2024.
- 2- The international community to take serious and effective action to compel the Israeli occupation forces to immediately cease military operations, stop the war and the genocide being committed in the Gaza Strip, lift collective punishments and restrictions that violate international humanitarian law, allow humanitarian aid and begin the actual reconstruction of housing, public and private facilities and economic and cultural infrastructure.
- 3- The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to include the destruction of archaeological and historical sites in the Gaza Strip as a separate and prominent case within war crimes and genocide committed in the region, and to pursue the perpetrators.
- 4- The High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions and the 1954 Hague Convention to compel the occupying state to stop targeting the remaining archaeological and historical sites and provide international protection for them.
- 5- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) to send a joint technical mission to investigate, assess the qualitative and quantitative damage to archaeological and historical sites, and to develop a roadmap for urgent and emergency intervention.
- 6- UNESCO to invoke the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, to refer Israel's cultural destruction in Gaza to the International Criminal Court, to the UN Security Council or General Assembly.
- 7- The international community to ensure reparations and compensation, in accordance with the responsibility of the occupying state, which is legally obliged to pay financial compensation for the reconstruction and restoration of archaeological sites according to international standards.
- 8- Israel to allow heritage and archaeology experts to enter the Gaza Strip to contribute to restoration efforts and preserve Gaza's cultural heritage.
- 9- The relevant Palestinian institutions to take practical steps to document the violations committed by Israeli occupation forces in targeting and destroying archaeological and historical sites as part of the genocide in Gaza, and to form a supreme national committee to follow up on the case.

10- The relevant Palestinian institutions, in cooperation with the international community and international organizations, to immediately begin comprehensive national documentation and digital archiving of all missing archaeological artefacts (whether stolen or destroyed) to pursue them internationally and prevent their circulation in global antiquities markets.

11- The relevant Palestinian institutions, in cooperation with the international community and international organizations, to protect historical ruins and oversee the removal of rubble from completely destroyed archaeological and historical sites, such as the al-Omari Mosque and Hammam al-Samra, using specialized archaeological engineering methods to extract original architectural elements that can be restored and preserved.

12- The relevant Palestinian institutions, in cooperation with the international community and international organizations, to strengthen the Palestinian historical narrative in all forms and launch international campaigns highlighting the civilizational value of destroyed archaeological and historical sites (such as Tel al-Ajoul and al-Balakhiyah) to counter the Israeli attempts to falsify or erase Palestinian history and facts.

ENDNOTES

¹Under the terms of the ceasefire brokered by the United States in October 2025, Israel controlled 53% of the Gaza Strip. On 18th May 2026 Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that the Israeli authorities held 60% of the Gaza Strip. Another Israeli media report claimed that a further 13 square miles had been seized, and that the relevant percentage was now 64%. <https://www.jns.org/news/israel-news/netanyahu-idf-control-of-gaza-strip-expanded-by-10-since-october>

² See footnote 1.

³ The information in this paragraph comes from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Conditions of Palestinians at the End of 2025”. 31 December 2025, <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/en/post-details/?postId=23319>

⁴ See footnote 1.

⁵ The United States brokered a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip signed in October 2025, under the sponsorship of mediators (Egypt, Qatar, Turkey), and with the approval of the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian factions. This was during an international conference held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, with the presence of all parties.

⁶ Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, Damage and Risk Assessment Report of Targeted Cultural Heritage in the Gaza Strip, January 2025, <http://www.cchp.ps/images/Damage-Assessment-Report.pdf>

⁷ Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Paris, 1972, 17th Session, Article 1, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext>.

⁸ UNESCO, World Heritage, <https://www.unesco.org/ar/world-heritage>.

⁹ ‘Preamble’, Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 14 May 1954, <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention>

¹⁰ Islamic buildings or institutions associated with Sufism. (Literally “corners” or “nooks”).

¹¹ Inns with central courtyards.

¹² Includes cinema sites, railways and water reservoirs, as well as any items not classified under the preceding categories.

¹³ Damage caused by military forces, with demolition carried out using hand tools (such as pickaxes and sledgehammers), smashing, burning and other non-machinery methods.

¹⁴ See fn. 1.

¹⁵ Several Arabic words have different transliterations. For example, التل, meaning mound or hill can be transliterated “tal” or “tel” or “tall”. Different sources use different transliterations.

¹⁶ ‘Tall al-‘Ajjul’, Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tall-al-Ajjul> (accessed 8 May 2026).

¹⁷ Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, Damage and Risk Assessment Report of Targeted Cultural Heritage in the Gaza Strip, January 2025, p.365.

¹⁸ Arabi21, Tel Rafah Archaeological Site, 23/11/2021 <https://url-shortener.me/A6YD>

¹⁹ Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, p.394.

²⁰ Palestinian News & Information Agency (WAFA), ‘Key Tourist and Historical Sites in the Gaza Strip’, <https://info.wafa.ps/pages/details/33027> (accessed 8 May 2026).

²¹ Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, pp.362–363.

²² ‘First Complete Roman Cemetery Discovered in Gaza’, Euronews, 23 September 2023, <https://url-shortener.me/A70M>

²³ WAFA, ‘Key Tourist and Historical Sites in the Gaza Strip’

²⁴ Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, p.62.

²⁵ WAFA, ‘Key Tourist and Historical Sites in the Gaza Strip’.

²⁶ Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, p.62.

²⁷ WAFA, ‘Key Tourist and Historical Sites in the Gaza Strip’.

²⁸ Interview with Nariman Khalla, Supervisor of Pasha Palace Museum, 5 February 2025.

²⁹ This word means ‘city market’; it has been transliterated elsewhere as Qaisareyya or Qaisariyya.

- ³⁰ Mohammad Abu Rakba and Rami Al-Sharafi, *Archaeological Guide to Gaza City*, (Press House Palestine, 2022). in Arabic, p.18
- ³¹ This word is also transliterated in various sources as Samara or Samra.
- ³² ‘A ‘cultural genocide’: Which of Gaza’s heritage sites have been destroyed?’, Al Jazeera, 14 Jan 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/14/a-cultural-genocide-which-of-gazas-heritage-sites-have-been-destroyed>
- ³³ Genocide in Gaza, ‘Hammam Al-Sammara’, 30 December 2023, <https://gigaza.org/war-damage/%d8%ad%d9%85%d8%a7%d9%85-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%85%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d8%ba%d8%b2%d8%a9/>
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ WAFA, ‘Key Tourist and Historical Sites in the Gaza Strip’.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ See, for example, ‘War on Writers: A look at writers killed in Gaza’, Pen International, <https://www.pen-international.org/war-on-writers-gaza-cases-> (accessed 11 May 2026) and ‘Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war’, Committee to Protect Journalists, 27 May 2026, <https://cpj.org/2023/10/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-war/>
- ³⁹ ‘Preamble’, Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 14 May 1954, <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention>
- ⁴⁰ Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 1949, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949>
- ⁴¹ Article 147, Fourth Geneva Convention.
- ⁴² Articles 8.2.(a)(iv), Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>
- ⁴³ Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, Article 53, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977>
- ⁴⁴ Rules 38 and 40, ICRC Database of Customary International Law, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1>; and jurisprudence of international criminal tribunals.
- ⁴⁵ UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, paras 88–89, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/26>
- ⁴⁶ Articles 8.2.(b)(ix) and 8(2)(e)(iv), Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>
- ⁴⁷ The Prosecutor v. Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, Judgment of 27 September 2016, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CaseInformationSheets/Al-MahdiEng.pdf>
- ⁴⁸ International Criminal Court, Office of the Prosecutor Policy on Cultural Heritage, June 2021, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/itemsDocuments/20210614-otp-policy-cultural-heritage-eng.pdf>
- ⁴⁹ ICC Statement of 3 March 2021, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-fatou-bensouda-respecting-investigation-situation-palestine>
- ⁵⁰ Genocide as Colonial Erasure, Report of the Special Rapporteur of 1 October 2024, para 47, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/genocide-as-colonial-erasure-report-francesca-albanese-01oct24/>
- ⁵¹ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-prevention-and-punishment-crime-genocide>
- ⁵² Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 14 August 2025, paras 66 and 67, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/337>
- ⁵³ South Africa’s Application, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20231228-app-01-00-en.pdf>
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., paras 88–94.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., para 94.
- ⁵⁶ ICJ Order of 26 January 2024, para 74. <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>



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