



Israeli Soldiers Arrested in Belgium for War Crimes in Gaza

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Two Israeli soldiers have been arrested in Belgium on charges of war crimes in the Gaza Strip, following a complaint filed by two human rights organizations. The operation, described as a “turning point” by activists, marks the first time a European country has applied universal jurisdiction to prosecute alleged crimes committed by Israeli military personnel.

According to a joint statement by the **Hind Rajab Foundation (HRF)** and the **Global Legal Action Network (Glan)**, the two soldiers were in Belgium to attend the **Tomorrowland** music festival in Boom when they were identified and detained by Belgian federal police last Sunday.

“The suspects were identified and arrested with a clear show of force at Tomorrowland”, the two NGOs stated on Monday.

A “historic” arrest for international justice

Dyab Abou Jahjah, director of the HRF, commented on the event: *“Within the long journey towards accountability, this represents a milestone. It is the first time a European country recognizes universal jurisdiction over Israeli soldiers and acts accordingly, arresting them and taking them to a police station for questioning.”*

Dearblah Minogue, senior lawyer at Glan who collaborated on the case, also described the arrests as *“the most significant step for justice since the beginning of the genocide”*. According to Minogue, *“for the first time European law enforcement has acted concretely by arresting suspects. I believe this will trigger a domino effect in Europe and the rest of the world.”*

The charges against the two soldiers include the use of human shields and the indiscriminate destruction of property. Part of the evidence, Minogue explained, was gathered directly from the soldiers' social media: *“One of them posted videos of his unit blowing up properties in Gaza and Lebanon; the other was photographed next to a Palestinian used as a human shield by his unit.”*

An evolving legal framework

The Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office confirmed on Monday that it had received two complaints between Friday and Saturday from HRF and Glan, related to *“serious violations of international humanitarian law allegedly committed in the Gaza Strip by two members of the Israeli army”* present in Belgium for the music festival.

Thanks to **Article 14/10 of the Preliminary Title of the Code of Criminal Procedure**, which came into force on April 28, 2024, Belgian justice now has jurisdiction over crimes committed outside Belgium based on the **1949 Geneva Conventions** and the **1984 Convention Against Torture**.

“In light of this possible jurisdiction, the Federal Prosecutor's Office instructed the police to locate the two individuals mentioned in the complaint and proceed with their questioning. After the interrogations, they were released”, the prosecutor's office specified, adding that no further details will be provided at this time.

HRF and the global hunt for war crimes

The **Hind Rajab Foundation**, based in Brussels, is a non-governmental organization committed to pursuing international legal actions for war crimes committed in Gaza since the

conflict began in October 2023. Founder Abou Jahjah stated that the foundation has over **8,000 documented pieces of evidence** of alleged crimes by Israeli soldiers.

Although HRF has already initiated legal proceedings in Europe and Latin America, this is the **first time its efforts have led to a concrete arrest**.

“The Hind Rajab Foundation and Glan welcome this progress with determination and humility”, reads a joint press release. “We will support the ongoing investigations and urge the Belgian authorities to proceed with determination and independence. Justice cannot stop here.”

A heated political context

The arrests coincide with a speech delivered the same day by **King Philippe of Belgium**, who described the situation in Gaza as *“a disgrace to humanity”*. The monarch reiterated Belgium's support for the United Nations' calls for *“an immediate end to this unbearable crisis”*.