

## Israel-Hamas war

# Two Israelis questioned in Belgium over war crime allegations in Gaza

Prosecutors act on legal complaint by pro-Palestinian group that is pursuing IDF personnel



A girl runs after Israeli strikes on a school sheltering displaced people at the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip © Reuters

**Mehul Srivastava** in London, **Heba Saleh** in Cairo and Andrew Bounds in Brussels

Published JUL 21 2025

Prosecutors in Belgium said on Monday two Israeli soldiers had been questioned over allegations they violated international law while fighting in Gaza, following a complaint by a pro-Palestinian group.

The two Israelis were attending a music festival over the weekend in Belgium when the Hind Rajab Foundation filed an “urgent legal complaint” that cited the men’s social media posts as evidence they committed war crimes in [Gaza](#), according to the group’s chair, Dyab Jahjah.

Prosecutors decided they had potential jurisdiction over the allegations, on the basis of legislation that gives Belgian courts oversight over acts that may violate international treaties, the federal prosecutor’s office said in a statement.

“In light of this potential jurisdiction, the federal prosecutor’s office requested the police to locate the two individuals targeted by the complaint and to conduct

interviews with them,” it added.

The two Israelis were not detained by police after questioning. No charges have been filed by the prosecutors.

It is the first time Israeli military personnel have been questioned in Europe over alleged war crimes in Gaza, after similar legal complaints by the Belgium-based Hind Rajab Foundation against Israel Defense Forces personnel [in Brazil](#) and Peru.

The group is relying on a legal concept called universal jurisdiction, which allows courts to pursue allegations of serious crimes no matter where they may have been committed.

In relation to the two Israelis questioned in Belgium, the treaties alleged to have been violated were the 1949 Geneva convention and the 1984 UN convention against torture, the federal prosecutor’s office said.

The Hind Rajab Foundation said it had presented evidence that one of the men had used Palestinian civilians as human shields in Gaza, while the other had carried out the demolition of civilian infrastructure.

The Israeli foreign ministry said an Israeli citizen and an Israeli soldier had been “interrogated” in Belgium, and that the [IDF](#) “dealt with the issue”.

It was not clear why the ministry did not describe both men as IDF personnel, but Israeli media described one as an active duty soldier and the other as a reservist.

The Hind Rajab Foundation, named after a 5-year-old girl who was killed in Gaza last year alongside members of her family, claimed the questioning of the two men in Belgium was a victory for its efforts to apply the legal concept of universal jurisdiction against Israelis.

“This is a breakthrough,” Jahjah said. “We have already had [some] countries recognising universal jurisdiction . . . but this is the first time this happens in Europe.”

The group has collected evidence that Israeli soldiers have themselves posted on

social media, where some are easily identifiable while posing with Palestinian captives, and others seen laughing and celebrating while explosions destroy civilian homes.

The Hind Rajab Foundation said it has information on more than 1,000 Israelis who have fought in Gaza and has filed legal complaints in at least 10 countries that they have visited.

Jahjah said the foundation attempted to have one of the two Israelis questioned in Belgium arrested earlier during a trip to Italy, where he was attending a football match, but he was in the country too briefly for the complaint to succeed.

“So we waited for him to visit another country,” Jahjah added. “We have hundreds of cases ready.”

While only a few of the legal complaints by the Hind Rajab Foundation have gained traction, Israeli officials are alarmed that IDF personnel could be questioned and potentially prosecuted while on vacation or business trips abroad, even after military service.

The Israeli foreign ministry has warned soldiers to be careful about posting online while in Gaza, saying “anti-Israel elements may exploit these posts to initiate futile legal proceedings against them”.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence minister Yoav Gallant face the prospect of being detained by authorities in more than 120 countries for alleged war crimes in Gaza after the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for the two men last year.

The ICC’s member states include most of the EU, the UK and much of Asia and Africa, and the arrest warrants have forced the two Israeli politicians to curtail their overseas travel. They deny the allegations of war crimes.

Israel launched its military offensive in Gaza in response to Hamas’s October 7 2023

attack during which the Palestinian militant group killed 1,200 people, according to

attack, during which the Palestinian militant group killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli officials, and took a further 250 hostage.

The Israeli campaign has killed more than 59,000 people, more than half of them women and children, according to Palestinian officials.

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