

Mr. Pavel Durov, CEO  
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**Urgent Call to Address Telegram’s Legal and Moral Responsibilities in Halting Incitement Against Palestinians in Gaza on its Platform in Light of the ICJ Provisional Measures Order in Genocide Case**

Dear Mr. Pavel Durov,

We, the Palestinian Digital Rights Coalition, write you to express our deepest concern regarding the proliferation of hate speech, dehumanization, and incitement to violence and genocide against the Palestinian people on your platform.

On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) [ordered](#) provisional measures in the case of *South Africa v. Israel*, determining the plausibility that Israel is carrying out genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza and recognised the risk of irreparable harm. The Court adopted legally binding orders that include requiring Israel to prevent genocide against Palestinians in Gaza as well as to prevent and punish direct and public incitement to commit genocide, as foreseen in Article III(e) of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Given the documented use of online platforms to [incite genocide against Palestinians](#) in Gaza, including by the highest levels of the Israeli leadership, the ICJ order presents a necessity to address the urgent need for online platforms to fulfill their legal and moral responsibility in respecting human rights and preventing the dissemination of harmful content, including incitement to commit genocide, within their domains.

Notably, in its ruling, the ICJ took note of a [statement](#) issued on 16 November 2023 by 41 UN independent experts, including members of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights, who expressed alarm over “discernibly genocidal and dehumanizing rhetoric coming from senior Israeli government officials, as well as some professional groups and public figures.” Furthermore, the ICJ observed statements made by Isaac Herzog, President of Israel, and Israeli Minister Yoav Gallant, and specifically referred to a [post shared by the Israeli Minister Israel Katz on X](#). We note that all of these Israeli officials, as well as many others who have made similar incendiary statements, continue to disseminate harmful and dehumanising content on your platforms unabated.

On 27 October 2023, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed [serious concern](#) about “the sharp increase in racist hate speech and dehumanization directed at Palestinians since 7 October, particularly on the Internet and in social media.” It is evident from the mounting evidence and reports through the [Palestinian Observatory for Digital Rights Violations \(7or\)](#) that hate speech, incitement to violence, and dehumanization of Palestinians are present on your platform. This continues to contribute to a dangerous environment where online

violence and discrimination against Palestinians, normalized and even celebrated, is translated into offline violence.

Israeli officials openly share and post inciteful, dehumanizing, and genocidal statements on various social media platforms, including Telegram. These statements, such as describing the Palestinian people as “human animals” and “children of darkness”, have translated into unlawful acts in Gaza that may be in violation of the Genocide Convention, including the killing of over [27,585 Palestinians](#), the destruction or damage of at least 60 percent of all housing units, and the forced displacement of over 75 percent of the population. In Gaza, Israel has imposed conditions of life designed to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinians living there, placing them at risk of irreparable harm as noted by the ICJ, including by tightening its 16-year-long illegal closure and blockade, impeding the entrance of food, water, and fuel, as well as medical and humanitarian aid. Currently, Gaza is teetering on the edge of famine, with half of the population is at imminent risk of starvation and epidemics spreading amidst a collapsed health system.

While platforms always have a significant role and responsibility to ensure the combating of hate speech and incitement online, this responsibility becomes even more paramount when there’s plausibility of genocide. Online platforms have previously been implicated in fueling genocidal violence online, such as in the cases of [Myanmar](#) and [Ethiopia](#). In 2022, [Amnesty International issued a report](#) detailing how Meta’s dangerous algorithms and reckless pursuit of profit substantially contributed to the atrocities perpetrated by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya.

Online platforms must put an end to the spread of hate speech and incitement on their platforms, and must ensure the effectiveness of hostile language classifiers for the Hebrew language in order to manage content fairly and equally in the sharp rise of incitement in Israeli society against Palestinians, and must commit to conducting regular, comprehensive and independent reviews (due diligence) to ensure it complies with human rights.

The failure to effectively address hate speech and incitement not only undermines the safety and well-being of the Palestinian people but also violates your obligations under international law and human rights principles. As Palestinians in Gaza attempt to survive, you have a legal and moral obligation to prioritize the protection of human rights and take immediate and concrete steps to address and prevent the spread of harmful content on your platform, including hate speech and incitement.

Sincerely,

The Palestinian Digital Rights Coalition