



Literature & Books | Advocacy Initiatives | Spotlight | Ireland | News

380 British and Irish Writers Demand Immediate Ceasefire In Gaza

Prominent British and Irish writers unite, demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, denouncing Israeli actions as genocide, and calling for humanitarian aid, justice, and an end to the ongoing violence.

Almost 400 writers and authors from across the UK and Ireland have risen to condemn the ongoing violence in Gaza, calling for an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian intervention. Signed by renowned authors including Zadie Smith, Ian McEwan, and Marina Warner, the [open letter](#) explicitly labels the Israeli government's actions as genocide, echoing assessments from international human rights organizations. Drawing inspiration from the late Palestinian poet Hiba Abu Nada's poignant verse, these writers reject the rhetoric of abstraction and demand concrete action: unrestricted aid distribution, international sanctions, and a resolution that guarantees safety and justice for all Palestinians and Israelis.

Writers Demand Immediate Gaza Ceasefire

We, the undersigned writers of England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, ask our nations and the peoples of the world to join us in ending our collective silence and inaction in the face of horror.

A year and seven months ago, the Palestinian poet Hiba Abu Nada was killed by Israeli airstrikes. In her poem “A Star Said Yesterday,” she imagined for the people of Gaza a cosmic refuge — something utterly unlike the constant lethal danger they now face:

“And if one day, O Light

All the galaxies

Of the entire universe

Had no more room for us

You would say: “Enter my heart,

There you will finally be safe.”

The government of Israel has renewed its assault on Gaza with unrestrained brutality. Public statements by Israeli ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir openly express genocidal intentions. The use of the words “genocide” or “acts of genocide” to describe what is happening in Gaza is no longer debated by international legal experts or human rights organizations. Amnesty International, Médecins Sans Frontières, Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and many other specialists and historians have clearly identified genocide or acts of genocide in Gaza, enacted by the Israel Defence Force and directed by the government of Israel.

On behalf of the UN, and published by the office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, over 40 Special Rapporteurs and independent experts recently concluded: “While States debate terminology — is it or is it not genocide? — Israel continues its relentless destruction of life in Gaza, through attacks by land, air and sea, displacing and massacring the surviving population with impunity,” the experts said. “No one is spared — not the children, persons with disabilities, nursing mothers, journalists, health professionals, aid workers, or hostages. Since breaking the ceasefire, Israel has killed hundreds of Palestinians, many daily — peaking on 18 March 2025 with 600 casualties in 24 hours, 400 of whom were children.”

Palestinians are not the abstract victims of an abstract war. Too often, words have been used to justify the unjustifiable, deny the undeniable, defend the indefensible. Too often, too, the right words — the ones that mattered — have been eradicated, along with those who might have written them.

The term “genocide” is not a slogan. It carries legal, political, and moral responsibilities. Just as it is true to call the atrocities committed by Hamas against innocent civilians on 7 October 2023 crimes of war and crimes against humanity, so today it is true to name the attack on the people of Gaza an atrocity of

genocide, with crimes of war and crimes against humanity, committed daily by the Israeli Defence Forces, at the command of the government of the State of Israel.

Recently, Alexis Deswaef, vice-president of International Federation of Human Rights and a lawyer at the International Criminal Court, recalled the concept of the “bystander-approver,” drawn from the special tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. It refers to a senior official who looks on, remains silent, and whose silence is interpreted as a green light by the perpetrators.

We refuse to be a public of bystander-approvers. This is not only about our common humanity and all human rights; this is about our moral fitness as the writers of our time, which diminishes with every day we refuse to speak out and denounce this crime.

In taking this stand, we assert without reservation our absolute opposition to and loathing of antisemitism, of anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli prejudice. We reject and abhor attacks, hate and violence — in writing, speech and action — against Palestinian, Israeli, and Jewish people in all and any form. We stand in solidarity with the resistance of Palestinian, Jewish, and Israeli people to the genocidal policies of the current Israeli government.

We ask all people to join in our call for compassion, for reason and for mediation. For Hiba, for the nearly 54,000 Gazans killed, and for the survivors — starving, wounded, and scarred for life:

1. We demand the immediate unrestricted distribution of food and medical aid throughout Gaza by the UN.
2. We demand that sanctions be imposed on the State of Israel if the Israeli government does not heed this call, which is also the world’s call, for an immediate ceasefire.
3. We demand a ceasefire which guarantees safety and justice for all Palestinians, the release of all Israeli hostages, and the release of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners arbitrarily held in Israeli jails.

This genocide implicates us all. We bear witness to the crimes of genocide, and we refuse to approve them by our silence.

Signed:

Jeanette Winterson

Gillian Clarke

Menna Elfyn — as President, Wales PEN Cymru

Scottish PEN

Ricky Monahan Brown

Owen Sheers

Kevin Barry

Tom Bullough

Patrick Gale

Adam Nicolson

Sarah Hall

Sophy Roberts

Victoria Shepherd

John Lister-Kaye

Amy Liptrot

Rob Cowen

Melissa Harrison

Musa Okwonga

Benjamin Myers

Adelle Stripe

Helena Drysdale

Clare Shaw

Jay Griffiths

Louisa Young

Glyn Maxwell

Nina Stibbe

Brian Eno

Shazea Quraishi

Stella Duffy

Jan Woolf

Leone Ross

Shelley Silas

Aliya Gulamani

Inua Ellams

Lise Mayer

Chris Power

Helen Jukes

Joe Dunthorne

Diana Evans

Deborah Moggach

Philip Hoare

Andrew O'Hagan

Toby Litt

Xiaolu Guo

Gareth Evans

Seán Hewitt

Ian Grosz

Cathy Galvin

Katy Evans Bush

Daisy Buchanan

Ian McEwan

Iona Macduff

India Knight

Lucy Atkins

Emma Reynolds

Polly Atkin

Giselle Leeb

Philip Marsden

Merryn Glover

Madeline Dewhurst

Colin Teevan

Anna C Wilson

Joanna Nadin

Claire Fuller

Rachel Spence

Sunnah Khan

Elen Caldecott

Tom Jeffreys

Abir Mukherjee

Anna Mazzola

Louise Doughty

Andrew Taylor

Rebecca Stonehill

William Dalrymple

Wendy O'Shea-Meddour

Lou Abercrombie

Zadie Smith

Nick Laird

Kerry Hudson

Courtia Newland

James Miller

Karen McCarthy Woolf

Gregory Norminton

Paul McVeigh

Laline Paull

Lucy Coats

Guy Gunaratne

Sarah Winman

Monisha Rajesh

Patrick McGuinness

Angharad Price

Gareth Howell-Jones

Rose Kelly

Jeff Young

Niall Griffiths

Nicholas Royle

Wayne Price

Tom Parfitt

Kerri Andrews

Nora Chassler

Dilys Rose

Kathleen Jamie

A L Kennedy

Hanif Kureshi

Ron Butlin

Aonghas Pàdraig Caimbeul (Angus Peter Campbell)

Kate Mosse

Linda Cracknell

Mark Cocker

Sally Huband

Moira Buffini

Ian Woolf

Elif Shafak

Fiona Sampson

Nick Jubber

Christopher Brookmyer

Jamie Jauncey

Sarah Bernstein

Suswati Basu

Alice Albinia

Tom Pow

Rebecca Lenkiewicz

Cal Flyn

Rory MacLean

Will Atkins

Anna Abney

Madeleine Bunting

Alec Finlay

Christine Deluca

Regi Clare

Mario Relich

David Constantine

Lizzie Eldridge

Ruth Aylett

Jenni Calder

Fiona Graham

Sofka Zinoviev

Cynthia Rogerson

Julia Copus

Julian Evans

Elizabeth Reeder

Alison Phipps

Anthony Vahni Capildeo

Douglas Field

Monique Roffey

Horatio Clare

Ulrike Meike

Mohamed Ben-Madani

Kapka Kassabova

Ian McGuire

Dan Richards

Paul Henry

Jon Gower

Femi Oyebode

Charles Foster

Sam Leith

Jini Reddy

Kathryn Tann

Cynan Jones

Louise Kenward

Eric Ngalle Charles

George Monbiot

Gwyneth Lewis MBE

Jasmine Donahaye

Frank Cottrell Boyce

Richard Gwyn

Laura Barton

Jonathan Coe

Olivia McCannon

Mendez Mendez

Lucy Jones

Matthew Norman

James Buxton

James Hanning

Nicola Kelly

Nicholas Blincoe

Patrick Barkham

David Hartley

Ali Millar

Jackie Morris

Catherine Wilkinson

Julia Bell

Annie Worsley

Adam Farrer

Lydia Macpherson

Sean Lusk

Kate Ashton

Malachy Tallack

Jennie Feldman

Ed Vere

Chrissie Gittins

Michael Amherst

Vivienne Tregenza

Sue Purkiss

Sam Baker

John Grimwood

Anna Wharton

John Pare

Marcia Hutchinson

Tessa McWatt

Lucy Jones

Lily Dunn

Robin Mukherjee

Marina Warner

Imran Khan

Rupert Thomson

Carly Gledhill

Silvia Saunders

Astrid Alben

Philip Hancock

Mez Packer

Ben Hinshaw

Caroline Willcocks

Celia Silvani

Caro Giles

Rebecca Schiller

Rosie Dastgir

Amanda Lees

Jenny Knight

Paul March-Russell

Hannah Stowe

Jane Simmons

Caroline Sanderson

Maggie Fergusson

Roxani Krystalli

Marianne Brown

Louisa Adjoa Parker

Karen Powell

Clare Best

Marni Appleton

Cari Thomas

Christiana Spens

Megan Barker

Russell Celyn Jones

Stephanie Bretherton

J P Maxwell

Danuta Reah

Rachel Howard

Cailean Steed

Susan Cahill

Helen Mort

Rose Rouse

Bec Evans

Rodge Glass

Hannah Lowe

Hannah Copley

Irvine Welsh

Sinéad O'Hart

Sinéad Gleeson

Stephanie Merritt

Judith Thurley

Damian Fowler

Dan Tyte

Tom Gaisford

Chris Kent

Anthony Sattin

Pippa Little

Jane Sunderland

Claire Gleeson

Donald Murray

Garth Cartwright

Geraldine Mitchell

Sean Borodale

Lynn Davidson

Mark Burns

Lesley McDowell

Sheena Joughin

Marius Kociejowski

Rob Miles

Réaltán Ní Leannáin

Gemma Bowes

Seán Ó Muireagáin

Lynnda Wardle

Rachael Boast

Joanna Eede

Sarah Ward

Fiammetta Rocco

Erika Meza

Jo Weaver

Liam Carson

Amanda Douge

Mise Áine

Matthew Teller

Mícheál Ó Flaithearta

Gavin Plumley

Emma Jane Unsworth

Kirstin Innes

Jason Cockroft

Samuel Tongue

Elizabeth Rimmer

Amanda Smyth

Mairéad Ní Chonaola

Milagros Corcuera

Katherine Hill

Pascale Petit

Jane Clarke

Matthew Caley

Jessica Traynor

Alyson Sarah Hallett

Karen J MacDonnell

Pico Iyer

Lynn Mitchell

Doug Johnstone

Lynn Davidson

Maura Dooley

Yara Rodrigues Fowler

Wren Burke

Julie Brominicks

Clare Potter

Mary Cardaras

Jenni Desmond

Maggie Harris

Abi Elphinstone

Yvonne Boyle

Robin Dobson

Nicola Chester

Ruth Nic Giolla Iasachta

Chitra Ramaswamy

Lias Saoudi

Harry Sword

Sandra Dieckmann

Gloria Ward

Doreen Cunningham

Ada Grey

Karin Celestine

Hana Ormara

Holly Exley

Lena Jacobs

Helen Hancocks

Janet Sutherland

Catherine Cole

Ann O’Nammus

Carol McKay

Kathleen Kenny

Jessamine O’Connor

Patrick Jones

Ruby Wright

Oliver Lomax

Dai George

C.W.Laurie

Anita Pati

Kathryn Bromwich

Daniel Hahn

Peadar O’Donoghue

Anona Dawson

Leon McCarron

Alsy Conran

Jo Clement

Debbie Oates

Rebekah Harrison

Russell T Davies

Shona MacLean

Jenn Ashworth

Lucy Unwin

Sarah Dyer

Alison Lock

Michael Stewart

Rowe Irvin

Julie Hesmondhalgh

Ian Kershaw

Jon Woolcott

Cezary Bednarski

Claire Collison

Sònia Albert

Olivia Sudjic

Hanna Flint

Helen Kellock

Marta Altes

Fiona Cameron

Laura Sacron

Tristan Hughes

Daisy Hildyard

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett

Zoe Skoulding

Kiran Millwood Hargrave

Claire Collison

Ben Okri

David Nicholls

John Mitchinson

Damian Barr

Blindboy Boatclub

Sathnam Sanghera

Catherine Taylor

Bruno Santin

John Douglas Millar

Marion Urch McNulty

Charles Glass

Nell Stevens

Emma van Straaten

Francine Toon

Imogen Hermes Gowar

Anthony McGowan

Luciana Francis

JLM Morton

Amy-Jane Beer

Geoff Dyer

Eley Williams

Francesca Reece

Martha Sprackland

Claire Kohda

Shafik Meghji

Rebecca Watson

Anna Wilson

Joanne Limburg

Patrick Jones

Luciana Francis

Catherine Airey

Hannah Beer

Marie Crook

Kerry Downes

Maxwell Milligan

Raymond Khoury

Elodie Harper

Ben Masters

Tina Gharavi