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Campaign Against Misrepresentation in Public Affairs, Information and the News

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The Lord Biggar CBE
House of Lords
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Dear Revd Lord Biggar

We write to you with concern and disappointment with respect to your recent article in the Church Times of 18th November 2025 entitled "Israel's acts are not genocidal."

Your article begins in an extremely unfortunate manner by appearing to suggest that the Archbishop of York is being presumptuous by speaking out on this issue at all. And yet this is an extremely pressing moral, political, and social issue, in which everyone has the right to take an interest and express concern. Most people commenting on this issue, whatever their position, are non-experts. Your disparagement of the Archbishop of York for expressing an opinion at all seems unfair and ungenerous.

At this point in time the overwhelming majority of the world's genocide scholars believe that Israel has committed a genocide in Gaza. This includes highly respected Jewish and Israeli genocide scholars who were reluctant to come to this conclusion, such as Professor Amos Goldberg and Professor Omer Bartov. Contrary to what you claim, the Nazi death camps are not the paradigm of genocide as far as genocide scholarship is concerned. As Professor Amos Goldberg has explained, they are very much an outlier. The vast majority of genocides do not involve the systematic mass murder of an entire population.

The Genocide Convention itself explicitly recognizes this by defining genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy a group "in whole or in part." The killing of 8,000 Bosniak men and boys at Srebrenica in 1995 was legally recognized as genocide despite representing only a small portion of the Bosnian Muslim population. The Armenian genocide involved the killing of approximately 1 to 1.5 million Armenians which, although devastating, only represented part of the Armenian population. In Darfur, approximately 400,000 people died through violence, starvation, and disease in what the U.S. Congress recognized as genocide. Again, though terrible, this nonetheless represented only part of the targeted group.

Your insistence on using the World War II Holocaust's industrialized death camps as the standard effectively places the bar so high that almost no other atrocity could ever qualify, thereby undermining the very purpose of the Genocide Convention which was designed to prevent such crimes.

It behoves you to actually read and listen to the arguments that genocide scholars are making as to why what Israel is doing counts as a genocide. Professor Omer Bartov's arguments are laid out in his New York Times piece "I'm a Genocide Scholar. I Know It When I See It" (July 15, 2025) where he explains how Israeli leaders' intentions are being implemented to make Gaza uninhabitable and prevent Palestinians from reconstituting as a group. This article is freely available online. Professor Amos Goldberg has given several interviews on this topic which can be viewed on YouTube, for example, one entitled: "Why Gaza is Genocide with Israeli Holocaust Historian Prof. Amos Goldberg." There are also interviews with Professor Raz Segal, Dr Melanie O'Brien, and others on this topic, which can be viewed freely on YouTube.

In September 2025, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, the world's leading professional organization of genocide experts with around 500 members, passed a resolution with 86% support stating that Israel's actions meet the legal definition of genocide under the 1948 UN Convention. These detailed analyses, and the position of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, would suggest that the expressed views of the Archbishop of York are, if anything, overly timid.

Your claim that "the IDF has not generally acted indiscriminately" simply doesn't stand up to scrutiny when the actual evidence is considered. From the very start, Israeli officials explicitly announced a policy of collective punishment. For example, on October 9th, 2023, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared: "We are putting a complete siege on Gaza... No electricity, no food, no water, no gas – it's all closed." This, in spite of that fact that the average citizen of Gaza bore no more responsibility for the events of October 7th 2023 than the average citizen of the UK. This is the very definition of collective punishment, and is rightly regarded as a war crime and prohibited under Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The vast majority of Israel's targets in Gaza have been civilian in nature. Its targets have included hospitals, schools, universities, water treatment plants, sewage systems, power plants, factories, bakeries, farmland, and greenhouses. Over 80% of buildings have been damaged or destroyed. Given the precision of Israel's strikes on Iran during the so-called Twelve-Day War (in June this year), including drone strikes which targeted specific rooms within high-rise building to assassinate military leaders whilst leaving the buildings standing, it is simply not credible to think that this level of destruction was anything other than an attack on the entire population of Gaza. [Note: This is not an endorsement of Israel's actions during that war, which is simply another topic entirely].

Your comparison to Allied bombing in World War II is deeply problematic. Firstly, it is widely recognised that the Allies committed serious war crimes during that conflict. The Fourth Geneva Convention protecting civilians was adopted in 1949 precisely to address such conduct, and many of the Allies' actions would now violate international humanitarian law

and be considered serious war crimes. But even setting that aside, the comparison is fundamentally flawed. Hamas is not a powerful army conquering Europe like the Nazi Wehrmacht. The circumstances bear no resemblance to World War II and, if anything, the comparison only highlights how disproportionate and indiscriminate Israel's actions have been.

We appreciate that you acknowledge that Israel's military actions in Gaza have been morally wrong. These are important concessions. However, your conclusion, which relies upon your own reasoning, fails to address the overwhelming evidence that Israel's actions do meet the formal definition of genocide and have been neither exclusively nor primarily targeted at military targets, or in any way proportionate in nature. As already expressed, we sincerely hope you will engage seriously with the scholarship of genocide scholars such as Professors Bartov, Goldberg, and Segal, as well as the overwhelming evidence provided by human rights organisations and UN bodies of the indiscriminate nature of Israel's attacks on Gaza, and adjust your position accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Adam Waterhouse

Chair of CAMPAIN

On behalf of CAMPAIN committee and the Lambeth Witness Group