

Amnesty International Can't Handle the Truth About Hamas

A planned report on the terrorist group's crimes turned into a moral muddle, including a long critique of Israel.



THE HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP FINALLY RELEASED ITS REPORT DOCUMENTING HAMAS'S ATROCITIES ON OCTOBER 7, 2023, AFTER MONTHS OF DELAY AND INTERNAL STRIFE. (LEON NEAL/GETTY IMAGES)

By Charles Lane

For months, Amnesty International, self-proclaimed champion of human rights and among the world's most influential and best-funded nonprofits, has been blasting Israel for alleged war crimes in Gaza, while hesitating to divulge full results of its investigation into the bloody event that triggered that war: Hamas's atrocities in Israel on October 7, 2023.

Commissioned in early 2024, and mostly completed well over a year ago, Amnesty's October 7 report finally came out on Thursday—two years, two months, and five days since Hamas and other Gaza-based terrorist groups massacred some 1,200 people in southern Israel, and one year after Amnesty accused Israel of genocide in a separate report.

As *The Free Press* reported exclusively in September, Amnesty repeatedly missed target dates for publication without explanation. It balked most recently in late summer of 2025 after internal protests at the famously Israel-critical human rights organization, in which staff pleaded that exposing Hamas's crimes would lend credence to Israel's case for war in Gaza.

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Amnesty's belated report duly documents and condemns the murder, torture, hostage-taking, and other crimes against humanity committed on October 7, but media coverage treated this repetition of well-established facts as the anticlimax it was. *The New York Times* noted that "many aspects of the Hamas-led assault had already been widely documented by the United Nations and other international and local human rights organizations, and in investigations by the news media, including *The New York Times*."

The real story here is the internal machinations at Amnesty that caused the delays. Thursday's report sheds little light on that.

In confidential talking points sent to the organization's spokespeople—and obtained by *The Free Press*—Amnesty staff are instructed to tell reporters that the October 7 report was mostly complete in August but needed "to go through a rigorous quality assurance process" including

vetting by Secretary General Agnès Callamard and other senior leadership. This “process” didn’t end until “the weeks prior to publication.” An Amnesty spokesperson gave that response when asked to comment for this article.

Additional internal communications from the months preceding the report’s release tell a different story.

By August of this year, Amnesty had decided that the October 7 report was ready to publish on September 9. As word of the scheduled release spread through the organization, staffers and some section leaders began to call for a delay or cancellation. Callamard noted the objections in an email to section leaders on August 8 and promised to address them.

Amnesty scrapped the September 9 launch and rescheduled it for September 29, according to a regular weekly internal email sent on the morning of September 22.

Later on September 22—a day after the *Free Press* article appeared—another email informed Amnesty insiders that the report was delayed. The new publication date was given as “TBC,” or “to be confirmed.” Subsequent weekly emails made no mention of the report until December 2, when its release date was listed as December 11.

The question remains whether the report’s tardy release will salvage Amnesty’s reputation for impartiality or damage it further.

The timing is noteworthy because the main complaint raised by opponents of the report was that publishing it on September 9 could detract from an effort to pass a Palestinian statehood resolution during

the United Nations General Assembly, which ran September 9 to 29. Postponing the report to December 11 effectively met that concern.

Amnesty was also evidently determined to accompany its October 7 report with more condemnation of Israel instead of issuing a standalone critique of Hamas and its crimes. The [press release](#) Amnesty sent out along with the report, with the vague title “Sustainable peace requires international justice for all victims of all crimes in Israel and the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territory],” devotes the first 1,300 of its 2,600 words almost entirely to a call for the prosecution of Israeli “apartheid” and “genocide,” before it finally pivots to the findings on Hamas. The organization promoted the report [on X](#) with a three-part thread, in which only one post mentioned Hamas.

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Responding to the internal protests in an email to other leaders of the organization, Deshmukh wrote that “any delay to a publication on the Hamas actions would be fundamentally wrong,” given Amnesty’s professed commitment to universal human rights. He added that “all human beings . . . deserve their rights protected, and when violated, it is the duty of human rights defenders to speak up about the violation.”

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If Amnesty balked at publishing its findings about October 7, Deshmukh warned, "out of even a well-meaning aim to avoid one side or other misinterpreting or misusing our evidence, we are in fact ourselves arguably becoming complicit in a bias. We would no longer have a clear and comprehensive response to the (many) false accusations Amnesty faces around the world of bias towards or against one group or other."

Now Amnesty insists the only factor affecting the report's release date was "quality assurance," not spin or political impact. But some Amnesty critics are not inclined to give the organization the benefit of the doubt.

"It's good that the report is out," said Molly Malekar, who was active in Amnesty's Israeli section before the organization suspended it for protesting the accusation of genocide against Israel. "But the silence of Amnesty, for more than two years, about the victims of Hamas and other Palestinian militants was deafening. Amnesty surrendered to the populist pro-Hamas movement instead of taking a leadership role and insisting on universalism."

