

ICJ ruling in Gaza genocide case renews calls to end Israel arms transfers

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An Israeli soldier moves a U.S. made 155mm artillery shell near a self-propelled howitzer near the Israel-Lebanon border, where Israeli troops have been engaged in skirmishes with Lebanon-based Hezbollah militants. Photo: Jalaa Marey/AFP via Getty Images

The Hague, January 27 (RHC)-- Rights advocates and legal experts have welcomed the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) decision ordering Israel to take "all measures within its power" to prevent acts that could amount to genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

While it stopped short of explicitly demanding a ceasefire, the top court of the United Nations on Friday acknowledged there is a plausible risk of genocide in the bombarded Palestinian enclave and refused to dismiss the case brought by South Africa.

"It's a huge defeat for Israel — one of the biggest defeats ... in the past 75 years," said Raed Jarrar, advocacy director at Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), a think tank in Washington, DC. But the ruling "goes beyond Israel" alone, Jarrar told Al Jazeera, as it highlights countries' legal and political obligations to take action to prevent the alleged genocide unfolding in Gaza.

The ICJ's decision in The Hague also spurred renewed calls to suspend weapons transfers to the Israeli government, which advocates say amount to complicity and violate international law. That includes arms shipments from the United States, Israel's foremost backer.

"It's a watershed moment where the United States government is put on notice that they cannot continue their blank-check policies with Israel," Jarrar said. "The U.S. can't and should not continue its arms transfers with Israel now."

Washington provides at least \$3.8 billion in military aid to Israel annually. For years, rights advocates and a growing number of U.S. lawmakers have called on Washington to condition that assistance on Israel's human rights record and international law.

However, U.S. President Joe Biden has rejected those efforts while bolstering assistance to the Israeli government. After Israel began the Gaza war on October 7, following an attack by Hamas that killed more than 1,100 people in southern Israel, the Biden administration sent a request to Congress to approve a \$14 billion foreign aid package for Israel, the bulk of which would be military assistance.

The US government also twice bypassed Congress to provide thousands of artillery shells to the country as it continued to bombard Gaza. Israeli attacks have killed more than 26,000 Palestinians to date and decimated the coastal territory.

Yet, despite reports and investigations that showed U.S. weapons were used in Israeli bombings that killed Palestinian civilians in Gaza, attempts to pressure Washington to end the transfers or determine whether the arms are being deployed in rights abuses have failed.

"We have been telling the Biden administration that this is not just a goodwill gesture" to end the transfer of weapons to Israel, said DAWN's Jarrar, explaining that Washington has obligations under international and U.S. law. "This is something that they have to think about very seriously because the United States as a government is implicated in these war crimes, and US officials are also implicated," Jarrar said. "They have to take today's order [from the ICJ] very seriously."

Rights groups have called on all UN member-states to suspend their transfers of weapons that "can be used to commit violations of international humanitarian and human rights law" in Gaza.



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