

*Palestine's lawyer at ICJ says
U.S. continues to shield Israel
from accountability*



Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki is seated during the hearings on the advisory proceedings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal consequences of Israel's practices in the Palestinian territories in The Hague, Netherlands, on February 19, 2024.

The Hague, February 20 (RHC)-- An attorney representing Palestine at the United Nations' highest court called out the U.S. on Monday for routinely defending Israel's violations of international law, including its brutal 57-year occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

Paul Reichler, an American lawyer who has a record of success at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), said during a historic hearing on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory that the U.S. is nearly alone in attempting to provide legal cover for the Israeli government's actions over the past six decades.

The "two outliers" among nations that have intervened in the ICJ case on Israel's occupation are Fiji and the United States, said Reichler. "This is not surprising: Whatever offenses against international law Israel commits, the United States comes forward to shield it from accountability," he continued.

In its written submission to the ICJ, Reichler noted, the U.S. "argues that belligerent occupation is governed exclusively by international humanitarian law and not by the U.N. Charter or general international law."

"Here the United States attempts to defend Israel not by arguing that the occupation is lawful but that it is neither lawful nor unlawful," Reichler said, adding that such a position runs directly counter to that of its allies, including France and Switzerland.

"Just how far in disregarding the international legal order will the United States go to exempt Israel from the consequences of its ongoing violation of peremptory norms, including the prohibition on acquisition of territory by force?" Reichler asked. "Apparently very far indeed."

Reichler's presentation followed remarks by Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki, who said that "the genocide underway in Gaza is a result of decades of impunity and inaction" in the face of Israel's illegal occupation and seizure of Palestinian land. "Ending Israel's impunity is a moral, political, and legal imperative," said al-Maliki.

Monday's presentations kicked off a week of public ICJ hearings examining the legality of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory.

The U.S. is set to deliver its arguments in the case on Wednesday. Israel will not be participating.

The proceedings began less than a month after the ICJ handed down an interim ruling ordering the Israeli government to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza, a decision that Israel has repeatedly flouted as it continues committing atrocities in the enclave and targets the severely overcrowded city of Rafah.

Israeli forces have killed more than 29,000 people in Gaza since October 7th.

Agnès Callamard, secretary-general of Amnesty International, said Monday that "the current conflict raging in the occupied Gaza Strip, where the ICJ has ruled there is a real and imminent risk of genocide, has brought into sharp focus the catastrophic consequences of allowing Israel's international crimes in the [occupied Palestinian territories] to continue with impunity for so long."

"The world must recognize that ending Israel's illegal occupation is a prerequisite to stopping the recurrent human rights violations in Israel and the OPT," Callamard added.



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