

*South Africa asks International
Court of Justice for more
emergency measures against
Israel over impending famine in
Gaza*

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The Hague, March 6 (RHC)-- South Africa has asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order additional emergency measures against Israel over its war on Gaza, the court has said. In its application, South Africa warned that Palestinians in Gaza were facing starvation and asked the court to order that all parties cease hostilities and release all hostages and detainees.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the South African presidency warned that the people of Gaza cannot wait. "The threat of all-out famine has now materialised. The court needs to act now to stop the imminent tragedy by immediately and effectively ensuring that the rights it has found are threatened under the Genocide Convention are protected," it added.

South Africa also asked to court to order that Israel take "immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address famine and starvation" in Gaza.

It said that the ICJ, also known as the World Court, should take these measures without scheduling a new round of hearings because of the "extreme urgency of the situation".

The United Nations has warned that widespread famine in the Gaza Strip is "almost inevitable" without action. Aid organizations have blamed military operations, insecurity and extensive restrictions to the delivery of essential supplies for the shortage of food in the enclave, which has been under an Israeli siege and assault since October.

The five-month war has killed more than 30,000 people in the strip, according to health officials in Gaza. At least 20 people have died from malnutrition and starvation in Gaza since Israel launched its assault, Palestinian authorities have said.

The number of humanitarian aid convoys entering Gaza daily must at least double to meet some of the population's most basic needs, the World Food Programme (WFP) said on Wednesday. "I would say that we need to double the level we have now. We are now at around 150 trucks. We need a minimum of 300 trucks a day coming in," Carl Skau, deputy executive director and chief operating officer at the World Food Programme, told the Reuters news agency.

"But of course, that also in the longer run needs to be supplemented with commercial [supplies]."

In January, the ICJ ordered Israel to refrain from any acts that could fall under the Genocide Convention and to ensure its troops commit no genocidal acts against Palestinians, after South Africa accused Israel of state-led genocide in Gaza.

The request on Wednesday is the second time Pretoria has asked the court for additional measures – its first request to pressurise Israel to halt an offensive against the Gaza city of Rafah in February was denied.

A final ruling in the case in The Hague could take years.

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