

Japanese judge Yuji Iwasawa elected ICJ president, set to oversee Israeli genocide case



Judges and parties sit during a hearing at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, Netherlands, on January 12, 2024. (Photo by AP)

The Hague, March 4 (RHC)-- The United Nations' top court has elected a Japanese judge as its new president to replace Nawaf Salam who resigned from the post in January to become the Lebanese prime minister.

In a statement released on Monday, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) said Judge Yuji Iwasawa will head the Hague-based tribunal until February 5, 2027 when Salam's term was due to expire.

Iwasawa has been a member of the ICJ since June 2018. Before joining the 15-judge court, he was professor of international law at the University of Tokyo and chair of the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

The 70-year-old judge is the second Japanese to assume the ICJ's presidency after Hisashi Owada, who served as the tribunal's chief from 2009 to 2012.

Salam, who began his role as the ICJ head in February 2024, officially stepped down after being appointed as the Lebanese prime minister by President Joseph Aoun. Pro-Israel Judge Julia Sebutinde, from Uganda, had taken over the temporary presidency of the court.

The ICJ is currently dealing with several high-profile cases, including the genocide case against Israel.

South Africa lodged the complaint with the court in December of 2023, saying the occupying regime's actions in the Gaza Strip are "genocidal in character because they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group."

Since then, several countries, including Belize, Cuba, Nicaragua, Colombia, Libya, Mexico, Palestine, Spain, Turkey, Bolivia, the Maldives, Chile, and Ireland have joined the case.

In January 2024, the ICJ handed down a ruling, ordering Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent genocide in Gaza, but stopped short of calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Israel waged its brutal Gaza onslaught on October 7, 2023, but it failed to achieve its declared objectives despite killing at least 48,397 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

The occupying regime accepted longstanding negotiation terms by the Hamas resistance group under a Gaza truce, which began on January 19th.

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