



[ICJ Ruling Regarding Israel's Illegal Occupation of Palestinian Territory](#)

After 18 months of public hearings, the United Nations (UN) International Court of Justice (ICJ) released an advisory ruling on Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, declaring that its settlements and presence in the West Bank is a violation of international law. The ruling also deems that Israel's actions and policies are discriminatory and contradictory to the UN prohibition of apartheid and racial segregation. The decision calls upon Israel to cease new expansion efforts, repeal legislation regarding unlawful territorial occupation, and provide appropriate reparations. It is important to note that the finding was not sparked by a lawsuit between Israel and Palestine, but was instead called for by the UN General Assembly – making the ruling one of an advisory nature. The ICJ has delivered other advisory rulings regarding Israeli actions in the past. Back in 2004, it concluded that Israel's construction of a separation wall inside illegally-occupied Palestinian territories was a clear violation of international law and human rights, but despite this the Israeli government has since continued its unlawful encroachment into Palestinian land and established more illegal settlements. Thus, the misalignments between Israel's policies and the ICJ's advisory rulings have been prevalent for decades.

The recent ICJ advisory opinion underscores what social justice and human rights activists have been arguing and drawing attention to for years. Erika Guevara Rosas – Amnesty International's Senior Director for Research, Advocacy, Policy, and Campaigns – stated "This is a historic vindication of the rights of Palestinians who have endured decades of cruelty and systematic human rights violations stemming from Israel's unlawful occupation." Various countries and organizations around the world have conveyed their support for the ruling. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese applauded the ICJ's "role in upholding international law." Similar statements have been released by the Belgian and Bolivian Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Spanish officials, and the United Kingdom's Labour government. The Palestinian Authority also praised the court's ruling, after years of lobbying within the UN General Assembly. Mai El-Sadany, the Executive Director of the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, highlighted that "The world's highest court established clearly the illegality of Israel's occupation and its settlement policy and practices," discrediting Israel's absurd claims of self-defense.

The ICJ's ruling is seen as a rebuttal to Israel's decades of unlawful seizures of land in Palestinian territory. Israel's advancements can be seen as a failure by the international community to concretely implement recommendations by the ICJ, allowing for Israel to continuously ignore international law. The recent ICJ decision also follows nearly ten months of Israel's disregard for international humanitarian law through its destructive War on Gaza whereby Israel has been deeply criticized for its indiscriminate attacks against civilians. The ruling is not simply a legal setback for Israel, as it opens the door for Karim Khan – the Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court – to prosecute Israeli government officials responsible for the territorial infringements.

Following the ICJ's advisory ruling, the issue will now return to the UN General Assembly. The UN Secretary-General's Deputy Spokesperson, Farhan Haq, stated that the Assembly will now "decide how to proceed in the matter." The potential resolution by the General Assembly will not be binding, but likely an influential decision from a global body that represents all member nations. Possible repercussions for Israel include the suspension of its rights and privileges within various UN entities and expulsion from the UN with approval from the Security Council. Undoubtedly, the ruling has further damaged Israel's international reputation and standing, at a time

when it was already facing widespread criticism for its egregious human rights violations in Gaza. Despite the lingering consequences, Israel has unsurprisingly refused to pull out of illegally-occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank. As such, there is a need for substantive repercussions to Israel. The harmful cloud of potential further annexation in the West Bank lingers as well, with various Israeli officials recently making inflammatory remarks calling for this to take place. While the long-term impact of the ruling remains to be seen, human rights and social justice activists hope that it will at least deter any additional unlawful land seizures by laying out and clearly defining the illegality of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory at the world's highest court.