

*Permanent Observer Mission
of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations*



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة
لدولة فلسطين
لدى الأمم المتحدة

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Statement by Loureen Sayej, Third Secretary, before the 79th Session of the General Assembly Meeting of the Sixth Committee on the Scope and Application of Universal Jurisdiction (Agenda Item 85)

Mr. Chair,

The Palestinian people are being exterminated with the full view of the entire world. Genocide by displacement. Genocide by siege. Genocide by starvation. Genocide by incineration. Genocide from air, land, and sea.

There is no crime more serious than genocide. There is no criminal more dangerous than that who commits it.

The international community has failed those who were killed. It is failing the besieged, wounded the sick. Millions of lives hanging in the balance. Our entire international-law based order is failing the Palestinian people. It is failing the requirements of humanity, morality and legality. Our international law based order lies there under the rubble.

How this was possible. One wonders, how is this possible for a year, live on TV, genocide taking place? That for 365 days, the world has watched the 365 km² of Gaza turned into rubble and ashes.

Impunity leads to recurrence of crimes. 76 years, not a single Israeli official has been held accountable for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people. Not one. Israeli crimes are the most documented crimes in modern history. Israeli soldiers and officials have also voluntarily shown us themselves their crimes.

We joined the ICC almost ten years ago, and still await the issuance of arrest warrants- warrants delayed by those States who opposed us joining the ICC, those who lead campaigns against the ICC and threaten to sanction it, the same ones who opposed the General Assembly seizing the ICJ- many of those who also sit here championing universal jurisdiction when it is politically convenient while changing their own domestic universal jurisdiction laws to shield Israeli criminals.

To those States and their representatives in this room we ask, is it universal jurisdiction or specific geographical jurisdiction?

Is our blood cheaper? Are our civilians less worthy of protection? Are our lives less sacred? Did you grow accustomed to our killing? Or is there a different set of international law and justice depending on the race, religion or origin of the victim?

The State of Palestine deplores the politicization of international justice and the repeated efforts to thwart in front of both domestic courts and international Court the pursuit of justice for serious crimes committed against the Palestinian people. This double-standards undermine the viability of courts of law as vehicles for international justice, truth, and fairness, and further undermine the rule of international law and the purpose of an independent, impartial, and unbiased international justice.

Nevertheless, the State of Palestine reiterates that impunity for grave breaches and serious crimes threaten international peace and security and undermine our international law-based order. Rooted in the Geneva Conventions and reaffirmed in international treaties prohibiting the most serious crimes, universal jurisdiction is essential to ensure the rights of victims to an effective judicial remedy, to combat impunity, and to promote deterrence.

Universal jurisdiction is an established component of international law. It overcomes the jurisdictional gaps in our international legal order. It is a stepping-stone towards universal justice. We have the power, and indeed the responsibility, to promote, advance, and materialize universal jurisdiction, for all victims, including by rejecting politicization of its mechanisms.

We need your unconditional support to ensure justice for Palestinian victims and hold accountable Israeli officials, before international courts and your domestic courts.

The State of Palestine looks forward to engage in a discussion on universal jurisdiction, its definition, scope, and application, in order to advance its appropriate exercise, in accordance with the principles of international law, in service of justice for victims of the most serious crimes of concern for humanity as a whole.