

Statement of The United Church of Canada to the Government of Canada, communities of faith of the United Church, Canadian faith and religious communities, and all justice-seeking people of goodwill

RE: A call to support the work and recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, and to uphold the work of the UN Secretary General, UNWRA and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

On August 15, 2024, the Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary of The United Church of Canada, [wrote a letter](#) to the Prime Minister of Canada urging him to suspend diplomatic relations with Israel, given its flagrant violations of and disregard for international law. The letter called for full implementation of the findings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding measures in the face of plausible genocide and regarding the illegal occupation and apartheid in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

The death and destruction have escalated on all fronts, intensifying ethnic cleansing and genocide in all parts of the OPT and extending Israel's military aggression to Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

UN peacekeepers have been attacked.

The Secretary General of the UN declared *persona non grata* by Israel.

Humanitarian aid is impeded with Israel's banning of UNRWA.

Prisoners are tortured, and civilians bombed and killed on an unprecedented scale.

And Israeli state-sponsored terror is unleashed in absolute rejection of even the minimum standard of international law and human decency.

In this context, [Dr. Francesca Albanese](#), the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, released her second report, titled "[Genocide as Colonial Erasure](#)." Dr. Albanese raises alarm at the ongoing and deteriorating situation in the OPT which, she says, "risks causing irreparable harm to the very existence of the Palestinian people." "Genocide as Colonial Erasure" expands on Dr. Albanese's previous report, "[Anatomy of a Genocide](#)." In both reports, Albanese stresses that the events of October 7, 2024, did not occur in a vacuum but "are part of a long-term intentional, systematic, State-organized campaign of forced displacement and replacement of the Palestinians."

Dr. Albanese's clear, professional, and courageous call to uphold international law and stop genocide has been met with an aggressive smear campaign aimed at discrediting her

findings and drawing attention away from the ongoing horror. These attacks have included public calls to ban Dr. Albanese from entering Canada, remove her from office, and even waive her diplomatic protection, which can only be seen as a physical threat to her.

UN Special Rapporteurs play an essential role in the United Nations system. They are “independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective.”¹ In May of 2024 the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations raised the alarm about growing attacks against this institution:

“We are gravely concerned by the conduct of certain States and non-governmental organisations undermining important mechanisms established by the Human Rights Council. Attacking UN human rights experts in this way undermines the credibility and authority of the Council that appointed them and of the UN human rights ecosystem as a whole,” the Committee said.

“Now more than ever we call for the full support and solidarity of all stakeholders, in particular States, to allow human rights experts to discharge their mandates in a safe and enabling environment, and to uphold their independence and legitimacy.”²

The Government of Canada must strongly condemn these politically motivated attacks against the Special Rapporteur and ensure that Dr. Albanese has unobstructed access to the groups with whom she is scheduled to meet, as well as access to Canadian government officials. Canada must publicly support the UN Special Rapporteur system, including specifically the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the OPT.

Please reconsider the decision not to meet with her during her visit to Canada. We further call on the Canadian government and all Canadian organizations, groups, and individuals to support and implement the following recommendations in Dr. Albanese’s report, “Genocide as Colonial Erasure,” according to the competence of each:

- a) Use all their political leverage—commencing with a full arms embargo and sanctions—so that Israel stops the assault against the Palestinians, accepts a ceasefire, and fully withdraws from the occupied Palestinian territory in line with the ICJ Advisory Opinion of July 19, 2024;
- b) Formally recognize Israel as an apartheid State and persistent violator of international law, reactivate the Special Committee Against Apartheid to comprehensively address the situation in Palestine, and warn Israel of the possible suspension of its UN membership under Article 6 of the Charter of the United Nations;

¹ [ohchr.org/en/special-procedures-human-rights-council](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures-human-rights-council)

² [ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/attacks-against-un-human-rights-experts-must-cease-coordination-committee](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/attacks-against-un-human-rights-experts-must-cease-coordination-committee)

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- c) Support the deployment of an international protective presence throughout the occupied Palestinian territories;
- d) Develop a protective framework for Palestinians displaced outside Gaza, in line with international human rights and refugee law, while fully preserving their right to return;
- e) Support independent and thorough investigation(s) of all war crimes conduct, including genocide and apartheid, through the application in national courts of universal jurisdiction over those suspected of such criminal conduct, including all relevant ancillary offences;
- f) Investigate and prosecute corporate entities and dual citizens involved in crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories, including soldiers, mercenaries, and settlers;
- g) Ensure unhindered humanitarian assistance to Gaza and full financing and protection of UNRWA from attacks on its premises and personnel, and from libelous smear campaigns and ensure the continuity of its mandate in all fields.

The Special Rapporteur urges the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to investigate the commission of the crime of genocide and apartheid by Israel, and investigate prominent individuals mentioned in the most recent report.

The Special Rapporteur urges the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and Israel to investigate the broader context of eliminatory intent and practices of Israel against all Palestinians (triple lens test), including those with Israeli citizenship and who are refugees, and recent acts of genocide.

Act now to end the genocide, dismantle apartheid, stop the killing, and work for peace based on justice.