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The world vs. U.S./Israel at ICJ hearing for Palestine

The International Court of Justice on Feb. 26 concluded its final week of hearings on Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian lands. Held at The Hague, Netherlands, these hearings from Feb. 19-26 were historic for receiving testimony from representatives of over 50 countries, the highest number to participate in a single lawsuit before the court since its founding in 1945.



Activists rally at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, Netherlands, where a genocide complaint against Israel brought by South Africa was heard in January 2024. (Al Jazeera)

This was also the first time the ICJ had been asked by the United Nations General Assembly, in a resolution adopted in December 2022, to detail the legal impact of Israel's "prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation" of Palestinian territories, including the

West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem since 1967. The breakout of war in October 2023 most likely accelerated the process.

Over the decades Israel has built around 200 illegal settlements on Palestinian lands where nearly 700,000 illegal settlers live. Some lie just miles from the Gaza border, including the kibbutz raided by Operation Al-Aqsa Flood in October. Plans announced by the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu government in June 2023 for building thousands of new housing units for illegal settlers in the West Bank, despite construction bans in place for years, were a triggering factor leading up to the October 7 uprising.

In addition to representatives from 52 countries, three organizations — the Arab League, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and African Union — also gave arguments regarding Israel’s illegal occupation and its practice of racial discrimination against Palestinians. The overwhelming majority of those present sided with Palestinian representatives who called for an end to Israel’s illegal annexation and occupation of large parts of Palestinian land.

Of particular significance, as Workers World wrote about previously, was the statement by senior Chinese official Ma Xinmin on Feb. 22 that Palestinians have the right to use armed force against Israel because of the illegal occupation. (workers.org/2024/02/77190)

Yvonne Dausab, Minister of Justice speaking on behalf of Namibia, stated: “Israel should not be exempted from sanctions.” She raised that Namibia knows “too well the suffering of occupation, colonialism, systemic discrimination and apartheid,” having suffered “the first genocide in the 20th century” under German occupation. (TeleSur, Feb. 23)

German settlers systematically killed nearly 100,000 Herero and Nama people after a popular uprising over land seizures and forced labor between 1904 and 1908 in Namibia, then referred to by the colonialists as “German South West Africa.” (Al Jazeera, Feb. 20). Not surprisingly, imperialist Germany has sided with Israel in the ICJ hearings.

From the river to the sea

Speaking for Pakistan, Ahmed Irfan Aslam, Federal Minister for Law and Justice, reminded the court that David Ben-Gurion, founder and first prime minister of Israel, called for Israel’s expansion of “all territories between the Nile and the Euphrates.” He spoke of the Algerian war for independence that forced France to withdraw 1 million settlers from colonial enclaves far older and better established than Israel’s West Bank colonies. (TeleSur).

Indonesia’s representative Retno L.P. Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated: “Given the illegal nature of the occupation, Israel’s withdrawal must neither be done with preconditions nor subject to any negotiation. They must withdraw now.” (TeleSur)

Only a handful of countries spoke on Israel's behalf. The U.S. and Britain — two countries responsible for centuries of white-supremacist settler colonialism, including the murders of millions of Indigenous people on multiple continents — stood firmly with the genocidal Israeli regime.

Global solidarity with Palestine isolates Israel

The panel of 15 ICJ judges may take up to six months to deliberate before issuing an opinion, and even then, it will be advisory — without any real power to enforce. But meanwhile, more and more countries are severing diplomatic relations with Israel, including recalling their ambassadors. Twenty-two countries are banning direct flights and overflights to and from Israel.

The parliament of Ireland on Feb. 21 called for sanctions on Israel, a ban on settlement trade, recognition of Palestinian statehood and the dismantling of the system of Israeli apartheid.

The Water Treatment Workers Federation of India, representing 3,500 workers across 11 key ports, on Feb. 23 said it would refuse to load or unload weapons to Israel. Similar “block the boat” actions by dockworkers refusing to load Israeli ships and cargo and transport arms to Israel have happened since October 7 in the U.S., Australia, Canada, Sweden, Italy, South Africa, Belgium and Tunisia. (Jacobin, Nov. 27, 2023)

Several countries have been participating in an international operation of providing food and supplies in coordinated air drops into Gaza in recent days.

And despite the ongoing and intensifying bombardments by U.S. and British warplanes, the Ansarullah political bureau in Yemen is continuing to block passage of ships carrying arms and other goods to or from Israel in the Red Sea.

Since its inception, the United Nations has never had the independence from U.S. control necessary to serve the needs of oppressed and occupied peoples living under imperialism. That will take determined revolutionary struggles like those being carried out throughout occupied Palestine and the solidarity of hundreds of millions of workers around the world with their struggle.

From the river to the sea — Palestine will be free!

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