

Former Prime Ministers' and Foreign Ministers' Statement
on Israel's Genocide in Palestine

Belize City. 29 January 2024

We, former Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of Belize, express the highest admiration for the Republic of South Africa for charging Israel before the ICJ with the crime of genocide. In doing so they were almost alone in the world in fulfilling their obligation under the Genocide Convention. But their action will serve now to reanimate the global conscience. It is a reminder and spur for others to do everything possible to prevent a genocide in progress.

We, like many other Belizeans, had hoped that the ICJ would order an immediate ceasefire. But we note that the Court ordered Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent killing or causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; to ensure with immediate effect that its military does not commit any such acts; to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide; and to take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in Gaza.

As South Africa's Minister of International Relations Dr. Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor has said, the only practical way for Israel to comply with these orders is with a ceasefire.

This case has not been tried on the merits, and South Africa only needed to show plausible evidence that Israel was committing the crime of genocide. It easily did so. The Court's Order vindicates the decision of the government of Belize to have suspended relations with Israel. We suggest a reconsideration by those, such as some of the Evangelical Churches, that condemned GOB's move. Indeed, they should now join the call for Israel to prevent continuing genocide; to stop the slaughter that has already so wantonly destroyed tens of thousands of innocent civilian lives and made a wasteland of the small area into which over two million people were laid siege to by Israel.

The judgment cites reports from various UN agencies and concludes: “The Court notes that the military operation being conducted by Israel following the attack of 7 October 2023 has resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries, as well as the massive destruction of homes, the forcible displacement of the vast majority of the population, and extensive damage to civilian infrastructure”.

It also quotes the UN report stating that: “People are facing the highest levels of food insecurity ever recorded. Famine is around the corner. For children in particular, the past 12 weeks have been traumatic: No food. No water. No school. Nothing but the terrifying sounds of war, day in and day out”.

Just as importantly, because the crime of genocide requires intent, the Court cites some of the statements made by Israeli leaders that clearly demonstrate that intent. The Defence Minister promised a “complete siege” and said that there would be “no electricity, no food, no fuel”. He told his troops “I have released all restraints . . . We are fighting human animals . . . We will eliminate everything”. And the Israeli President: “It is an entire nation out there that is responsible . . . And we will fight until we’ll break their backbone”. And the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure: “All the civilian population in [G]aza is ordered to leave immediately. We will win. They will not receive a drop of water or a single battery until they leave the world”.

Until they leave the world.

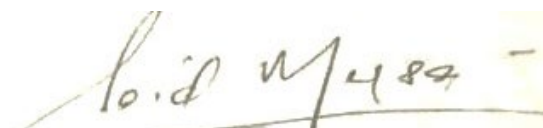
Perhaps the most significant part of the ruling is this: “The State of Israel shall submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to this Order within one month as from the date of this Order”. The orders are not left up in the air. Israel must submit regular reports, the first within a month, to prove its compliance.

Nobody expects Israel to comply. It believes that it enjoys immunity from all civilised laws of mankind. But that is where the Security Council comes in, the body authorised by the UN Charter to enforce the findings of the ICJ. The General Assembly can also play a pivotal role in the enforcement process over time.

And that is where other parties come in. Not only the tens of thousands of Jewish people and other global citizens that are demanding a ceasefire, but, crucially, the other states parties to the Convention. Belize is one of those states as are our fellow CARICOM member states. We are duty bound by the Convention to do all in our power to ensure that a genocide in progress stops. And we Belizeans who have faced the threat of Guatemalan forces armed and trained by Israel should step up and defend the right of the Palestinian people to life and to self-determination. By defending them we defend ourselves and all mankind. And the same logic and principles apply to our CARICOM brothers and sisters. Let our Caribbean Community also be counted. They too must discharge the sacred duty falling on all of us as conscientious, responsible and principled members of the international community.

We therefore once again endorse the first step taken by the Belize government to comply with the Genocide Convention and urge it to take all other steps it can. This includes joining South Africa in the substantive case against Israel for the crime of genocide. Such a move would be a historic way of inscribing Belize's name in the rolls of countries that fight for individual and universal justice.

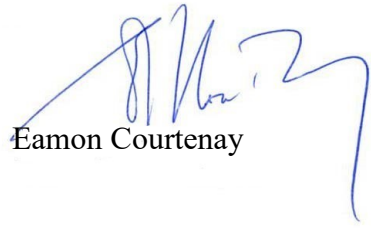
We are shocked by the decision of several western powers to withdraw funding from UNRWA, the UN agency that helps to keep alive the more than 4 million Palestinian refugees created by Israel's ethnic cleansing. They have done so based on Israel's accusation that 9 or 12 employees of UNRWA's 30,000 employees were among those who breached the fence on October 7. It is no surprise that this allegation is made the day after the ICJ concluded that Israel is plausibly committing genocide and demanded that effective humanitarian aid reach the people of Gaza. Now, the funding withdrawal helps Israel to disobey that order, to flout international law. Thus, we urge those powers to reinstate the funding immediately. Their failure to do so would be subversion of the very world order that they installed and are obliged to uphold.



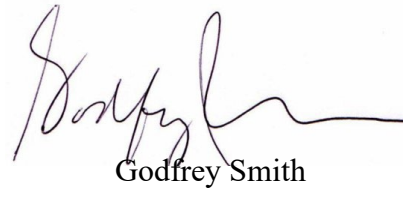
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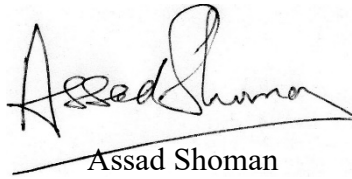
Dean Barrow



Eamon Courtenay



Godfrey Smith



Assad Shoman