



**STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE
ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

21 March 2026

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On this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, United Staff for Gaza urges accountability for the State of Israel's violations of the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) (ICERD).

We recall the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, of July 2024 ([A/78/968](#)). The ICJ determined that the State of Israel, in the unlawfully Occupied Palestinian Territory, enforces a regime of **systemic discrimination** against Palestinians, in violation of several treaties to which Israel is Party, including Article 2 of the ICERD. The Court further indicated that Israel's physical and juridical separation and isolation of Palestinian communities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violate Article 3 of the ICERD, which prohibits **racial segregation** and **apartheid**. The Court's findings were reaffirmed by the General Assembly ([A/RES/ES-10/24](#)).

We also recall that the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel concluded in September 2025 that "the State of Israel bears responsibility for the failure to prevent **genocide**, the commission of **genocide** and the failure to punish **genocide** against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip" ([A/HRC/60/CRP.3](#)).

We further recall extensive reporting by the Secretary-General (e.g., [A/80/39](#)), High Commissioner for Human Rights (e.g., [A/HRC/61/26](#)), and Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (e.g., [CERD/C/ISR/CO/17-19](#)), among other authorities and bodies, which describe **Israel's racially discriminatory policies and practices**. These include dispossession and demolition of Palestinian property, land expropriation, evictions and forced displacement, State-sanctioned settler violence, arbitrary detention and [torture](#), unequal protections and access to legal remedy, and movement restrictions, among numerous other measures "intended to maintain the **oppression** and **domination** of Palestinians" ([A/HRC/61/70](#)).

"There is a **systematic asphyxiation** of the rights of Palestinians," the High Commissioner for Human Rights [said](#) in January. "This is a particularly severe form of **racial discrimination and segregation**, that resembles the kind of **apartheid** system we have seen before."

Based on the foregoing:

1. **United Staff for Gaza calls upon Israel to respect the human rights of Palestinians and fulfil its legal obligations, including duties under the ICERD.** We condemn Israel's **systemic discrimination** against the Palestinian people and its "**[utter disregard for Palestinian lives](#)**." Only last week, in an abhorrent and yet emblematic incident roundly **condemned** by the Secretary-General, Israeli soldiers reportedly murdered a Palestinian family in the West Bank returning home after a Ramadan iftar, including two children, and assaulted two surviving children while boasting of the murder of their parents and siblings, calling them "**[dogs](#)**." This type of **State-sanctioned lethal cruelty** is commonplace. At least 1,071 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since October 2023, including 233 children, with thousands more injured and forcibly displaced.
2. United Staff for Gaza regrets that **sanctions** to stop and prevent Israeli settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank have been "**[largely ineffective](#)**," according to the High Commissioner for Human Rights. **We call upon Member States to ensure Israel's compliance with its legal obligations**, including its duties under the ICERD.
3. United Staff for Gaza encourages accelerated consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals for a **mechanism to follow up on Israel's violations of Article 3 of the ICERD**. In December 2024, the Secretary-General presented two options: a standalone mechanism on the model of the former **United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid**, which served to address the apartheid system in South Africa; or supplementing the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. We note that the State of Palestine and South Africa have argued for the former option ([A/79/588](#)).
4. **United Staff for Gaza mourns the loss of the 397 members of United Nations personnel killed by Israel in Gaza since October 2023**, nearly all of whom were Palestinians working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We deplore the **total absence of accountability** and urge Member States to uphold the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel by protecting all UN personnel, including our Palestinian colleagues, and ensuring **accountability for crimes perpetrated against us**.
5. United Staff for Gaza calls for compliance with the ICJ's Advisory Opinion, including an **end to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory**. We deplore that Israel ignored the General Assembly's deadline of 18 September 2025 to end the occupation. New settlement construction must be halted, existing settlements must be dismantled, and all settlers must be evacuated, per the ICJ and General Assembly.

The United Nations has a storied record of combating discrimination, racial segregation, and apartheid, including its principled and sustained opposition to apartheid in South Africa. We strongly hope that the international community will recover this **unity of purpose** and ensure **accountability** for Israel's violations of ICERD. It should act decisively, without delay, to uphold the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people.