

# Yemen's Right to Defend Gaza and the Obligation to Support Yemen

The ongoing genocide in Gaza, perpetrated by Israel, constitutes a grave violation of international law and human dignity, demanding urgent action to halt the systematic extermination of the Palestinian people. Yemen, invoking its rights and obligations under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) framework, has asserted its authority to defend the people of Gaza through measures including military action. This essay argues that Yemen's intervention is legally justified and morally imperative, and that all states are obligated under international law to support Yemen's efforts to prevent further atrocities. Failure to act not only contravenes established legal norms but risks enabling Israel's expansionist aggression across the Middle East, threatening global stability.

## Yemen's Legal Right to Defend Gaza

The *Genocide Convention* (1948) imposes a clear duty on states to prevent and punish genocide, defined as acts intended to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group. Israel's actions in Gaza—indiscriminate airstrikes, deliberate starvation, and destruction of civilian infrastructure—meet this definition, as evidenced by the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) January 2024 provisional measures in *South Africa v. Israel*, which found plausible evidence of genocidal acts. Article I of the *Genocide Convention* mandates states, including Yemen, to take all necessary measures to prevent such crimes, regardless of territorial boundaries. Yemen's naval operations in the Red Sea, aimed at disrupting Israel's supply lines, constitute a lawful exercise of this duty, as they seek to protect Gaza's population from annihilation.

Furthermore, the *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P) doctrine, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, obligates states to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity when a state fails to do so. Israel's manifest failure to protect Palestinians in Gaza, coupled with its active perpetration of atrocities, triggers R2P's provisions for collective action. Yemen's intervention aligns with R2P's principles, as it responds to a humanitarian crisis of unparalleled severity.

The precedent of NATO's 1999 intervention in Kosovo, undertaken to halt ethnic cleansing despite lacking UN Security Council approval, supports Yemen's actions. Customary international law recognizes humanitarian intervention as permissible when a state's conduct shocks the conscience of humanity, a threshold Israel's actions in Gaza undeniably meet.

## The Obligation of States to Support Yemen

Under the *Genocide Convention* and R2P, all states are legally bound to prevent genocide, not merely through rhetoric but through concrete action. This obligation extends to supporting Yemen's efforts to defend Gaza. Article VIII of the *Genocide Convention* encourages states to call upon competent UN organs to take action, but when such bodies are paralyzed by political vetoes—as seen in the UN Security Council's repeated failure to address Gaza—states must act independently or collectively. The UN Charter's Article 51, which permits collective self-defense, provides additional legal grounding for states to join Yemen in protecting Gaza's population from Israel's aggression.

Historical precedents underscore the consequences of inaction. The international community's failure to intervene during the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, despite clear evidence of mass atrocities, resulted in the deaths of approximately 800,000 people. Similarly, the appeasement of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, exemplified by the Munich Agreement of 1938, emboldened aggression and led to the Holocaust. These failures highlight the moral and legal imperative to act decisively against genocide. States that fail to support Yemen risk complicity in Israel's crimes, violating the post-Holocaust commitment of "Never Again."

## **Israel's Broader Threat and the Need for Collective Action**

Israel's actions extend beyond Gaza, revealing an expansionist agenda that threatens the entire Middle East. Its illegal annexation of the West Bank, in violation of the *Fourth Geneva Convention* (1949), and its military incursions into Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen demonstrate a pattern of aggression. The 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres and the 2006 Lebanon War illustrate Israel's willingness to destabilize neighboring states. Recent airstrikes on Syria and threats against Iran and Iraq further confirm its imperialist ambitions.

Yemen's resistance to Israel's aggression is not only a defense of Gaza but a stand against a regional threat that, if unchecked, could escalate into a broader conflict with global ramifications.

States must support Yemen through diplomatic, economic, and, if necessary, military means. Sanctions against Israel, arms embargoes, and prosecution of Israeli officials under universal jurisdiction for war crimes are critical steps. The principle of universal jurisdiction, recognized in cases like the arrest warrant for Augusto Pinochet (1998), allows states to hold perpetrators of international crimes accountable, reinforcing Yemen's efforts. Additionally, economic measures such as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, inspired by the anti-apartheid campaign against South Africa, can complement Yemen's actions, but military support may be required to achieve immediate results given the urgency of the crisis.

## **Moral and Legal Imperative for Global Solidarity**

Yemen's intervention, despite its own humanitarian challenges, exemplifies a commitment to humanity that shames wealthier and more powerful states. The moral weight of this crisis demands that states prioritize their obligations under international law over political al-

liances. Western powers, which have historically enabled Israel through military and financial support, bear particular responsibility to reverse course and align with Yemen's efforts. Failure to do so undermines the very principles of justice and humanity that underpin the international legal order.

Moreover, civil society has a role in pressuring governments to act. Global protests, advocacy, and support for Yemen's humanitarian efforts can amplify its actions. The international community must recognize that supporting Yemen is not merely a policy choice but a legal and moral necessity to uphold the sanctity of human life and prevent the recurrence of history's darkest chapters.

## **Conclusion**

Yemen's right to defend the people of Gaza is firmly rooted in the *Genocide Convention*, R2P, and customary international law. Its actions to disrupt Israel's genocidal campaign are a lawful and necessary response to an ongoing atrocity. All states are obligated to support Yemen through collective action, including diplomatic, economic, and military measures, to halt the genocide and counter Israel's expansionist threat. History teaches that inaction in the face of genocide breeds catastrophe; the international community must heed this lesson and rally behind Yemen to fulfill its legal and moral duty. The time for hesitation has passed—global solidarity with Yemen is the only path to justice for Gaza and stability for the world.