

Allegation: Israel Commits Genocide

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In the heightened rhetoric of the present day and especially in the aftermath of Israel's war against Hamas following the October 7, 2023 attack, Israel is often accused of committing "genocide," "acts of genocide" or of having "genocidal intent" against the Palestinians. Genocide is a very specific crime with legal elements requiring intent and action that are difficult to meet, and in no way do Israeli policies and actions reach this legal threshold. Rather, the sensationalist use of the term genocide in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not only inaccurate and misleading, but it unfairly serves to demonize the State of Israel and to diminish recognized acts of genocide.

The term genocide was first introduced by Polish-Jewish attorney Raphael Lemkin in 1944, with the construct of "genos" meaning race or tribe and "cide" meaning killing. Lemkin coined the term in response to the lack of existing terminology in international law to accurately describe, and consequently enable punishment of, the horrific offenses committed during the Holocaust, and earlier events, including the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The United Nations General Assembly recognized genocide as a crime under international law in 1946, and it was codified in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948.

The [definition of genocide under this convention reads](#):

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

This is the same definition used in the Rome Statute for International Criminal Court.

While one may condemn particular Israeli policies or actions with regard to Palestinians, the fact remains that in no way has Israel engaged in any action with the intent to exterminate, in whole or in part, the Palestinian people.

In 2024, South Africa brought legal proceedings in an attempt to have Israel be held responsible for Genocide by the International Court of Justice. As of this writing, reports indicate that South Africa and its supporters failed to provide sufficient evidence to the court to support their claims. In fact, when seeking to join in support of South Africa's case, the Irish [government asked the court to "broaden" its interpretation](#) of the definition

of genocide according to the Convention in order to hold Israel responsible. Meaning, Ireland itself understood that Israel could not be found to be committing genocide under 76 years of legal precedent and interpretation of the Convention, and therefore requested that the definition of the crime be altered to prove the case against Israel.

Indeed, accusing Israel of genocide has the collateral effect of diminishing real acts of genocide – such as those that occurred in the Holocaust, against Armenians, in Rwanda, Bosnia or Sudan.

Furthermore, it is deeply concerning that Israel is often one of the only countries accused by activist groups of engaging in genocide. This false claim singularly demonizes Israel by accusing it of committing a crime which has been suffered by the Jewish people - the people of Israel- and therefore some argue that this constitutes a perverse double standard.

Finally, claiming as some do, that there are many “types” of genocide, and Israel is, for example, committing “cultural” genocide, is equally problematic. Regardless of how the term is applied, the accusation is aimed at convincing the general-public that Israel is guilty of committing the most awful of human atrocities. Once levied, these charges tend to affect perception and confuse lay individuals, regardless of their falsity.