



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
24 September 2024

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

Fifty-seventh session

9 September–9 October 2024

Agenda item 7

**Human rights situation in Palestine and other  
occupied Arab territories**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 August 2024]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Urgent Call for International Action: Addressing the Massacre at Gaza's Refugee School and Ensuring Accountability for Violations of Human Rights**

The recent attack by Israeli forces on a refugee school in Gaza, where civilians were gathered in prayer, constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law and human rights. This brutal act, which resulted in the massacre of innocent people seeking refuge in a place that should have been safe, is a stark reminder of the devastating impact of the ongoing conflict on the most vulnerable populations. The deliberate targeting of a civilian refuge, especially during a time of worship, is not only a war crime but also an affront to the very principles of humanity and dignity.

This statement calls upon the international community to fulfill its moral and legal obligations to protect civilians, to ensure accountability for those responsible for such atrocities, and to impose sanctions on Israel as a means of enforcing international law. The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) must lead these efforts, ensuring that the rights of the Palestinian people are upheld and that justice is served for the victims of this heinous act.

### **The Massacre at the Refugee School: A Crime Against Humanity**

The attack on the refugee school in Gaza, where displaced families had sought shelter and were engaged in prayer, represents a horrific escalation of violence in the region. Schools, along with hospitals and other civilian structures, are protected under international humanitarian law, and any attack on such facilities constitutes a serious violation.

#### **1. Targeting of Civilians and Protected Spaces:**

- The school, which was being used as a shelter for refugees, was clearly marked and known to be housing civilians. The attack during prayer time, when many were gathered in a moment of peace and reflection, underscores the cruelty of this act. The targeting of civilians, particularly in a location designated as a safe haven, is a blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions and could amount to a crime against humanity.

#### **2. Violation of International Humanitarian Law:**

- International humanitarian law explicitly prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including schools, places of worship, and hospitals. The deliberate targeting of a site where civilians were known to be present violates the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution, which are designed to protect non-combatants during armed conflict. The massacre at the refugee school is a clear breach of these principles and demands urgent international response.

#### **3. Impact on the Civilian Population:**

- The psychological and emotional toll of such attacks on the civilian population cannot be overstated. Survivors and witnesses, including children, are left with deep trauma that will affect them for years to come. The destruction of a place of refuge further diminishes the already limited spaces where civilians in Gaza can feel safe, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region.

### **The Responsibility of the International Community**

The international community, particularly the United Nations, has a responsibility to protect civilians in conflict zones and to hold accountable those who violate international law.

The attack on the refugee school in Gaza is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern of violations that have characterized the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is imperative that the global community takes decisive action to prevent further atrocities and to ensure justice for the victims.

### **1. Condemnation and Accountability:**

- The international community must unequivocally condemn the attack on the refugee school and demand accountability for those responsible. This includes supporting efforts to investigate the incident thoroughly and impartially, with a view to prosecuting those who ordered and carried out the attack. The International Criminal Court (ICC) should be involved in this process, given the potential for war crimes charges.

### **2. Protection of Civilians:**

- The United Nations, through the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, must take immediate steps to protect civilians in Gaza. This includes enforcing safe zones, ensuring the protection of schools, hospitals, and other civilian structures, and deploying international observers to monitor the situation on the ground. The responsibility to protect civilians must be a central focus of the international response to the conflict.

### **3. Imposition of Sanctions:**

- The international community, led by the United Nations, should impose targeted sanctions on Israel as a means of pressuring the government to comply with international law. These sanctions should include economic measures, such as trade restrictions and asset freezes, as well as diplomatic actions, such as travel bans on Israeli officials involved in the decision-making process that led to the attack. Sanctions are a necessary tool to enforce compliance with international standards and to deter future violations.

## **Recommendations to the United Nations Human Rights Council**

The United Nations Human Rights Council has a crucial role to play in responding to the massacre at the refugee school in Gaza. The following recommendations outline the actions that the UNHRC should take to address this atrocity and prevent further violations of human rights in the region:

### **1. Establish an Independent International Inquiry:**

- The UNHRC should immediately establish an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate the attack on the refugee school. This commission should have the authority to gather evidence, interview survivors and witnesses, and produce a comprehensive report on the incident. The findings of this inquiry should be submitted to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for potential prosecution of war crimes.

### **2. Advocate for International Sanctions:**

- The UNHRC should recommend that the United Nations Security Council impose targeted sanctions on Israel in response to the attack. These sanctions should focus on individuals and entities responsible for planning, authorizing, and carrying out the attack, as well as broader economic and diplomatic measures to pressure Israel into complying with international law.

### **3. Promote the Protection of Civilian Infrastructure:**

- The UNHRC should work with other UN bodies and international organizations to ensure the protection of civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including schools, hospitals, and places of worship. This includes advocating for the establishment of safe zones and the deployment of international peacekeeping forces to protect civilians from further attacks.

### **4. Support Humanitarian Assistance:**

- The UNHRC should coordinate with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other relevant agencies to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to the victims of the attack and the broader civilian population in Gaza. This assistance should include medical care, psychological support, and aid for rebuilding destroyed infrastructure.

### **5. Strengthen International Advocacy:**

- The UNHRC should lead a global advocacy campaign to raise awareness about the situation in Gaza, particularly the impact of military actions on civilians. This campaign should aim to mobilize international support for the protection of human rights in the region and to pressure Israel to end its violations of international law.

## **Conclusion**

The massacre at the refugee school in Gaza is a stark reminder of the brutal realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the urgent need for international action. The deliberate targeting of civilians, particularly in a place of refuge and prayer, is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and human rights. The United Nations Human Rights Council has a moral and legal obligation to respond to this atrocity with decisive action.

The recommendations outlined in this statement provide a clear path forward for the UNHRC to address the massacre and to ensure accountability for those responsible. By establishing an independent inquiry, advocating for sanctions, promoting the protection of civilians, supporting humanitarian assistance, and strengthening international advocacy, the UNHRC can help to prevent further atrocities and to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people.

The international community must not stand by in the face of such egregious violations. It is time to act, to protect the innocent, and to ensure that justice is served for the victims of this horrific attack.

---