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South African Jews for a Free Palestine welcomes the decision by the South African Government to invoke the 1948 Genocide Convention and institute proceedings against ‘The State of Israel’ at the International Court of Justice

On the 29th December 2023, The Republic of South Africa instituted proceedings against the State of Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and requested the Court to indicate provisional measures aiming to end Israel’s genocide in Palestine. On the 2nd January 2024, the Israeli Government announced that it will appear in The Hague at the ICJ and the first hearing is set for the 11th and 12th January 2024.

South African Jews for a Free Palestine (SAJFP) wholeheartedly welcomes South Africa’s submission to the ICJ as part of a set of tactics towards justice in the pursuit of a free Palestine and the absolute ending of the genocide in Gaza. The genocide in Gaza has its roots in the ongoing Nakba that marked the establishment of the apartheid Zionist settler colony of Israel in 1948 in continuity with the establishment of the Apartheid State in South Africa in the same year. 1948 was also the year in which the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG), or the Genocide Convention – on which grounds South Africa has made its submission to the ICJ – was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

Thinking together about these connected apartheid and legal architectures from our vantage point as Jewish South Africans, we express our absolute condemnation of the genocide in Palestine and of the violent vandalization of our Jewish faith as it has been manipulated to support apartheid and settler colonial genocide in Palestine and globally through the conflation of Judaism and Zionism and antisemitism and anti-Zionism. This conflation is ahistorical, inaccurate, racist, and dangerous.

On the 2nd January 2024, Israeli Government Spokesperson Eylon Levy confirmed that Israel would defend the application “to dispel South Africa’s absurd blood libel”. Blood libel is an antisemitic trope in the form of a false accusation levelled against Jewish people for murdering Christians and using their blood in the performance of religious rituals. It is a trope that has provided fuel for the centuries of discrimination, persecution and pogroms experienced by the Jewish people, and it is one which we take deeply seriously. Labelling the application to the ICJ in terms of the Genocide Convention “blood libel” is not only a complete misrepresentation of what blood libel is, it is a further instance of Jewish historical experience being weaponised in service of Israel’s settler colonial project.



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This trope joins a significant deployment of dog whistle and explicit anti-Palestinian racism from both the Israeli government and Zionists globally and in South Africa in response to the submission. We refuse in the strongest terms the attempts to smear this process by Israel and its allies as well as by South African Zionist institutions and individuals such as the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the South African Zionist Federation, and Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein. Their words do nothing more than manufacture further violence and fail to honour the living and the dead.

One of the key principles that guides Jewish faith and morality is *tzedeq*, which means justice. It is this principle, among many others that guides us to unwaveringly dream and fight towards a world of justice and freedom in Palestine and globally. While we will not conflate law and justice, we commend this move as part of a repertoire of justice, guided by principles of solidarity, freedom, and *tzedeq*.

In this spirit, we reiterate our welcoming of this legal action and hope to see a ceasefire in the immediate term, alongside complete end to the genocide, and the dismantling of the apartheid settler colonial Zionist project of the ongoing Nakba in Palestine.

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