



Israeli soldiers walk in Gaza City's Shijaiyah neighborhood on Dec. 8, 2023, as part of an operation to round up hundreds of Palestinians across the northern Gaza Strip and truck some to an undisclosed location. ● MOTI MILROD/AP



Palestinian women and their children walk through destruction in the wake of an Israeli air and ground offensive in Jebaliya, northern Gaza Strip after Israeli forces withdrew from the area, on May 31, 2024. ● ENAS RAMI/AP

infrastructure - all of which are protected under international law - dealt a mortal blow to the international humanitarian law regime, leaving it reeling. With each child killed in Gaza, the pillars of the laws governing conduct in armed conflict were shaken, and with each missile and bomb that struck a hospital or aid center, a chunk of the humanitarian law ceiling crumbled. The genocide in Gaza is the most egregious embodiment of the systematic and flagrant violation of human rights. The right to life, the most fundamental human right, was rendered meaningless, and the Palestinian people were subjected to the most heinous forms of slaughter and genocide. Gaza has been the scene of the most horrific and systematic violations of all human rights and humanitarian norms simultaneously. Those who managed to survive the bombardments and gunfire were left to face the even more dire consequences of the total blockade of food, medicine, and healthcare. The large number of children, women, and men who have lost their lives due to starvation, disease, and the lack of basic medicine is a stark testament to this bleak reality. Ironically, over the past 57 months, the [UN] Human Rights Council has failed to hold a single special session to discuss the human rights situation in Gaza, due to the inaction or obstructionism of Western governments that claim to champion human rights. The genocide in Gaza has also had serious implications for the credibility and standing of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the judicial organ of the United Nations. The Israeli regime has brazenly disregarded six provisional orders issued by the ICJ to prevent genocide and ensure humanitarian access to Gaza, emboldened by its confidence in US support. Meanwhile, a pressing and disturbing question remains: how could the ICJ, despite overwhelming evidence of genocide in Gaza, fail to issue a ruling to halt the military operations of the Israeli regime, instead merely issuing a mild statement calling on Israeli forces not to commit genocide?!

**Unrelenting crimes against humanity**

Over the past year, alongside the egregious and unprecedented violations of humanitarian law that constitute war crimes, numerous instances of crimes against humanity and genocide have occurred in a continuous and persistent manner. All three categories of these crimes, in addition to the crime of "aggression", are criminalized under the

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and despite the Israeli regime's non-membership in the court, the necessary mechanisms, including referral by the Security Council or the intervention of the court's prosecutor, are in place to pursue and prosecute the regime's leaders. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority, since January 6455, has accepted the court's jurisdiction over crimes committed in the occupied Palestinian territories by filing a declaration under Article 56(7) of the statute. While the court's prosecutor in May 6468 took the step of requesting an arrest warrant for Netanyahu and Gantz for crimes against humanity, no concrete progress has been made in holding them accountable, and instead, the prosecutor and judges of the court have been brazenly threatened and intimidated by Israel and the United States. US President Biden personally launched a scathing attack on the ICC prosecutor's actions, and the prosecutor himself has been subjected to Israeli harassment and Mossad's fabrications against him and his family. In the latest development, Karim Khan has been accused of sexual misconduct against a female employee, with reports suggesting that this is a dirty plot by Mossad to pressure Karim Khan and the ICC. At the same time, Julia Motoc, the Romanian president of the ICC's pre-trial chamber responsible for examining the indictment against Netanyahu and Gantz, has resigned from her post. As a result, doubts have intensified about the ability or willingness of the ICC and its members to resist the illegitimate pressures from Israel and its Western allies and to take concrete and expected steps towards upholding the integrity and respect for international law and prosecuting the Israeli regime's leaders.

**ICRC's inaction on Palestine**

Over the past year, the unique position and humanitarian mandate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been compromised, with its invocation of the principle of 'neutrality' being perceived by many as a form of 'indifference' that is unjustifiable in the face of the blatant genocide of Palestinians. Furthermore, the ICRC has been found wanting in its response to repeated Palestinian requests for assistance, having fallen short in its duty to act. A striking difference in the stances, including the use of expressions and terms that raise suspicions of the committee's bias towards Israel, has raised serious

concerns about the possibility of the organization being influenced by the political and philosophical views of Western states on the issue of Palestine. Pro-Palestinian advocacy groups argue that the ICRC has been guilty of "taking sides" or, at the very least, showing "uneven sympathy" towards Israel from the get-go. For instance, ICRC statements have repeatedly condemned Hamas's attacks on Israel and explicitly called on the group to release "hostages," while studiously avoiding direct references to Israel and instead using passive voice to describe its actions and crimes. Meanwhile, the ICRC has opted to use the term "detainees" to describe the thousands of Palestinians who are often arrested and held in harsh conditions without charge or trial, with the aim of extracting concessions from their families. ICRC statements also frequently call on "all parties" to end hostilities or respect international humanitarian law. However, there is no equivalence between the nature and capacity of the Zionist regime's aggression as the occupying power on one hand, and the nature and capacity of the Palestinian resistance as the occupied nation on the other, or even Hamas, which uses the most basic means to defend itself. In this situation, "equating" or implying the equality of the two sides provides a legal cover to justify the severe crimes committed by the Zionist regime and its Western supporters, which in a way complements the media propaganda against the Palestinian people and resistance groups.

**UN agencies under fire**

It is necessary to shed light on the inadequate response of two other international bodies that were expected to play a pivotal role in halting the genocide: the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The WHO's response, as the global custodian of health and healthcare, to Israel's repeated and ongoing attacks on hospitals, medical centers, and medical staff, as well as the ruthless slaughter of patients and wounded individuals within hospitals, has been negligible and ineffective. A case in point is the WHO's response to the destruction of Al-Shifa Hospital on October 57, 6467, which left over 544 patients and medical staff dead; the organization merely condemned the attack without mentioning the perpetrator, Israel, or calling for an end to its assaults. The UNHCR has also been guilty of a similar dereliction of duty. While Israel is actively pursuing a poli-



Once, the realization of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter was a lofty aspiration. Now, after a year of blatant and persistent violations of these principles, with no consequences for the occupying regime, they appear to be nothing more than an unattainable ideal.



Palestinians line up for a meal in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Dec. 21, 2023. ● FATIMA SHBAIR/AP



cy of forced displacement of the Gaza population, the UNHCR has condemned Hamas and criticized the international community for its silence in the face of Israeli displacement. The upshot is that the repetition and perpetuation of atrocities in occupied Palestine and Lebanon have numbed many people to the point of apathy. The human conscience, which is the most significant barrier to the spread of evil and malice, has been influenced by the "justifying" rhetoric of Israel's Western supporters, leading to self-deception and denial of the severity of the crimes. The danger of trivializing evil and normalizing atrocities has never been more pressing. Edward Herman's concept of "the banality of evil" refers to "making the unthinkable seem normal" and "doing horrific things" in a regular and organized manner based on normalization. This is a trend where heinous, degrading, and inhumane acts become routine and are accepted as normal and factual. So, what is to be done?

**Call to action against Israeli atrocities**

If we accept that only hegemonic, bullying, and aggressive countries with a history of colonialism and interventionism benefit from lawlessness and chaos at the global level, we must uphold the existence of the United Nations and its principles and objectives, and strive to protect them. As one of the 55 founding members of the United Nations, Iran has always believed in and adhered to the UN's principles and objectives. Despite the injustices and affronts, we have suffered at the hands of this organization, which has been influenced by the abuse of power by its powerful members, we have never turned against the United Nations. We have not torn up the UN Charter, killed peacekeepers, disparaged the UN secretary-general, or disrespected the specialized agencies and organizations of the UN, even when we were under the harshest sanctions imposed by the Security Council. This is not surprising, given the Iranian people's reputation for being civilized, enlightened, noble, forward-thinking, responsible, and patient.

The world is in dire need of a coalition to put an end to Israel's brutality, lawlessness, and slaughter. In the current state of affairs, everyone must uphold the principles and objectives of the United Nations and be wary of their violation. The heinous crimes committed by Israel must not lead to the "banality of evil" and the "normalization of atrocities", casting doubt on humanitarian and moral principles. It is essential to meticulously identify and expose the breaches of the UN Charter and international law to the global community, and to condemn the Zionist regime's actions and those of its apologists. We must not allow crime and evil to become the norm, nor should we tolerate the erosion of the principles of the UN Charter, human rights, and humanitarian law. We must safeguard the achievements of human civilization in the realm of international law and humanitarian principles. Governments and other stakeholders who believe in international law and institutions must launch a joint campaign within the United Nations and other international and regional organizations to enforce the ICJ's provisional measures and put an end to the genocide of Palestinians. They must also support the ICC's decision to prosecute Israeli leaders for crimes under its jurisdiction. Simultaneously, we must hold international organizations such as the ICRC, the WHO, the UNHCR, UNESCO, and others accountable and push them to break their silence and inaction in the face of Israeli atrocities. We must make it clear to them that remaining silent in the face of the Gaza genocide, under the guise of neutrality, is morally reprehensible. In a situation where evil is spreading rapidly, neutrality and inaction are tantamount to complicity. In short, every individual has a responsibility to confront the trend that is targeting humanity and human dignity.