



SOUTH AFRICA

Opening Remarks

Panel 4

**2024 Conference of CSOs working on the Question of Palestine
“Building Bridges with International Civil Society to Address the
Ongoing Nakba”**

**Convened by the
Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the
Palestinian People (CEIRPP)**

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Chairperson,

It is an honour to deliver opening remarks at this important event that seeks to recognize the role of the international civil society in pursuit of the struggle of the people of Palestine. South Africa knows all too well the important role civil society plays. Indeed, it is thanks to the solidarity displayed by civil society during South Africa's struggle against apartheid that I can stand here today as a proud representative of my country, which this year will mark the 30th Anniversary of our freedom and democracy.

You have asked me to speak on the topic of ensuring compliance with international mechanisms after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Rulings. In this regard, it was Israel's failure to comply with the initial provision measures of 26 January 2024 and the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, that South Africa once again approached the ICJ on 06 March to request further and to modified provisional measures based on new information, particularly the widespread starvation in Gaza and the associated heightened risk of famine.

Accordingly, on Friday 28 March the ICJ handed down the following provisional measures:

- The State of Israel shall, in conformity with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay, in full co-operation with the United Nations, the unhindered provision at scale by all concerned of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, including food, water, electricity, fuel, shelter, clothing, hygiene and sanitation requirements, as well as medical supplies and medical care to Palestinians throughout Gaza, including by increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points and maintaining them open for as long as necessary;
- In addition, the State of Israel shall ensure with immediate effect that its military does not commit acts which constitute a violation of any of the rights of the Palestinians in Gaza including by preventing, through any action, the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance.

Without full compliance, it is predicted that these deaths will increase exponentially in the absence of an immediate and unconditional cessation of military activities and the lifting of the blockade.

This order was also in the wake of South Africa's call that all parties to the Genocide Convention, must take the measures necessary to comply with their obligations and refrain from or support any action, which might prejudice the right of the Palestinians to be protected from acts of genocide. While we welcome the latest ICJ order, we remain concerned that Israel continues violate the ICJ's orders, together with its obligations under the Genocide Convention as seen during the attacks in occupied Palestinian territories over the Easter weekend and in the past days ago.

Notwithstanding this, South Africa's case at the ICJ, together with the orders issued by the ICJ, no doubt played a role in securing, at long last, the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2728 (2024) on 25 March 2024, which demands an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip for the Holy Month of Ramadan and proposed that this ceasefire should lead to a lasting sustainable ceasefire.

In order to ensure Israel's full compliance, urgent measures such as sanctions and other economic and political measures necessary to restore respect for international law, must be enforced. We regret that very few countries, including Israel's allies, have demonstrated the political will to force Israel to comply with the ICJ orders.

We maintain our view that the only way to end the suffering is to end the illegal Israeli occupation, together with its apartheid practices. This will create conditions that ensure that the Palestinian people are ultimately free to enjoy their fundamental human rights including their inalienable right to exercise self-determination attain political independence, human dignity and economic emancipation.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms should be respected for all and everywhere, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language or religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

As we meet on the margins of HRC-55, it is important to reiterate and remind ourselves about the noble principles of human rights namely, universality, indivisibility, interrelatedness, among others.

Our determination to promote and protect human rights and support the people of Palestine in their pursuit of freedom remains unflinching. South Africa will continue to express our steadfast support for Palestine's struggle for independence.

I thank you.