

PRESS RELEASE

# J7 Task Force Statement on the ICJ Preliminary Ruling on Israel

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New York, NY, January 26, 2024 ... Leaders of the J7, the Large Jewish Communities' Task Force Against Antisemitism, issued the following statement in response to today's International Court of Justice ruling on South Africa's demand for an Israeli ceasefire in Gaza:

We take note of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) appropriate rejection of South Africa's extreme demand for an Israeli ceasefire - which tacitly recognizes Israel's right to self-defense against Hamas and others in Gaza - as well as the ICJ's call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. We are, however, disappointed by today's decision to issue a series of provisional measures against Israel, as it gives weight to South Africa's preposterous claims.

Opponents of Israel are shamelessly politicizing the Genocide Convention, making a mockery of actual genocides, past, present and future. It is part of a broader and morally obscene, anti-Israel campaign, led by South Africa, with the backing of the Iranian regime and other governments hostile to the Jewish State. Their goal is to weaken Israel's international standing, while bolstering the image of Hamas and other terrorist organizations committed to Israel's violent

destruction. It is unfortunate the ICJ, which is meant to serve as the ultimate standard-bearer for the international rule of law, has fallen victim, even if partially, to South Africa's sinister ploy.

It's important to note that the court's provisional ruling – as repeatedly stated - is not a judgment on the merits of whether or not Israel's actions amount to genocide, but rather aimed at “preserving” the state of affairs in preparation for a final ruling from the court, which could take months or years. We are confident the evidence will show that Israel is indeed compliant with the Genocide Convention, and the charges brought by South Africa are baseless in the eyes of the court.

The Court's provisional measures will now likely be misconstrued by some to falsely argue Israel is in fact committing acts of genocide in Gaza. This would be a lie. The legal definition, as laid out in the 1948 Genocide Convention, states that genocide constitutes “... acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group...” The fact remains there is no objective evidence that Israel is targeting the Palestinian people as a whole, in Gaza or elsewhere. As Israel has repeatedly stated, its conflict is with Hamas terrorists – who on October 7 launched an unprovoked attack on Israel, torturing, raping, mutilating and butchering 1200 people, and kidnapping 240 others - not with the millions of Palestinian civilians living in Gaza.

Indeed, during its military operations, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have gone to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties. This includes giving advance warnings for civilians to evacuate targeted areas, creating humanitarian corridors for civilian safe passage, facilitating the delivery of truckloads of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and working

with the United States and others to develop best practices on avoiding civilian casualties.

Rather than recognizing Israeli efforts to minimize civilian casualties – as per its obligations under international humanitarian law, which Israel fully abides by - the ICJ has sent a confusing and convoluted message that grants legitimacy to Hamas, an actual genocidal group, whose founding charter is rife with calls for anti-Jewish violence and other forms of antisemitism and extremism. More urgently, the ruling will be used by anti-Israel activists to further malign Israel and its supporters, and by antisemitic actors as “justification” for assaulting those advocating for the safety of the Jewish state and its citizens.

We are grateful to Israel’s allies, including the US, Germany, the UK, Italy, Guatemala, Austria, and others who have stood up to South Africa’s false accusations, and clearly rejected the genocide claim against Israel. We hope those governments and other like-minded states will similarly reject the ICJ’s interim ruling and continue to stand with Israel in defending itself against terrorism.

*The J7, the Large Communities’ Task Force Against Antisemitism, was formed in response to increasing rates of antisemitism around the world and comprises major Jewish organizations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Argentina and Australia.*