

Can the United Nations stop Israel? Canada can lead

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Alone or with others, Canada can immediately call on the UN General Assembly to convene an emergency special meeting.



UN Security Council members vote to fill a vacancy in the International Court of Justice on Jan. 24, 2025.

It is within the world's power to intervene effectively to stop Israel, write Edward Jackson and Gordon Breedyk. *Photograph courtesy of United Nations/Evan Schneider*

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In Gaza, Israel is perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity, actions that constitute genocide. For the sake of all Gazans—and for our collective humanity—Israel must be stopped.

It is within the world's power to intervene effectively to stop Israel, and Canada is well-positioned to play a key role. On Sept. 5, a panel of United Nations experts presented an [urgent appeal](#) to the General Assembly that it “convene an emergency meeting to,” among other things, “Call on Member states to act under ‘Uniting for Peace’ in line with General Assembly resolution 377 V and recommend a peace operation.”

The appeal identifies a number of actions, including opening all crossings to unrestricted humanitarian access under direct UN oversight, demanding an immediate permanent ceasefire, and securing the release of arbitrarily detained Palestinians and Israelis.

The facts are well known—and outrageous. As of Sept. 3, more than 66,700 people—64,739 Palestinians and 1,983 Israelis—have been reported killed in the [Gaza war](#), according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

As UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese [found](#), more journalists and media workers have been killed by Israel in Palestine since Oct. 7, 2023, than were killed in the United States Civil War, the Second and First World Wars, the Korean War, Vietnam War, former Yugoslavia wars (in the 1990s and 2000s), and the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan—*combined*.

Warrants of arrest have been issued by the [International Criminal Court](#) for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Both are suspected of “the war crimes of starvation as a method of warfare and of intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts.”

On March 2, the Israeli government announced the blockade of all food, medicine, fuel, and other humanitarian supplies from entering Gaza. Amichay Eliyahu, a Knesset member and minister in Netanyahu’s government, openly called for starving the Palestinian population of Gaza, saying, “there is no nation that feeds its enemies.”

In May 2025, Eliyahu added: “They need to starve. If there are civilians who fear for their lives, they should go through the emigration plan.”

More recently, the International Association of Genocide Scholars declared that Israel’s actions in Gaza meet the legal definition of genocide, citing mass civilian casualties, starvation, blockaded aid, and collective displacement.

As Linda McQuaig recently wrote in *The Toronto Star*, “By now, it’s clear that Israel will keep killing Palestinians in Gaza unless the world intervenes to stop it.”

Canada can and should exercise leadership, as Lester Pearson did in 1950 and 1956, first by supporting the “Uniting for Peace” resolution, and second by recommending a large-scale, impartial UN peacekeeping force be deployed to Gaza.

There is a significant groundswell of support for such action. Alone or with others, Canada should immediately call on the General Assembly to convene an emergency special meeting under the “Uniting for Peace” provision. From there, the General Assembly is obligated to convene an emergency special session to develop recommendations for appropriate action to stop the killing, destruction, and obstruction of food, water, medicine, shelter, and other relief.

These recommendations can include military intervention. With two-thirds General Assembly support, they would be submitted to the Security Council for implementation, carrying the weight of the membership of the General Assembly.

We call upon Prime Minister Mark Carney and the Canadian government to respond to the many urgent appeals from Canadians and the global community by demanding that the UN General Assembly convene an emergency special meeting without delay.

“Silence and inaction are not an option in the face of mass atrocities,” the UN experts emphasized. They added: “The General Assembly must uphold the duty of the United Nations to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians, end the violence, and guarantee that life-saving assistance reaches the people of Gaza without obstruction or delay. Anything less makes the international community complicit in these grave violations.”

Now is the moment for Canadian leadership. We must act.

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