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Israel-Hamas war

S Africa accuses Israel of breaking international laws on genocide in Gaza

Case brought by Pretoria to UN's International Court of Justice dismissed as 'baseless' by Netanyahu government



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa held a press conference on the Gaza conflict with Muslim leaders in South Africa this month © AFP via Getty Images

Joseph Cotterill YESTERDAY

South Africa has accused Israel of violating international laws on genocide in its military operations in Gaza in a case it has brought to the UN's International Court of Justice.

Israel had “failed to prevent genocide and is committing genocide” against Palestinians in Gaza and the court should order an immediate halt to Israeli military operations, South Africa said in an [application](#) filed with the ICJ on Friday.

South Africa argues that the court, a UN body which adjudicates disputes between states, has jurisdiction under the 1948 Genocide Convention, to which both countries are party.

Pretoria is also seeking urgent measures including an order for an immediate halt to Israeli military action, and it has called for hearings early in the new year.

Israel said the claims were baseless.

South Africa said Israel had shown “genocidal intent” in operations since the war began on October 7, when [Hamas attacked communities](#) in southern Israel, leaving a death toll Israeli officials put at more than 1,200. It accused Israeli forces of inflicting on Palestinians “conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical

...
destruction”.

“Israel rejects with disgust the blood libel spread by South Africa in its application to the International Court of Justice,” a spokesperson for Israel’s foreign ministry said. “South Africa’s claim lacks both a factual and a legal basis, and constitutes a despicable and contemptuous exploitation of the court.”

The South African case underlines the criticism that Israel is facing from governments across the so-called “Global South” as it intensifies a ground offensive into central Gaza after weeks of aerial bombardment that has seen the displacement of most of the territory’s population.

Over 21,000 people have been killed in Gaza, according to health officials in the Hamas-ruled territory. UN officials have accused Israel of obstructing aid — claims it denies.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa’s government has already suspended normal diplomatic ties with Israel over the war, and has also called for an International Criminal Court probe into the conflict.

The ICJ ordered Russia to halt its invasion of Ukraine last year after Kyiv brought a case, also on the basis of the UN genocide convention. Moscow ignored the ruling.

Earlier this year Russian President Vladimir Putin skipped the annual [Brics summit in Johannesburg](#), after South Africa said it could not avoid executing an ICC-issued arrest warrant for alleged Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

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