

Ministry of General Affairs  
His Excellency, the Prime Minister,  
Mr. H.W.M. Schoof  
Turfmarkt 147  
2511 DP The Hague

The Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists (NJCM)  
Mailbox 778  
2300 AT Leiden

Leiden, November 4th, 2024

RE: Letter regarding the recent developments in Israel, the Palestinian territories and Lebanon.

Dear Mr. Schoof,

The Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists (NJCM) calls your attention to recent developments in Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon. With growing concern, we note that the situation in this region increasingly pressures fundamental human rights and humanitarian law standards. Numerous organizations have reported serious and widespread violations of human rights and humanitarian law, with the situation escalating further.

We are particularly troubled by reports of attacks on UN peacekeepers in the region. It appears that UN personnel and facilities are deliberately targeted, endangering both the safety of UN staff and the adherence to international obligations. We urgently appeal to the Dutch government, and specifically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to engage diplomatically and issue a strong condemnation of these attacks across various international forums.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned by recent Israeli legislation that prohibits the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) from providing humanitarian aid within the Palestinian Territories. This decision severely restricts access to life-saving assistance for vulnerable civilians, including a significant number of children. UNRWA oversees much of the civil administration in Gaza, managing essential services such as education, healthcare, and emergency aid. The current trajectory poses a risk of causing irreparable harm to the very existence of the Palestinian people. No alternative exists to ensure the continuity of these vital services. We foresee a surge in human rights violations and increased humanitarian needs, including shortages of food, water, shelter, and disease outbreaks, due to this restricted access to basic provisions. As a country that prides itself on leading in human rights advocacy and has ratified numerous human rights treaties, the Netherlands has a duty to uphold these commitments. We therefore urge the Dutch government to raise this issue in international forums and to express a stronger stance, especially given the growing international criticism.

Another crucial issue concerns the follow-up to the orders issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on January 26, 2024, March 28, 2024, and May 24, 2024, regarding the situation in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. The ICJ has identified a tangible risk of genocide, which under the Genocide Convention obligates the Netherlands to engage in preventive measures. Additionally, we are concerned about the violence against journalists in the Palestinian Territories, which not only threatens their safety but also endangers the right to information. In its July 19, 2024 advisory opinion, the ICJ further stressed the importance of upholding international law and called upon Israel to fulfill its obligations concerning the protection of human rights, children's rights, and humanitarian law. The ICJ emphasized that Israel must take measures to respect human rights, prevent violence against civilians, and reconsider illegal settlements and other actions that contravene international law. As the United Nations' highest judicial authority, the ICJ provides an independent and authoritative framework to support the international rule of law and to promote adherence to international legal standards.

In light of the above developments, it appears that the Israeli government's willingness to comply with the ICJ's rulings is notably limited. We observe that, despite the ICJ's clear directives, little progress has been made in implementing them to date, with far-reaching consequences for civilians in the Palestinian Territories. Moreover, this undermines the ICJ's legitimacy.

Under Article 90 of the Dutch Constitution, the Dutch government is mandated to promote the development of the international rule of law. The NJCM therefore urges the Dutch government, and particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to bring the aforementioned issues to the forefront on the international stage. This entails building alliances to foster a unified and strong response. A reassessment of the current course of action would not only reinforce the credibility of the Netherlands but also bolster confidence in the human rights organizations based in our country.

We urgently call on the Dutch government to take positive and concrete steps in these matters, advocating for strict adherence to human rights, children's rights, humanitarian law, and international law.

Yours faithfully,

The Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists (NJCM)