

Detroit, 5 February 2025



**Official Statement On the Illegality and  
Ethical Implications of U.S. Ownership Claims Over Gaza**

The recent remarks by U.S. President Donald Trump, suggesting that the United States take ownership of the Gaza Strip, forcibly remove its Palestinian inhabitants, and redevelop it as the "Riviera of the Middle East," are not only reckless but profoundly unethical and in direct violation of international law.

Gaza is not a prize to be claimed, nor are the 2 million Palestinian citizens in Gaza pawns to be displaced at the whim of foreign powers. The forced removal of a population constitutes a grave violation of international law, explicitly prohibited under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), which states "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." [1]

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) classifies forcible transfer and deportation as both a crime against humanity and a war crime. [2] The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) further considers forcible population transfers as an element of genocide when done with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. [3] A just and everlasting peace cannot be built upon the forced displacement of people from their homeland. The Palestinians of Gaza are not obstacles to development—they are a people with the right to self-determination, as enshrined in Article 1 of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). [4]

President Trump's suggestion that the United States could "own" Gaza and oversee its reconstruction violates fundamental principles of international law, particularly the UN Charter, which explicitly prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. [5] The UN Security Council, in Resolution 242 (1967) and Resolution 338 (1973), affirms the principle that territory cannot be acquired by war, making any foreign claim of sovereignty over Gaza illegitimate under international law. [6] The suggestion of U.S. ownership echoes colonialist thinking, treating an occupied and war-torn land as a commodity rather than recognizing the deep historical and human suffering inflicted upon its people. Gaza's reconstruction must be led by its own people, with support from the international community, rather than dictated by a foreign power with vested political interests in the region.

Equally alarming is Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's response, stating that Trump's plan is "worthwhile really pursuing." Rather than endorsing schemes that violate Palestinian rights and international law, Israel must be held accountable for its actions in Gaza, as required under the Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention, which establish obligations for an occupying power to protect, rather than displace, the local population.[7] The international community must reaffirm that a just and lasting peace requires respect for human rights, self-determination, and the dignity of all people.

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## Notes

1. Geneva Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 1949, Article 49, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-49/commentary/1958>.
2. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 1998, Articles 7 and 8, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>.
3. United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948, [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1\\_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf).
4. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 1, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>; International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 1, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-49/commentary/1958>.
5. Charter of the United Nations, Article 2(4), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>.
6. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (1967), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/242\(1967\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/242(1967)); United Nations Security Council Resolution 338 (1973), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/338\(1973\)/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf](https://undocs.org/S/RES/338(1973)/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf).
7. Hague Regulations of 1907, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/195>; Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-49/commentary/1958>.

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United Nations Security Council Resolution 242. 1967. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/242\(1967\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/242(1967)).

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