

Israel asks ICJ not to order new measures over looming famine in Gaza



The Hague, March 18 (RHC)-- Israel has asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) not to issue emergency orders for it to step up humanitarian aid to Gaza to address a looming famine, dismissing South Africa's request to do so as "morally repugnant."

In a legal filing to the top United Nations court, made public on Monday, Israel said it "has real concern for the humanitarian situation and innocent lives, as demonstrated by the actions it has and is taking" in Gaza.

Lawyers for Israel denied allegations of deliberately causing humanitarian suffering in the besieged enclave, where tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed and hunger is rising. They said South Africa's repeated requests for additional measures are an abuse of procedures.

The filing said South Africa's accusations in its request for new measures, filed March 6, are "wholly unfounded in fact and law, morally repugnant, and represent an abuse both of the Genocide Convention

and of the court itself.” The new exchange between the parties is part of South Africa’s ongoing case accusing Israel of state-led genocide in Gaza after the October 7th Hamas attacks on Israel

In January, the ICJ, also known as the World Court, ordered Israel to refrain from any acts that could fall under the Genocide Convention and ensure its troops commit no genocidal acts against Palestinians in Gaza. Israel described the genocide allegation as baseless.

ICJ emergency measures serve as temporary injunctions meant to keep a situation from deteriorating before the court in The Hague can hear the full case, a process that usually takes several years.

Israel’s response was published on the day the UN’s World Food Programme said “famine is imminent” in northern Gaza. The agency said 70 percent of its remaining population is experiencing catastrophic hunger and a further escalation of Israel’s assault could push about half of Gaza’s total population to the brink of starvation.

The more than five-month offensive has killed nearly 32,000 people in the strip, according to health officials in Gaza. Another 1,139 people died in southern Israel in Hamas attacks on October 7, after which Israel launched its war on Gaza.

At least 20 people have died from malnutrition and starvation in Gaza since Israel began its assault, Palestinian authorities said.

The European Union’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, on Monday said the impending famine in Gaza was “entirely man-made” as “starvation is used as a weapon of war.” “Trucks are stopped. People are dying while the land crossings are artificially closed,” he said.

South Africa’s request to the ICJ is the second time Pretoria has asked the court for additional measures. Its first request to pressure Israel to halt an offensive against the southern Gaza city of Rafah in February was denied.

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