

Israelis Invade Syria: Who Will Stop Israel?

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The United States, Turkey and Israel all responded to the fall of the Assad government in Damascus by launching bombing campaigns on Syria. Israel also attacked and [destroyed](#) most of the Syrian Navy in port at Latakia, and invaded Syria from the long-occupied Golan Heights, [advancing](#) to within 16 miles of the capital, Damascus.

The United States said that its bombing campaign targeted remnants of Islamic State in the east of the country, hitting 75 targets with 140 bombs and missiles, [according](#) to Air Force Times.

A long-standing force of 900 U.S. troops [illegally](#) occupy that part of Syria, partly to [divert](#) Syria's meagre oil revenues to the U.S.'s Kurdish allies and prevent the Syrian government regaining that source of revenue. U.S. bombing badly damaged Syria's oil infrastructure during the war with the Islamic State, but Russia has been ready to help Syria restore full output whenever it recovers control of that area. U.S. forces in Syria have been [under attack](#) by various Syrian militia forces, not just the Islamic State, with at least 127 attacks since October 2023.

Meanwhile, Turkiyë is conducting airstrikes, drone strikes and artillery fire as part of a new [offensive](#) by a militia it formed in 2017 under the Orwellian guise of the "Syrian National Army" to invade and occupy parts of Rojava, the autonomous Kurdish enclave in northeast Syria.

Israel, however, launched a much [broader](#) bombing campaign than Turkey or the U.S., with about 600 airstrikes on post-Assad Syria in the first eight days of its existence. Without waiting to see what form of government the political transition in Syria leads to, Israel set about methodically destroying its entire military infrastructure, to ensure that whatever government comes to power will be as defenseless as possible.

Israel claims its new occupation of Syrian territory is a temporary move to ensure its own security. But while Israel [bombed](#) Syria 220 times over the past year, killing about 300 people, Syria showed restraint and did not retaliate for those attacks.

The pattern of Israeli history has been that land grabs like this usually turn into long-term [illegal](#) Israeli annexations, as in the Golan Heights and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. That will surely be the case with Israel's new strategic base on top of Mount Hermon, overlooking Damascus and the surrounding area, unless a new Syrian government or international diplomacy can force Israel to withdraw.

Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Russia and the UN have all joined the global [condemnation](#) of the new Israeli assault on Syria. **Geir Pedersen**, the UN Special

Envoy to Syria, [called](#) Israel's military actions "highly irresponsible," and UN peacekeepers have removed Israeli flags from newly-occupied Syrian territory.

The Qatari Foreign Ministry called Israel's actions "a dangerous development and a blatant attack on Syria's sovereignty and unity as well as a flagrant violation of international law... that will lead the region to further violence and tension."

The Saudi Foreign Ministry [reiterated](#) that the Golan Heights is an occupied Arab territory, and said that Israel's actions confirmed "Israel's continued violation of the rules of international law and its determination to sabotage Syria's chances of restoring its security, stability and territorial integrity."

The only country in the world that has ever recognized Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights is the United States, under the first Trump administration, and it is part of Biden's disastrous legacy in the Middle East that that he failed to stand up for international law and reverse Trump's recognition of that [illegal](#) Israeli annexation.

As people all over the world watch Israel ignore the rules of international law that every country in the world is committed to live by, we are confronted by the age-old question of how to respond to a country that systematically ignores and violates these rules. The [foundation](#) of the UN Charter is the agreement by all countries to settle their differences diplomatically and peacefully, instead of by the threat or use of military force.

As Americans, we should start by admitting that our own country has led the way down this path of war and militarism, perpetuating the scourge of war that the UN Charter was intended to provide a peaceful alternative to.

As the United States became the leading economic power in the world in the 20th century, it also built up dominant military power. Despite its leading role in creating the United Nations and the rules of the UN Charter and the Geneva Conventions, it came to see strict compliance with those rules as an obstacle to its own ambitions, from the UN Charter's [prohibition](#) against the threat or use of military force to the Geneva Conventions' universal [protections](#) for prisoners of war and civilians.

In its "war on terror," including its wars on Iraq and other countries, the United States flagrantly and systematically [violated](#) these bedrock foundations of world order. It is a fundamental principle of all legal systems that the powerful must be held accountable as well as the weak and the vulnerable. A system of laws that the wealthy and powerful can ignore cannot claim to be universal or just, and is unlikely to stand the test of time.

Today, our system of international law faces exactly this problem. The U.S. presumption that its overwhelming military power permits it to violate international law with impunity has led other countries, especially U.S. allies but also Russia, to apply the same opportunistic standards to their own behavior.

In 2010, an Amnesty International [report](#) on European countries that hosted CIA "black site" torture chambers called on U.S. allies in Europe not to join the United States as another "accountability-free zone" for war crimes. But now the world is confronting a U.S. ally that has not just embraced, but doubled down on, the U.S. presumption that dominant military power can trump the rule of law.

The Israeli government refuses to comply with international legal prohibitions against [deliberately](#) killing women and children, by military force and by deprivation; seizing foreign territory; and bombing other countries. [Shielded](#) from international accountability behind the U.S. Security Council veto, Israel thumbs its nose at the world's impotence to enforce international law, confident that nobody will stop it from using its deadly and destructive war machine wherever and however it pleases.

So the world's failure to hold the United States accountable for its war crimes has led Israel to believe that it too can escape accountability, and U.S. complicity in Israeli war crimes, especially the genocide in Gaza, has inevitably reinforced that belief.

U.S. responsibility for Israel's lawlessness is compounded by the conflict of interest in its dual role as both Israel's military superpower ally and weapons supplier and the supposed mediator of the lopsided "[peace process](#)" between Israel and Palestine, whose inherent flaws led to Hamas's election victory in 2006 and now to the current crisis.

Instead of recognizing its own conflict of interest and deferring to intervention by the UN or other neutral parties, the U.S. has jealously guarded its monopoly as the sole mediator between Israel and Palestine, using this position to grant Israel total freedom of action to commit systematic war crimes. If this crisis is ever to end, the world cannot allow the U.S. to continue in this role.

While the United States bears a great deal of responsibility for this crisis, U.S. officials remain in collective denial over the criminal nature of Israel's actions and their instrumental role in Israel's crimes. The systemic corruption of U.S. politics severely limits the influence of the majority of Americans who support a ceasefire in Gaza, as pro-Israel lobbying groups buy the unconditional support of American politicians and attack the few who stand up to them.

Despite America's undemocratic political system, its people have a responsibility to end U.S. complicity in genocide, which is arguably the worst crime in the world, and people are finding ways to bring pressure to bear on the U.S. government:

Members of CODEPINK, Jewish Voice For Peace and Palestinian-, Arab-American and other activist groups are in Congressional offices and hearings [every day](#); [constituents](#) in California are suing two members of Congress for funding genocide; students are calling on their universities to [divest](#) from Israel and U.S. arms makers; activists and union members are [identifying](#) and picketing companies and [blocking](#) ports to stop weapons shipments to Israel; [journalists](#) are rebelling against censorship; U.S. officials are [resigning](#); people are on [hunger strike](#); others have committed [suicide](#).

It is also up to the UN and other governments around the world to intervene, and to hold Israel and the United States accountable for their actions. A growing international movement for an end to the genocide and decades of illegal occupation is making progress. But it is excruciatingly slow given the appalling human cost and the millions of Palestinian lives at stake.

Israel's international propaganda campaign to equate criticism of its war crimes with antisemitism poisons political discussion of Israeli war crimes in the United States and some other countries.

But many countries are making significant changes in their relations with Israel, and are increasingly willing to resist political pressures and propaganda tropes that have successfully muted international calls for justice in the past. A good example is Ireland, whose growing trade relations with Israel, mainly in the high-tech sector, formerly made it the [fourth largest](#) importer of Israeli products in the world in 2022.

Ireland is now one of [14 countries](#) who have officially intervened to support South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) – the others are Belgium, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Libya, the Maldives, Mexico, Nicaragua, Palestine, Spain and Türkiye. Israel reacted to Ireland's [intervention](#) in the case by closing its embassy in Dublin, and now Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar has smeared Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister) Simon Harris as "antisemitic."

The Taoiseach's spokesperson [replied](#) that Harris "will not be responding to personalized and false attacks, and remains focused on the horrific war crimes being perpetrated in Gaza, standing up for human rights and international law and reflecting the views of so many people across Ireland who are so concerned at the loss of innocent, civilian lives."

If the people of Palestine can stand up to bombs, missiles and bullets day after day for over a year, the very least that political leaders around the world can do is stand up to Israeli name-calling, as Simon Harris is doing.

Spain is setting an example on international efforts to halt the supply of [weapons](#) to Israel, with an arms embargo and a ban on weapons shipments transiting Spanish ports, including the U.S. naval base at Rota, which the U.S. has leased since it formed a military [alliance](#) with Spain's Franco dictatorship in 1953.

Spain has already refused entry to two Maersk-owned ships transporting weapons from North Carolina to Israel, while dockworkers in Spain, Belgium, Greece, India and other countries have [refused](#) to load weapons and ammunition onto ships bound for Israel.

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) has passed resolutions for a ceasefire in Gaza; an end to the post-1967 Israeli occupation; and for Palestinian statehood. The General Assembly's 10th Emergency Special Session on the [Israel-Palestine](#) conflict under the Uniting for Peace process has been ongoing since 1997.

The General Assembly should urgently use these Uniting For Peace powers to turn up the pressure on Israel and the United States. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has provided the legal basis for stronger action, ruling that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories Israel invaded in 1967 is illegal and must be ended, and that the massacre in Gaza appears to violate the Genocide Convention.

Inaction is inexcusable. By the time the ICJ issues a final verdict on its genocide case, millions may be dead. The Genocide Convention is an international commitment to prevent genocide, not just to pass judgment after the fact. The UN General Assembly has the power to impose an arms embargo, a trade boycott, economic sanctions, a peacekeeping force, or to do whatever it takes to end the genocide.

When the UN General Assembly first launched its [boycott](#) campaign against apartheid South Africa in 1962, not a single Western country took part. Many of those same countries will be the last to do so against Israel today. But the world cannot wait to act for the blessing of

complacent wealthy countries who are themselves complicit in genocide.

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Featured image: Israeli troops unfurl Israeli flag on Mount Hermon in Syria. Photo credit: Times of Israel

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