

Israel closes Dublin embassy in response to Irish government ICJ intervention and Occupied Territories Bill

Steve James
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An Irish intervention in South Africa's International Court of Justice (ICJ) case, accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza, has enraged the war criminals in the Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu.

Speaking last week, Irish Tánaiste (deputy premier) and Foreign Affairs minister Micheál Martin announced, following a cabinet meeting of Ireland's caretaker coalition government, that there had been "a collective punishment of the Palestinian people through the intent and impact of military actions of Israel in Gaza, leaving 44,000 dead and millions of civilians displaced."

Martin continued, "By legally intervening in South Africa's case Ireland will be asking the ICJ to broaden its interpretation of what constitutes the commission of genocide by a State."

Speaking to *Irish Legal News*, Michael Becker, an assistant professor of law at Trinity College Dublin, explained, "Ireland and other states may ask the court to clarify that the existence of other possible objectives in an armed conflict, such as counter-terrorism, does not preclude the simultaneous existence of genocidal intent, meaning a state policy aimed at the physical destruction of a specific population group... In other words, Ireland and other intervening states may end up urging the ICJ to accept that a policy of genocide can be the instrument to achieve other state objectives."

The ICJ is the highest legal body of the United Nations. In January this year it issued a provisional measure against Israel in South Africa's case warning that its action in Gaza "appear to be capable of falling within the provisions of the [1948 Genocide] Convention." In May the ICJ ruled that Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza is "illegal" and that "All States must cooperate with the United Nations to put into effect modalities required to ensure an end to Israel's illegal

presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

In practical terms, Ireland's move will have not the slightest impact on the actions of the Israeli government since the major decisions of the war are being taken by the United States and its imperialist allies, who view Israel's actions in Gaza and now Syria as a necessary component of the accelerating conflict with Russia, Iran and China. It nevertheless further exposes the protestations of the Zionist regime and its imperialist backers that Hamas' actions of October 7, 2023, can serve as justification for their murderous onslaught.

Ireland's intervention was welcomed by Amnesty International, for example, whose report earlier this month accused all levels of the Israeli operation in Gaza of genocidal intent and "unprecedented destruction, at a level and speed not seen in any other conflict in the 21st century, levelling entire cities and destroying critical infrastructure, agricultural land, and cultural and religious sites, rendering large swathes of Gaza uninhabitable."

In response, the Israeli government announced the closure of its Dublin embassy. Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar accused the Dublin government of encouraging antisemitism "based on the delegitimization and dehumanization of Israel." Sa'ar complained that Ireland "worked systematically to damage our relations with the European Union" and described Ireland current leader as the "anti-Semitic Prime Minister Simon Harris."

In a statement on X/Twitter, Sa'ar complained, "Ireland is one of the few European countries that has not adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, and its government has failed to take effective measures to combat the surge of anti-Semitism within Ireland."

Recalled ambassador Dana Erlich complained of the ICJ case: "This is an abuse of the international multilateral system by South Africa, we were sorry to see Ireland join

it, but this joins an accumulation of steps, rhetoric and initiatives that we've seen Ireland trying to promote this past year... We see Ireland in a more extreme stance than any other country."

To the extent there remains any framework of international law, it is Israel and its backers who have for decades ignored any attempts at imposing legal restrictions on their occupation of Palestinian lands.

Meanwhile, there has been no surge of antisemitism in Ireland, but there have been sustained and very large demonstrations in defence of the Palestinian population in a working class that itself suffered imperialist oppression. The Irish government, on account of this and of the partitioned island's colonial history, has felt obliged to go somewhat further than its peers in offering criticisms of the starvation and massacre of the Palestinians.

Earlier this year, as well as indicating support for the ICJ case, Ireland lined up alongside NATO members Norway and Spain in recognising the state of Palestine. Ireland has subsequently accepted an ambassador from Palestine, Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid, and intends to upgrade its office in Ramallah in the West Bank to the status of an embassy, with diplomatic immunities covered by the Vienna Convention.

An Occupied Territories Bill, put forward in 2018 by independent member of parliament Frances Black, which would ban "trade with and economic support for illegal settlements in territories deemed occupied under international law," has been kicked down the road despite having been passed by both houses of the Irish parliament—the Dáil and the Seanad.

The bill, which applies only to occupied territories anywhere and does not mention Israel or Palestine, was revived in the aftermath of the ICJ case in October this year and in the run-up to the recent general election.

However, in the years since the bill was first passed, trade between Israel and Ireland, particularly electronics exports from Israel, has expanded hugely. In 2023, for example, Ireland exported some \$563 million worth of goods, including electronics, pharmaceuticals, machinery (including nuclear) and food stuffs, to Israel. Ireland also imported \$3.9 billion worth of goods from Israel, of which electrical and electronic equipment accounted for the vast majority (\$3.7 billion), doubtless largely to US-owned companies based in Ireland.

As a result, the Irish government has sought to further delay any implementation of the bill, seeking instead European Union-wide measures. In October, following advice from the Attorney General, Tánaiste Martin said

the bill was "reviewed and amendments prepared in order to bring it into line with the Constitution and EU Law." Ireland, Belgium and Spain have all called for a review of the EU's Association Agreement with Israel, a process that will take forever and a day.

Even then, in response to the possibility that the bill might be revived, the US Chamber of Commerce, which claims to be the world's largest business grouping, raised it during talks last week with Ireland's Minister for Enterprise, Fine Gael's Peter Burke. No report of the exchanges has surfaced but it is not hard to imagine their content.

The website of the chamber's branch in Ireland states that its US affiliates' total assets in Ireland amount to over \$2 trillion, while Irish assets in the US are valued at as much as \$500 billion. 970 US corporations operate in Ireland, employing 210,000 people directly, with another 168,000 jobs dependent on them.

Defending this transatlantic bounty, in the dangerous and unpredictable conditions of the incoming fascistic Trump presidency, will be the priority of the next administration in Dublin.

Currently negotiations appear to be favouring a renewed but more right-wing Fianna Fáil-Fine Gael coalition, with a combination of "independents" making up a parliamentary majority. The Irish Labour Party has pulled out of negotiations following the election of former Fine Gael TD Verona Murphy as Ceann Comhairle (speaker of the house). Murphy was deselected as a Fine Gael candidate for a 2019 attack on asylum seekers.

A loyal opposition bloc, including Labour, the Social Democrats and Sinn Féin, is now expected to coalesce, with one of its early outings likely to involve making a show of pushing forward the Occupied Territories Bill.

No confidence should be placed in any of these manoeuvres to alleviate the pressure on the Palestinians. The only global power capable of or interested in stopping the genocide and the worldwide drive to war is the international working class, whose daily struggles in defence of living conditions and democratic rights must be directed towards the socialist reorganisation of society.



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