

I am a citizen of Silver Spring, MD. I'm writing because I have been absolutely dismayed Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza. Now more than 30,000 innocent civilians have been killed by Israel's indiscriminate bombing of the Gaza Strip. The number is likely higher since many are under the rubble.

A state cannot simultaneously exercise control over territory it occupies and militarily attack that territory on the claim that it is "foreign" and poses an exogenous national security threat. In doing precisely that, Israel is asserting rights that may be consistent with colonial domination but simply do not exist under international law.

Occupation Law prohibits an occupying power from initiating armed force against its occupied territory. By mere virtue of the existence of military occupation, an armed attack, including one consistent with the UN Charter, has already occurred and been concluded. Therefore the right of self-defense in international law is, by definition since 1967, not available to Israel with respect to its dealings with real or perceived threats emanating from the West Bank and Gaza Strip population. To achieve its security goals, Israel can resort to no more than the police powers, or the exceptional use of militarized force, vested in it by International Humanitarian Law.

The loss of life in Gaza (and now increasingly in the West Bank due to extreme settler violence) has been absolutely catastrophic and there does not appear to be an end in sight. Gazan friends of mine have lost dozens of members of their extended families. The loss is unfathomable and the consequences will span generations.

The United States' silence in the face of this unfolding genocide of Palestinians is complicity. I urge Maryland legislators to stand vocally against Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine and **call for an immediate ceasefire**. Humanitarian aid desperately needs to be let into Gaza and the illegal occupation of Palestine must end.

We should not support a nation that propagates settler colonialism, white supremacy, apartheid, and an illegal occupation.

Thank you,

Melanie Snail