

The Third Appeal of Japanese Middle East Studies Researchers (7 Nov 2024)

# **Open Call to the Japanese Government and International Community to Act Immediately to Stop the Escalation of Crisis in Gaza and the Expansion of Israeli Wars**

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Monday 9 December 2024, by [Japanese Researchers Specialized in Middle Eastern Studies](#) (Date first published: 7 November 2024).

## **This is the third Appeal Issued by a Group of Japanese Researchers Specialized in Middle Eastern Studies.**

The situation in Gaza is catastrophic. At least 43,000 people have been killed since last October, as a result of Israel's full-scale assault and indiscriminate killing of civilians. (According to an article published in the "Lancet", which estimated the number of deaths attributed to the ongoing crisis based on the data until June this year, the total number amounts to more than 180,000, including bodies still buried under the rubble and indirect deaths.) 90% of the population have lost their homes. Food, water, fuel, and medicine supplies have been cut off, and hunger is widespread. Hospitals, schools, and refugee camps have been the target of relentless attacks. Currently the situation in the northern part of Gaza is particularly serious, where the population is being besieged, attacked, and forcibly displaced, creating horrific scenes. Furthermore, the Israeli parliament has recently passed a law effectively banning the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), which has been supporting the life of the Palestinian people in Gaza and elsewhere, an outrageous decision tantamount to openly denying a human being's right to live.

There is a growing awareness that this is an unmistakable case of genocide. In response to a lawsuit filed by South Africa and other countries claiming that the situation in Gaza is a violation of the Genocide Convention (1948), the International Court of Justice (ICJ) announced provisional measures (orders) in January 2024, demanding that all measures should be taken for the prevention of genocide. Consequently, the UN Human Rights Council adopted, in this past April, a resolution calling for an arms embargo on Israel.

It has also come to the notice of the global public that Gaza and the West Bank are the territories which were occupied by Israel in 1967, and despite successive UN resolutions calling for withdrawal, have been under its occupation for the last 57 years. At the bottom of the present crisis, therefore, lies the question of occupation. In parallel with the situation in Gaza, the escalation of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank has also been a serious phenomenon. In July 2024, the ICJ therefore issued an advisory opinion denouncing Israel's occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, and calling on the international community to end this unlawful occupation. The

UN General Assembly adopted, in September, a resolution calling for the end of the occupation within one year. (Japan voted in favor of this resolution.)

In spite of growing international criticism, however, Israel is continuing its massacres and destruction in Gaza. Moreover, it seems Israel has recently been even expanding its war in the region, with its re-invasion of Lebanon (which had been once invaded and partly occupied by Israel), and its repeated provocations and attacks aimed at Iran. In Lebanon, Israel's indiscriminate attacks have resulted in the deaths of many civilians and forced displacements, and the alarm has been sounded that Lebanon is becoming a "second Gaza" (an expression used by the UN Secretary-General). As in the case of Gaza, Israel's military operations are conducted under the pretext of "self-defense," but these wars, which are described as a "clash between barbarism and civilization" (Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech at the U.S. Houses), are apparently aimed at creating a "New Middle East" order, in which the entire region will be placed under the influence of Israel, armed with its superior military power and the support of the United States. If such an expansionist policy is allowed to continue under the pretext of "self-defense" and "security," there will be neither sovereignty nor peace for Israel's neighboring states. The attitude of the Netanyahu administration, continuing war and mass killings in defiance of international law, reminds us of the path taken by Japan in the 1930s, which eventually led to the Second World War. Such an attitude, which shakes the foundations of world order based on the UN Charter and international law, will ultimately bring not only the Middle East but the entire world to the brink of ruin.

Concerning the situation in Gaza, it has been observed that, in Europe and the United States, those who oppose the war (citizens, intellectuals, and statesmen) are often criticized and attacked as being "anti-Semitic." However, it is wrong to equate the Israeli government with the Jewish people, as demonstrated by the fact that in the U.S. and other countries Jewish citizens themselves are voicing their opposition to the war, raising the slogan of "Not in our name." There are Israeli citizens as well, who are critical of the policy of their government and demanding an end to the war. Rather, it is necessary to pay attention to the problematic situation, where labeling someone with "anti-Semitism" functions as a device to contain international public opinion opposed to the war.

Since the outbreak of the crisis last October, we, as a group of Japanese researchers specialized in Middle East studies, have already issued several appeals, calling for an immediate ceasefire, hostage release, relief for Gaza, and observance of international law, and have made proposals for a peaceful solution to the problem. One year later, however, the situation is even more serious and the war has spread throughout the Middle East. It is urgent that the international community take decisive action to stop killings and war, and we believe that Japan itself must play a role in this process. We therefore make the following demands:

□□ Imposing an international arms embargo against Israel. In accordance with the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council, no arms should be exported or provided to Israel

□□ Increased international pressure to enforce UN General Assembly and UN Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire. Considering the "Rally for Peace" at the UN against Israel, which continues to expand its war

□□ Provide and expand humanitarian assistance to Gaza as soon as possible. Intensify international criticism of the outrageous decision by Israel to ban the activities of UNRWA, which is a UN agency, pressuring it to reverse this decision. Condemn the targeting of UN agencies and personnels for attacks and killings, and the obstruction of their activities

□□ End the Occupation. Increase international pressure for ending Israel's occupation of Gaza, the

West Bank and East Jerusalem, and for the dismantling of settlements, in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and UN General Assembly resolution

□□To pave the way to a fundamental, peaceful and comprehensive solution, the international community should unequivocally support the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and its membership in the United Nations

□□If Israel does not respond to international calls for observance of international law, a ceasefire, and an end to the occupation, the international community should consider imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions

Furthermore, the following demands are made to the Japanese government:

□□That the Japanese government should urge the governments of other countries, especially the U.S. and those continuing to support Israel and provide it with military aid and weapons, to take the above measures (1 6)

□□Suspension of cooperation between the defense authorities of Japan and Israel. No procurement of weapons from Israel, no sharing of military technology, and no joint development of weapons

□□Reconsidering economic cooperation with Israel. Not to conclude an economic partnership agreement

10. Reconsidering diplomatic relations with Israel. It should be noted that the Japanese government already referred, in 1973, to the possibility of reconsidering its policy toward Israel if Israel does not comply with international demands such as withdrawing from the 1967 occupied territories and respecting the rights of the Palestinian people (The Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary, Nikaido, in 1973). The current violation of international law and of human rights, committed by the Israeli government, is far more serious now than at that time

□□The international community is responsible for the ongoing crisis in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, etc., with its lack of action and tacit approval of the situation. We, Japanese researchers engaged in Middle East Studies, will do our utmost, cooperating with the citizens of Japan and the rest of the world, to stop the bloodshed as soon as possible, and will strive for the restoration of humanity and the achievement of peace and justice.

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