

Francesca Albanese at the UN in Vienna

DIALOP and members of Standing Together Vienna were invited by His Excellency, the Palestinian Ambassador in Vienna, Salah Abdel-Shafi at a lecture of Francesca Albanese, United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, at the UN headquarters in Vienna on December 6, 2024.

UN independent experts and states, including South Africa have warned before the International Court of Justice (“ICJ”), that acts committed by the Israeli IDF in the onslaughts since Oct 7, 2023 may amount to genocide.

Before talking about genocide, Albanese points out that the UN recognized as unlawful the 57 years of occupation of Palestinian territories. There is no possibility of equal negotiation to end the war, if we don’t realize that the very first step Israel and our mindset should do, is *decolonializing* Palestine, in order to allow self-determination of the Palestinian population. Supporting Palestinian authority is not enough, if the colonialization is not over. In Palestine there are 300 colonies and 100.000 Israeli settlers. This protracted impunity must have an end, this behaviour above the law is not bearable. But the fact is that speaking openly on it, attracts even diffamation and the accusation of anti-semitism.

Is it genocide or not? – asks Albanese – at the UN in Vienna before several ambassadors of the Mediterranean area and civil society representatives, including DIALOP and Standing Together Vienna [Standing Together | OneState](#). Many people don’t accept the saying of a genocide. A possible comparison with the holocaust does not hold, since the holocaust was a process, by which Jews had been dehumanized and their destruction had been declared plausible. Alas, Europeans did the same before to the indigenous in America, to the slaves from Africa. The Nazis dropped the Jews in ghettos before the gas chambers, they starved them to death. That was extermination.

But genocide is something slight different. By a genocide you destroy not only the present, but also the past! In Gaza mosques, churches, houses, hospitals, schools, archives, jurisprudential places, universities, natal cliniques, infrastructure have been destroyed. That means to erase a population from the face of the earth. Any defence of such a behaviour (as a self-defence after the massacre of Oct 7, 2023) is not only unbearable, it produces complicity.

So the question raises menacing: what remains of the legal system, if one Country can raise up above the law and remain unpunished?

The Ambassador of South Africa replied saying: We lived the pain of the apartheid, but we haven’t seen the hell Palestinians are living today!

Albanese answered that the UN have become part of the problem, because the whole weight was put on the humanitarian crisis, which is one aspect, a very crucial one, but not the determining. The UN should change its attitude to Israel.

South Africa went to the ICJ alone. So, any Country, also European Countries could do this. The International law is the only tool we have! – so Albanese.

But one thing is clear, the economic ties of Israel to almost every Country. This is a responsibility of all of us.

Several ambassador “friends of Palestine” spoke up to request sanctions. The Jordanian ambassador asked if there is hope to solve the situation.

Albanese pointed out some clear steps on a short, middle and long term:

- End of the genocide
- Withdraw of the Israeli troops. Dismantling the settlements. End of exploitation of natural resources
- Reparation and reconstruction

In the meantime Israel should not become any support. Albanese said that its impudence is so dire, that there is even selling of Palestinian land between Montreal and Toronto through Jewish companies!

Every Country can start a prosecution for genocide at the ICJ.

The Ambassador of Palestine concluded with a moving statement: “We don’t need people to be for Palestine, we need people to be for International Law” summing up excellently the crux of this disastrous time which regards The Middle East, but reflects a crucial matter in all of our Countries.

Luisa Sello