

The Right to Self-Defense

Double Standards & Hypocrisy in the “Rules Based International Order”

The right to self-defense is one of the most fundamental principles recognized in international law, especially for people living under occupation or in the case when “an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations.”

This right, enshrined in international treaties and the Geneva Conventions, allows oppressed and occupied people – such as the Palestinians – to resist foreign domination and fight for their freedom. It also allows countries attacked or whose recognized sovereign territory is infringed upon to legally respond.

Unfortunately, countries in the collective West, made up of imperial powers whose recent history is dotted with colonialism and slavery, have systematically distorted and manipulated this right in favor of their own geopolitical interests.

A case in point is the political cover they have consistently provided to the Zionist colonial project dubbed “Israel” from global accountability. Another case in point is how they have chosen to misconstrue the Islamic Republic of Iran’s right to respond to assassinations within its borders.

Indeed, there are countless other examples from across the Global South, including Africa and more specifically the Horn of Africa, where the countries of the collective West have taken it upon themselves to play judge and jury in matters of sovereignty and the internationally recognized rights of a country to protect itself.

The Right to Self-Defense & the Struggle for self-determination

The right to self-defense is explicitly recognized in several key international legal frameworks. Article 51 of the United Nations Charter upholds the “inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs” against any member state. This right extends to peoples fighting for their liberation from foreign domination, colonial rule, or racist regimes, as outlined by UN General Assembly Resolution 37/43, which affirms that colonial and occupied peoples have the right to use all means necessary, including armed struggle, to achieve self-determination.

In the case of peoples under occupation, the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) provides specific protections. Articles 1, 3, and 4 of the convention outline the basic protections and rights that civilian populations must be afforded under occupation. These include the right to resist occupation and seek self-determination through legitimate means. Additional Protocol I (1977) to the Geneva Conventions extends the protection to individuals fighting against colonial domination and foreign occupation, recognizing their resistance as part of a struggle for self-determination.

Western Distortions of International Law

Despite the clarity of international law on the right of occupied peoples to defend themselves, Western imperial powers have consistently manipulated this legal framework to suit their geopolitical interests. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of the Zionist settler-colonial project in Palestine.

Over the decades, the West—particularly the United States, the European Union, and their allies—has worked tirelessly to misrepresent the legitimate resistance of the Palestinian people as “terrorism” while portraying Israel’s colonial expansion and apartheid policies as acts of self-defense.

This distortion of reality stems from a fundamental reversal of roles. Rather than acknowledging Israel as an occupying power in violation of numerous international resolutions, Western powers have framed Palestinians as aggressors. The result is a deliberate misrepresentation of the international legal framework, twisting the legitimate right to self-defense of an occupied people into a false narrative of violence and extremism.

Zionism: A Colonial Project Protected by Imperial Powers

Zionism, from its inception, has been a settler-colonial project that seeks to establish a Jewish state on Palestinian land, displacing its indigenous population. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was accompanied by the Nakba (catastrophe), where over 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly removed from their homes, with many villages destroyed or depopulated. This process of dispossession continues today through illegal settlements, forced evictions, and land seizures in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza—all violations of international law.

Despite this, Western imperial powers have worked to obscure these facts. By providing military, financial, and diplomatic support to Israel, they enable its continued violation of Palestinian rights.

The narrative pushed by the West, which falsely equates resistance to occupation with terrorism, is a deliberate strategy to suppress legitimate Palestinian self-defense and preserve Western geopolitical interests in the Middle East.

The Misuse of the “War on Terror” Narrative

The so-called “War on Terror,” launched by Western powers after the events of 9/11, has been instrumental in conflating the struggle for self-defense with terrorism. This has allowed imperial powers to label any form of resistance, including legitimate armed struggle by occupied peoples, as terrorism. Nowhere is this more evident than in Palestine.

By branding groups like Hamas or other resistance factions as “terrorist organizations,” the West has attempted to delegitimize the Palestinian cause and its fight for freedom.

This narrative is not only false but dangerous. It provides Israel with the political cover to continue its colonization project, portraying its aggression as self-defense while criminalizing the legitimate resistance of an occupied people. This deliberate distortion of international law undermines the Geneva Conventions and sets a dangerous precedent for other colonial occupations around the world.

The Right to Self-Defense of Palestinian Allies: The Resistance Axis

While Western imperialists try to twist the legal frameworks protecting the Palestinian right to resist occupation, other nations and movements—often labeled the “Resistance Axis”—have firmly upheld this right. Countries like Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Yemen stand in solidarity with the Palestinian cause, not only recognizing their right to self-defense but also defending their sovereignty against foreign aggression.

For instance, Iran has consistently supported the Palestinian struggle and emphasized its right to self-defense per international law. Iran itself faces significant hostility from Western powers and regional actors like Israel, which frequently threatens or conducts illegal military actions against Iranian interests. As a sovereign nation, Iran’s right to defend itself is also enshrined in international law, particularly in response to any attacks or provocations. Similarly, Yemen, which has faced devastating bombardments by a Saudi-led coalition backed by Western countries, maintains its right to self-defense as it fights against foreign intervention and aggression.

These countries, by standing against imperialism and colonialism, affirm that the right to self-defense is universal—not limited to the interests of powerful Western states. In resisting Zionist expansionism and defending themselves against foreign aggression, they are upholding the same international laws that protect the Palestinian right to resist occupation. This solidarity is essential, as it helps balance the scales of power in a world where Western hegemony often seeks to silence the voices of the oppressed.

Defending the Palestinian Right to Resist

The Global South must reject the Western imperial narrative that distorts the right to self-defense. The Palestinian people, like all peoples under occupation, have the legal and moral right to resist foreign domination, colonialism, and apartheid. The framework established by international law, including the Geneva Conventions and UN resolutions, must be upheld to ensure that occupied peoples are protected and empowered in their struggle for self-determination.

The struggle in Palestine is not an isolated case; it is part of a broader global fight against colonialism, occupation, and imperialism. Whether in Africa, Asia, or the Middle East, the right of people to resist foreign domination must be fiercely defended. This is not just a question of legal interpretation—it is a matter of justice, humanity, and the fight for freedom against imperialist powers determined to maintain their colonial projects.

Upholding International Law for a Free World

The right to self-defense for occupied peoples is a cornerstone of international law and human rights.

In the case of Palestine, this right has been systematically undermined and distorted by Western imperial powers to protect their Zionist colonial ally.

Similarly, countries and movements allied with Palestine, such as Iran, Yemen, and others within the Resistance Axis, have been targeted for upholding their right to defend themselves.

The Global South must reaffirm its commitment to the rule of law, recognizing the legitimacy of Palestinian resistance and rejecting the false narrative of “terrorism” pushed by the West. Moreover, it must defend the sovereign rights of other nations in the region, like Iran and Yemen, to protect themselves against aggression.

Only by upholding these principles can justice be served for the Palestinian people, and the path toward liberation and self-determination be made possible.

The struggle for a free Palestine is a fight for all oppressed peoples worldwide, standing against the forces of imperialism, colonialism, and occupation.



[DOWNLOAD PREVIOUS ISSUES HERE](#)

