

**INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE:
ANNUAL REPORT (2023-2024)
By Nida Çetintaş**

Abstract

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) released its yearly report covering the period from August 1, 2023, to July 31, 2024. The report details the Court's operations for the year, highlighting its contribution to the peaceful resolution of international conflicts and the advancement of the rule of law. In terms of judicial work, the Court handled a wide range of cases concerning territorial and maritime delimitation, human rights, reparation for internationally wrongful acts, environmental protection, the jurisdictional immunity of States, and the interpretation and application of international treaties. These treaties address, among other issues, diplomatic relations, elimination of racial discrimination, prevention of genocide, suppression of terrorism financing, prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and the safety of civil flight.

Keywords

Annual Report, Dispute Settlements, International, Judicial Activity, United Nations.

1. Introduction

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the Charter of the United Nations in June 1945 and began its activities in April 1946. The ICJ is the only international court of universal character with general jurisdiction, which is twofold: contentious and advisory.

The Court consists of 15 judges elected for nine-year terms by the UN General Assembly and Security Council, with one-third of the membership renewed every three years. As of February 2024, Nawaf Salam serves as President and Julia Sebutinde as Vice-President. The Court annually forms a Chamber of Summary Procedure and several committees, including Budgetary, Rules, and Library Committees, to assist in its work. Parties without a national judge may appoint a judge ad hoc for specific cases. The Registry, managed by Registrar Philippe Gautier and Deputy Registrar Jean-Pelé Fomété, provides judicial, diplomatic, and administrative support and employs law clerks and executive assistants. Judges, the Registrar, and staff enjoy diplomatic privileges and immunities. The Court's seat is at the Peace Palace in The Hague, where it has always held its sittings.

During this period, the ICJ delivered two judgments and one advisory opinion, rendered 27 orders on various matters, and held public hearings for 11 cases. The Court seized four new contentious cases and one advisory request, illustrating its continued relevance in addressing emerging international legal issues. As of 31 July 2024, the General List comprised 23 cases, involving States from all world regions. In total, 134 States engaged with the Court as parties, intervening States, or by submitting written or oral statements, underscoring the universal nature of the Court's jurisdiction. The Court's long-term effectiveness is demonstrated by the steady stream of submissions and its substantial output.

The geographical distribution and diverse subject matter of the cases brought before the Court

illustrate the universal and general character of the Court's jurisdiction. Many cases involved multiple procedural phases, such as preliminary objections, provisional measures, and interventions, highlighting the complexity and significance of the Court's work. Together, these activities demonstrate the ICJ's enduring role in upholding the rule of international law and facilitating the peaceful settlement of disputes among States. In addition to working on pending cases, the Court actively reviews its procedures and working methods on an ongoing basis to improve efficiency.

The Court reaffirmed its role in promoting the rule of law, welcoming the General Assembly's call for more States to accept its jurisdiction under the Statute.

2. The Report

The ICJ settles disputes submitted by States in accordance with international law and the exercise of their sovereignty. As of 31 July 2024, 193 States are parties to the ICJ Statute through UN membership, giving them access to the Court. Many States have recognized the Court's jurisdiction under various treaties. The Court also provides advisory opinions to UN organs and specialized agencies, reinforcing its broad mandate in international law.

The Report continues by detailing the pending contentious proceedings during the period under review, highlighting the key themes and priority issues emphasized by the ICJ. This comprehensive overview underscores the Court's ongoing commitment to addressing complex international legal challenges and reinforces its essential role in the peaceful resolution of disputes.

When we look at decisions related to **racial discrimination**, there are a few standouts.

- [*Ukraine v. Russian Federation*](#)

The Court found that the Russian Federation violated key obligations under the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. These violations include its failure to investigate information provided by Ukraine regarding alleged offenses under the Terrorism Financing Convention and its restrictions on education in the Ukrainian language in Crimea, breaching the Racial Discrimination Convention. It also ruled that Russia failed to comply with provisional measures indicated in 2017 related to the rights of the Crimean Tatar community and the prevention of actions that might worsen the dispute. While rejecting some of Ukraine's other claims, the Court confirmed Russia's responsibility to comply with its treaty obligations. These findings underscore the Court's ongoing role in addressing complex issues arising from contemporary armed conflicts and in upholding international legal obligations to protect affected populations in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

- [*Armenia v. Azerbaijan*](#)

Armenia filed an application against Azerbaijan alleging violations of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, including killings, torture, and abuse targeting individuals of Armenian ethnic or national origin. The application was accompanied by a request for provisional measures. The Court ordered Azerbaijan to ensure the security and equality of detained persons and to

prevent vandalism against Armenian cultural heritage.

- *Azerbaijan v. Armenia*

Similarly, Azerbaijan filed an application against Armenia alleging violations of the same Convention, accusing Armenia of ethnic cleansing and cultural erasure. The Court indicated provisional measures to address these concerns and to hold Armenia accountable.

During this period, **the crime of genocide** was an important and relevant topic.

- *The Gambia v. Myanmar*

In this application, The Gambia proceeded against Myanmar, alleging violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide concerning the Rohingya group. It was stated that Myanmar must fulfill its obligations to provide reparations in the interest of the victims of genocidal acts who are members of the Rohingya group and that it must offer assurances and guarantees of non-repetition. The Court confirmed its jurisdiction over the case and upheld the admissibility of the application filed by The Gambia under the Genocide Convention. It also said that the Maldives and a group of States, including Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, might submit statements of intervention as long as they were regarding how to apply the Convention. These verdicts strengthen the Court's role in dealing with claims of genocide and making sure that the right States are involved in the proceedings.

- *Ukraine v. Russian Federation*

On 26 February 2022, Ukraine filed an application against the Russian Federation under the Genocide Convention, challenging Russia's claims of genocide in Luhansk and Donetsk and the legality of its military actions. The Court promptly indicated provisional measures, ordering the suspension of Russian military operations and directing both parties to refrain from actions that could aggravate the dispute. Throughout the proceedings, 33 States submitted declarations of intervention, several of which were admitted by the Court. After considering preliminary objections raised by Russia, the Court confirmed its jurisdiction and the admissibility of Ukraine's application while establishing procedural deadlines for the submission of memorials and counter-memorials. These decisions reinforce the Court's role in addressing allegations of genocide and ensuring international participation in proceedings.

- *South Africa v. Israel*

On 29 December 2023, South Africa filed an application instituting proceedings against Israel, alleging violations of Israel's obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in relation to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The applicant claimed that Israel's actions were genocidal in nature, carried out with the specific intent to destroy a national, ethnic, and racial group. The application included a request for provisional measures aimed at preventing further severe and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people under the Genocide Convention and ensuring Israel's compliance with its obligations to prevent and punish genocide. The Court ordered Israel to take all necessary measures within its power to comply with the Convention and to ensure the immediate effect of these measures. Several States, including Nicaragua, Colombia, Libya, Mexico, Spain, and the State of Palestine, filed declarations of intervention under Articles 62 and 63 of the Statute. The

case remains pending before the Court.

Prohibition of cruel treatment was brought up to the court.

- [*Canada and the Netherlands v. Syrian Arab Republic*](#)
On 8 June 2023, Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands filed a joint application instituting proceedings against the Syrian Arab Republic, alleging violations of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The applicants cited abuses including the use of chemical weapons, inhumane detention conditions, enforced disappearances, sexual and gender-based violence, and violence against children. They requested provisional measures aimed at protecting the rights afforded to Canada and the Netherlands under the Convention. Following a public hearing, the Court ordered the Syrian Arab Republic to take effective measures to prevent further destruction.

Also, **territorial dispute** was severely addressed.

- [*Guyana v. Venezuela*](#)
Guyana filed a case against Venezuela in March 2018 to confirm the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award and settle the land boundary dispute. Venezuela largely did not participate but submitted observations. The ICJ affirmed its jurisdiction over the Award and rejected Venezuela's preliminary objections. Guyana requested provisional measures in 2023 to prevent Venezuela from taking unilateral actions in the disputed territory. Written pleadings and public hearings are ongoing, with deadlines for replies set through 2025.
- [*Gabon v. Equatorial Guinea*](#)
In March 2021, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea brought a territorial and maritime boundary dispute before the International Court of Justice under a special agreement signed in 2016. They asked the Court to determine whether certain treaties—including the 1900 Franco-Spanish Convention and the 1974 frontier agreement—are legally binding between them concerning the delimitation of their land and maritime boundaries and sovereignty over the islands of Mbanié/Mbañe, Cocotiers/Cocoteros, and Conga. Both States also reserved the right to rely on additional legal titles and agreed on procedural arrangements for the written and oral stages. The parties submitted their responses within the ICJ's deadlines set between 2021 and 2023. The public hearings on the merits are scheduled from 30 September to 4 October 2024.
- [*Guatemala v. Belize*](#)
Guatemala and Belize submitted their dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) through a special agreement on 7 June 2019. The Parties asked the Court to determine all of Guatemala's legal claims regarding land territory, insular territories, and any related maritime areas, and to declare the rights of both States as well as establish their boundary lines. The Court set time limits for written pleadings. Guatemala filed its Memorial, and Belize submitted its Counter-Memorial within the extended deadlines. Both Parties later filed their Reply and Rejoinder, also within the prescribed time limits. The case remains pending before the Court.
- [*Belize v. Honduras*](#)
Belize filed a case against Honduras in November 2022 over sovereignty of the

Sapodilla Cayes, claiming historical and legal rights under international law. Honduras disputes this claim. Guatemala has requested to intervene. The ICJ set deadlines for written pleadings in 2023.

On the matter of **sovereign immunity**, there are decisions of

- [*Equatorial Guinea v. France*](#)

On 29 September 2022, Equatorial Guinea instituted proceedings against France with regard to an alleged violation of its obligations under the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 31 October 2003, on the grounds that France had not returned a property which was in the proceeds of a crime to Equatorial Guinea. Equatorial Guinea argued that it was the legitimate owner of the property and that France had not provided the cooperation required for its restitution. The initial request for provisional measures was later withdrawn, and the proceedings continued with the exchange of written pleadings. The Court set timelines for the filing of further submissions, with the case currently pending before it.

There are notable decisions on the **diplomatic relations** topic.

- [*Mexico v. Ecuador*](#)

On 11 April 2024, Mexico instituted proceedings against Ecuador concerning a dispute over the inviolability of diplomatic missions and the peaceful settlement of international disputes. The case arose from an incident on 5 April 2024, when Ecuadorian security forces forcibly entered the Embassy of Mexico in Quito and arrested former Vice-President Jorge Glas, who had been granted asylum by Mexico. Mexico alleged that Ecuador's actions violated fundamental principles of international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The Court held public hearings on Mexico's request for provisional measures but found that the circumstances did not require their indication. The case remains pending before the Court.

- [*Ecuador v. Mexico*](#)

On 29 April 2024, Ecuador filed a case against Mexico concerning alleged violations of international law related to the conduct of Mexico regarding former Ecuadorian Vice-President Jorge David Glas Espinel. Ecuador claimed that Mexico misused the premises of its diplomatic mission in Quito to shield Mr. Glas from Ecuadorian justice, unlawfully granted him political asylum, and interfered in its internal affairs. Mexico, on the other hand, maintains that its actions were in line with diplomatic and humanitarian principles. The Court's jurisdiction was based on Article 36(1) of the ICJ Statute and Article XXXI of the Pact of Bogotá. The case is currently pending before the Court.

Treaty compliance was dealt with.

- [*Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America*](#)

On 14 June 2016, the Islamic Republic of Iran filed an application against the United States concerning measures allegedly violating the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights. Iran claimed these measures adversely affected its ability and that of Iranian companies to exercise property rights, including assets located within the United States. In 2019, the Court ruled it had jurisdiction over part of the case and declared the application admissible but excluded claims related to

sovereign immunity and the status of Iran's Central Bank (Bank Markazi). In its 2023 judgment on the merits, the Court upheld the objection that it lacked jurisdiction over claims involving Bank Markazi but found that the United States violated several treaty provisions. The Court ordered the United States to compensate Iran for damages caused and reserved the procedure for determining compensation if the parties fail to agree within 24 months.

- [*Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America*](#)

The case concerns Iran's claim that U.S. sanctions re-imposed in May 2018 violated the 1955 Treaty of Amity. Iran asked the ICJ to declare that the United States breached the Treaty, to order the termination of these breaches, and to award compensation. Iran also requested provisional measures, and in October 2018, the Court ordered the United States to remove obstacles to humanitarian trade, including medicine and civil aviation safety goods. The written phase proceeded with Iran filing its memorial, followed by the United States raising preliminary objections. In February 2021, the Court rejected all objections and confirmed its jurisdiction under the Treaty. The case then advanced to the merits, with the United States submitting its counter-memorial, and both parties later exchanging a reply and rejoinder. All written pleadings were filed within extended time limits, and the case is now ready to move to the next procedural stage.

Sovereign immunity dispute was a noteworthy topic.

- [*Germany v. Italy*](#)

On 29 April 2022, Germany initiated proceedings against Italy before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging that Italian courts continued to entertain claims in violation of its sovereign immunity. This conduct persisted despite the ICJ's 2012 judgment confirming Germany's jurisdictional immunity regarding acts committed by the German Reich during World War II. Particularly, Germany referred to the 2014 judgment of the Italian Constitutional Court, which—while acknowledging the binding character of the ICJ's ruling—held that constitutional protection of fundamental rights allowed individuals to bring such claims. Consequently, numerous new cases were brought before Italian courts. The Court's jurisdiction was based on Article 36(1) of the ICJ Statute and the 1957 European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes. Although provisional measures were initially requested, this request was withdrawn following bilateral discussions. The Court subsequently set and extended deadlines for the written proceedings. The Memorial is due in January 2025, and the Counter-Memorial is due in August 2027. The case concerns issues of State jurisdictional immunities and the compatibility of domestic judicial decisions with international legal obligations.

Pending advisory proceedings during the period under review are also important.

- [*Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*](#)

The General Assembly requested an advisory opinion on Israel's violations of Palestinian self-determination rights, demographic changes in East Jerusalem, and implications for States and international organizations. Fifty-seven written statements were submitted and public hearings held. The Court's advisory opinion, adopted by strong majority, concluded Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful, calling for an end to settlement activity, evacuation of settlers, reparations,

and ending the occupation swiftly. The Court also stated that all States and international organizations, including the UN and EU, must not recognize or assist in maintaining the illegal situation.

- *Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change*

The Court was requested to clarify States' obligations under international law to protect the climate system and legal consequences of climate-related harm. Ninety-one written statements were filed. Proceedings continue, with written comments due by August 2024.

- *Right to Strike under ILO Convention No. 87*

Due to longstanding disagreement within the ILO, the ICJ was asked for an urgent advisory opinion on whether the right to strike is protected under Convention No. 87. The Court invited States parties, the ILO, and consultative organizations to submit statements. Thirty-one written statements were filed. Proceedings remain ongoing, with written comments due by September 2024.

3. Conclusion

The report highlights the Court's efforts to enhance procedural efficiency and transparency through the use of multimedia platforms and cooperation with the UN. For the world to gain a better understanding of the activities of the court, they welcomed high-level visitors, gave presentations on organizations, provided online resources and services worldwide, established a museum, used the services of the Secretariat's Department of Global Communications, and published various documentation.

For the **full report**, see: [**The International Court of Justice Annual Report**](#)