



# Science for Peace

**January 25, 2024**

**President's Column**



Dear members of Science for Peace,

On January 17, Michael Lynk presented the first of the Peace and Conflict lectures organized by Science for Peace for the 2024 Winter: "Palestine through the lens of international law". Michael is a Professor of Law at Western University in London, ON. Between 2016 and 2022, he served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the

situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. He delivered regular reports to the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Michael's presentation provided strong arguments that Israel's attack on Gaza is violating the core principles of International Humanitarian Law protecting civilians during war. Defenders of Israel's actions argue that on October 7, Hamas committed war crimes, which is true. However, under International Humanitarian Law the fact that one side commits war crimes does not justify war crimes from the other side. Israel has stated that its intent is to attack Hamas, and not Palestinian civilians. However, the Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant declared on October 9 "We are putting a complete siege on Gaza ... No electricity, no food, no water, no gas – it's all closed". This clearly indicates that Israel is punishing not just Hamas, but the entire Palestinian population in Gaza.

After strong international pressure some food, water and medicines have been allowed to enter Gaza, but the amounts are clearly insufficient, and now the civilian population is facing death by starvation, disease, and lack of medical care. Israel's military activity also violates other core principles of International Humanitarian Law: the "proportionality of response" and the obligation to "minimize the military attacks on the civilian population". As a result of these violations of the core principles, as of January 22, more than 15,000 women and children have been killed by the Israeli army.

The video with the complete lecture by Michael Link can be found [here](#).

The US and its allies frequently claim that they defend the "rules-based international order" and international humanitarian law. For example, these countries have invoked international law to oppose the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and they have opposed any attempts of ceasefire arguing that Russia should not be allowed to keep territories conquered by military force.

The West however has not applied this principle in the Middle East, where the Palestinian territories have been occupied by Israel for 75 years. Moreover, the West, and in particular the US, is allowing the killing of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including women and children. The US continues to provide billions of dollars in military assistance to Israel.

Last week the Prime Minister of Israel announced that he informed President Biden that Israel is against the creation of a Palestinian state. Certainly, this is nothing new. Since the creation of the State of Israel, its leadership, despite publicly expressing their support for the two-state solution, continuously promoted the establishment of settlements on Palestinian territory. Why would Israel promote settlements on a territory that will eventually be part of the Palestinian State? The truth is that the Israeli leadership wants to solve the "Palestinian problem" by ethnic cleansing. They apparently hope that, by making Gaza inhabitable, the civilian population will "voluntarily" migrate to Egypt or another country that will accept Palestinian refugees.

Another important recent event in the Middle east crisis has been the case made by the South African government at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. [This is the link](#) to the presentation at the ICJ by one of the South African lawyers, and [this is the link](#) to the presentation by one of the Israeli lawyers.

The 84-page filing by South Africa claims that Israel violated the 1948 Genocide Convention, drawn up in the aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust. A provisional ruling is expected soon. If the court decides to implement an interim measure like a ceasefire, this judgment would put a legal obligation on Israel to end its onslaught. The court's rulings are final but it has no authority to enforce them.

On February 14th at 5 PM, Richard Sandbrook, Science for Peace vice-president, will present the second lecture of our Peace and Conflict Winter Lecture calendar. The title of his talk is "Climate Crisis and Capitalism: Is System Change the Answer?" (Please see poster below, and register for this event, on Zoom or in-person.)

Jorge Filmus  
President  
Science for Peace

## Upcoming Events

SCIENCE FOR PEACE  
PEACE AND CONFLICT LECTURES, WINTER 2024

PROFESSOR RICHARD SANDBROOK ON:

# CLIMATE CRISIS AND CAPITALISM

IS SYSTEM  
CHANGE THE  
ANSWER?



### Location (Hybrid)

In-person at the Paul  
Cadario Conference  
Centre, University College  
at U of T, and on Zoom

**WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 14  
5:00-6:30 PM ET**

### Registration

#### In Person:

<http://tinyurl.com/mr3pfnsf>

#### Zoom:

<http://tinyurl.com/3n4cy6md>



Sandbrook is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at U of T and Vice-President of Science for Peace. He identifies the impasse in reformist and radical approaches to resolving the climate crisis. He proposes a radical-reformist paradigm that might dissolve the impasse by offering a just, viable and feasible pathway.

Register below:

[In Person](#)

[Online via Zoom](#)

## Recent Publications and Events



### ***Arnd Jurgensen: A War between Guyana and Venezuela would be a Disaster for the World***

Facing elections that he is likely to lose next year, Venezuela's alleged "tyrant" Nicholas Maduro, is provoking a conflict with his small neighbor, Guyana. He is claiming 60% of Guyana's national territory, including

its rich deposits of oil. He even held a referendum, in which 80 % of Venezuelans voted in favour of declaring the Essequibo region part of the national territory, as if matters of territory like this were decided by popular opinion.

[Continue reading..](#)



## Palestine through the lens of international law

**Michael Lynk** is Professor Emeritus of Law, Western University, London, Ontario, where he taught international and Canadian human rights law, labour law, and constitutional law. Between 2016 and 2022, he served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, delivering regular reports to the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

[View recording](#)

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