

US Sanctions UN Rights Expert Over Criticism of Israel's Gaza Campaign

July 10, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



The United States has imposed sanctions on Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, in a move that has sparked outrage among human rights advocates and international legal experts.

Announced on July 9, the sanctions target Albanese over what the U.S. called her “illegitimate and shameful” efforts to encourage legal action against American and Israeli officials and businesses. Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated that Albanese’s efforts to

urge the International Criminal Court (ICC) to pursue cases against U.S. and Israeli officials and companies over Israel's military operations in Gaza had crossed a line.

Albanese, an Italian lawyer and academic, has been one of the most outspoken critics of Israel's conduct in Gaza. She has described Israel's offensive as a "genocidal campaign" and called for governments to impose an arms embargo and suspend trade and financial ties with the country. Israel, which launched its military campaign in response to a deadly Hamas attack in October 2023, has strongly denied allegations of genocide, insisting its actions are legitimate self-defense.

In her recent report to the U.N. Human Rights Council, Albanese named more than 60 companies ranging from weapons manufacturers to major technology firms that she claims are contributing to Israel's military activities and settlement expansion. She urged these companies to end their involvement and called for accountability for executives allegedly complicit in violations of international law.

The U.S. sanctions quickly drew criticism from international human rights organizations. Dylan Williams, vice president for government affairs at the Center for International Policy, described the decision as "rogue state behavior." Amnesty International condemned the move, warning that it could undermine the independence and safety of all U.N. special rapporteurs, who are tasked with investigating and reporting on serious abuses.

Agnes Callamard, Amnesty's Secretary General and herself a former U.N. special rapporteur, called on governments worldwide to resist the U.S. sanctions and protect the work of independent rights experts.

This development comes amid a broader U.S. disengagement from international institutions during President Donald Trump's second term, including the withdrawal from the U.N. Human Rights Council and funding cuts to U.N. agencies. Since returning to office in January, Trump has suspended American participation in the U.N. Human Rights Council, cut funding to the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, and announced plans to exit other global agreements, including the Paris climate accord.

The sanctions on Albanese also follow previous measures against judges of the International Criminal Court, reflecting a hardline approach toward international investigations into alleged misconduct by the U.S. and Israel.

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