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U.S. Sanctions on UN Official Spark Backlash from Palestinian Human Rights Groups

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The United States' decision to impose sanctions on United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has drawn fierce criticism from Palestinian rights organizations, which argue that the move undermines the credibility of international human rights institutions. Francesca Albanese, tasked by the UN to report on human rights conditions in the Palestinian territories, has been sanctioned by the U.S. following her pointed accusations against Israel for alleged war crimes and systemic abuses.

Two leading Palestinian civil society coalitions, the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO) and the Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC), issued a joint statement condemning the sanctions as “a dangerous precedent” and an “attack on the independence” of the UN’s human rights mechanisms. PNGO and PHROC accused the United States of violating several foundational international agreements, including the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Albanese has consistently raised alarms about what she describes as systematic violations by Israeli forces in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, including allegations of ethnic cleansing, extrajudicial killings, and the maintenance of an apartheid regime. Her reports, supported by global human rights bodies such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International, and the UN’s Independent International Commission of Inquiry, have drawn the ire of pro-Israel governments, particularly Washington.

The U.S. sanctions, according to PNGO and PHROC, are part of a broader pattern of American efforts to shield Israel from international accountability. These efforts, they note, extend back to threats against the International Criminal Court (ICC), including sanctions against its judges and prosecutors. ICC stands for International Criminal Court, the global tribunal responsible for prosecuting individuals for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

“Punishing a UN official for doing her job with integrity is a disturbing sign,” the joint statement read. “This isn’t just about Francesca Albanese; it’s about the erosion of the international system meant to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.”

The organizations are urging the global community, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), to defend the autonomy of special rapporteurs and to reject political interference. UNHRC stands for United Nations Human Rights Council, the intergovernmental body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights worldwide.

PHROC and PNGO closed their statement with a call for international human rights advocates to stand in solidarity with Albanese and to resist what they termed a “dangerous path” that could delegitimize the very system designed to uphold justice.

While Washington has yet to provide detailed reasoning for the sanctions, the political message is clear: scrutiny of U.S. allies, particularly Israel, comes at a cost. For critics, the move further confirms the widening gap between U.S. foreign policy and the principles it claims to defend.