



By: TA | AP Insight

Nobel Peace Prize as a rebuke to Trump and Netanyahu



Navi Pillay, a South African-born jurist and former U.N. human rights chief whose **career** has spanned from defending the rights of an imprisoned Nelson Mandela to leading a panel that found that **Israel committed genocide** in Gaza, won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for her efforts to promote international law as it comes under attack.

Her win is sure to be seen as a **high-profile rebuke** to U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who have both rejected the findings of the U.N. commission she led on Gaza.

The leaders also have been highly critical of the **International Court of Justice** and the International Criminal Court. Pillay has worked at both.

Hours after the award was announced in Norway, the Trump administration imposed sweeping **new sanctions on the ICC** as part of a campaign to dismantle the tribunal that the U.S. believes has become politicized and attempted to unfairly and illegally prosecute Americans and Israelis on war crimes charges.

On the 125th anniversary of the prize's inception, the Norwegian Nobel Committee sought "to remind the world that the rule of law, national and international, underpins the system we have set up to ensure peace and resolve conflicts nonviolently. Peace requires justice," committee Chairman Jørgen Watne Frydnes said.

Judges "guard the thin red line between order and chaos," and the world needs jurists "of courage, vision and determination, qualities that Navi Pillay demonstrates in her work on the bench."

In places such as Israel and in apartheid-era South Africa, she and peers took on some of the world's most painful and sensitive legal issues and most vulnerable populations.

Pillay, 85, received the news while attending a forum in Nuremberg, Germany, where the trials of Nazi war criminals helped lay the foundations of international law. She was in

the same room where the trials were held when the prize was announced in Norway.

She said efforts to weaken international criminal justice "endanger the progress painstakingly made since Nuremberg, and they risk returning us to a world in which power, rather than law, determines whose suffering matters."

Winner led investigation that determined Israel committed genocide in Gaza

Pillay chaired the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, which was created by the U.N.-backed Human Rights Council.

The commission a year ago concluded Israel was responsible for genocide in Gaza with a specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza.

Gaza was among Pillay's first comments Friday after hearing she had won. "What's happening there is genocide," she said in Germany, to more applause.

The commission last year also found that the Israeli president, prime minister and former defense minister "have incited the commission of genocide." Israel, which has refused to cooperate with the commission since it was established in 2021, has strenuously denied the accusations.

Pillay has repeatedly rebuffed critics who accused her of antisemitism or turning a blind eye to the Hamas attacks in Israel

Pillay has repeatedly rebuffed critics who accused her of antisemitism or turning a blind eye to the Hamas attacks in Israel.

Under her leadership, the commission also issued reports accusing Hamas of war crimes and violations of international humanitarian

law during its Oct. 7, 2023, attack.

In an interview with The Associated Press last year, she recalled how she worked closely with some Jewish lawyers in the fight against apartheid in her native South Africa and was invited to Israel as the U.N. rights chief from 2008 to 2014.

Critical time for Gaza

Growing up under the harsh system of segregation influenced Pillay's interest in human rights and the law. Starting with Mandela's presidency, South Africa's government has openly compared the situation faced by nonwhite people during apartheid to the Palestinians' plight.

"We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians," Mandela said soon after apartheid ended.

The Nobel announcement came at another critical time for Gaza

The Nobel announcement came at another critical time for Gaza, just two days after the anniversary of the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, that killed about 1,200 people and sparked the war.

Over 74,000 Palestinians have since been killed, with their territory devastated. Saturday marks a year since a fragile ceasefire took effect, while Israeli strikes continue.

Netanyahu wrote on X that the Nobel committee "has lost its moral compass" by awarding its highest honor to "a bigot who built her career around inventing and propagating blood libels against the one and only Jewish state."

The award was announced less than three weeks before Israel's election, in which Netanyahu is fighting to stay in power.

Focus on a court under pressure from Trump

Pillay's win and new U.S. sanctions bring renewed attention to Trump's ongoing feud with the International Criminal Court, where Pillay was a judge from 2003 to 2008.

In a video address, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the Trump administration would "ban transactions with this rogue court, cutting off their resources and crippling its ability to operate against us."



The Trump administration would ban transactions with the ICC, cutting off their resources and crippling its ability to operate against us - Marco Rubio

The Nobel Committee did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment following Rubio's announcement.

Pillay currently serves as an ad hoc judge at the International Court of Justice, the highest court of the United Nations, in the ongoing genocide case against Myanmar.

When countries do not have a national on the court's permanent, 15-judge panel, they can appoint an expert of their choice.

Gambia, which launched the proceedings in 2019, selected Pillay when the country accused Myanmar of committing genocide against the Rohingya minority group.

As a young lawyer in apartheid South Africa, part of Pillay's work involved establishing key rights for political prisoners being held on Robben Island, which included Mandela, who

later won the Nobel Peace Prize.

After apartheid ended, then-South African President Mandela appointed Pillay to be the country's first non-white woman to serve as a High Court judge.