

Press Release

Second International Legal Conference Concludes in Istanbul with the Adoption of the “Istanbul Declaration” and the Launch of an International Initiative to Defend the International Criminal Court

Istanbul – 12 July 2026

The Second International Legal Conference, held under the theme “Crimes of the Israeli Occupation in Palestine: Between Legal Accountability and Achieving Justice,” concluded in Istanbul after bringing together judges, lawyers, academics, international law experts, representatives of bar associations, and legal and human rights organizations from around the world. The conference was jointly organized by the Istanbul No. 2 Bar Association, the International Legal Coalition for Palestine, and the Jordanian Bar Association.

Throughout its sessions, the conference addressed the crime of genocide in the Gaza Strip, war crimes and crimes against humanity, settlements and forced displacement, violations against Palestinian prisoners and detainees, the independence of the International Criminal Court (ICC), universal jurisdiction as a tool of accountability, and the legal status of the so-called “Peace Board” and its implications for the rights of the Palestinian people.

The conference adopted the “Istanbul Declaration for the Defense of the Rights of the Palestinian People,” reaffirming the international legal community’s commitment to supporting the Palestinian people’s rights to freedom, independence, and self-determination, holding perpetrators of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity accountable, combating impunity, and defending the independence of the International Criminal Court and its judges against political pressure and unilateral sanctions.

The participants also approved the Final Conference Declaration, which sets out key legal principles and recommendations, including reaffirming the universality of international law, rejecting double standards, condemning settlement expansion, annexation, and forced displacement, rejecting any form of guardianship imposed upon the Palestinian people, promoting the effective use of universal jurisdiction, holding companies complicit in the occupation accountable, and establishing a permanent international legal network to coordinate legal efforts in support of justice and accountability.

One of the conference’s most significant outcomes was the launch of the International Initiative to Defend the International Criminal Court and Its Judges, aimed at safeguarding the Court’s independence, responding to unilateral sanctions and political interference targeting its judges and officials, and building a global coalition of lawyers, legal experts, and human rights organizations to strengthen legal protection for the Court and uphold international criminal justice.

The participants emphasized that international justice must remain independent of political interests and power politics, warning that continued impunity undermines the credibility of the international legal order and encourages further violations of international law. They called upon bar associations, universities, legal professionals, academic institutions, and civil society organizations worldwide to join the Istanbul Declaration and the International Initiative to Defend the International Criminal Court, and to unite their efforts in defending the rights of the Palestinian people, protecting the independence of international justice, and ensuring accountability for serious violations of international law without selectivity or double standards.

The End