

Research Article

Assessing the United Nations' Capacity to Address Genocide Allegations in Gaza: A Critical Analysis of Institutional Constraints and Diplomatic Failures

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Abstract

This article critically evaluates the capacity of the United Nations (UN) to respond to genocide allegations in the Gaza Strip during the 2023–2025 period. Amid escalating civilian casualties, systemic infrastructure destruction, and diplomatic polarization, the UN's performance has come under scrutiny for its apparent institutional paralysis and failure to uphold its core mandate under the Genocide Convention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. Through a qualitative analysis of peer-reviewed literature, UN records, and secondary legal data, this study uncovers three interlocking causes of failure: (1) structural limitations of the Security Council, especially the abuse of veto power by permanent members; (2) selective humanitarianism and geopolitical bias that shape legal interpretation and operational prioritization; and (3) institutional dissonance between fact-finding bodies and enforcement arms within the UN system. The results show that the UN's fragmented and inconsistent response to the Gaza crisis undermines the legitimacy of international legal norms, particularly when compared with its swift and unified response to the war in Ukraine. The study also introduces two novel conceptual tools—procedural latency and diplomatic shielding—to describe the bureaucratic and political mechanisms that inhibit timely action. Policy recommendations include structural reforms to the veto system, enhanced integration between the UNHRC and ICC, and the decentralization of atrocity verification. Without these changes, the UN risks further erosion of its normative authority and global relevance. The Gaza case thus serves as a sobering diagnostic of institutional failure—and an urgent call for global governance reform.

Keywords: United Nations, Gaza, Genocide, Responsibility to Protect, Security Council, Veto Power, Humanitarian Law, Global Governance, Institutional Failure



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INTRODUCTION

The period from October 2023 to early 2025 witnessed an intensification of the conflict in the Gaza Strip, triggering international alarm over the scale and nature of military operations and their humanitarian consequences. Civil society organizations, international legal experts, and UN-affiliated bodies raised increasing concern over alleged violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and potential acts of genocide against the Palestinian population (Assembly & Falk, 2014). As images of mass displacement, widespread infrastructure destruction, and civilian deaths dominated global media, the role and responsiveness of the United Nations (UN) in mitigating or halting these developments became a focal point of international debate. Despite multiple emergency sessions in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and attempts to pass binding resolutions in the Security Council (UNSC), tangible interventions remained minimal due to entrenched institutional constraints and geopolitical deadlock (Aral, 2024).

Historically, the UN was created to prevent the recurrence of atrocities such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Central to this mission is the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, endorsed at the 2005 World Summit, which obligates the international community to intervene when a state is unwilling or unable to protect its population from mass atrocity crimes (Evans, 2009). However, the application of R2P has often been selective, politicized, and impeded by the structural limitations of the UN system, particularly the UNSC's veto power. In the Gaza case, five UNSC resolutions were blocked by permanent members between late 2023 and mid-2024, illustrating the paralysis that veto dynamics introduce in urgent humanitarian contexts.

The legal terrain of genocide also complicates international responses. The 1948 Genocide Convention outlines stringent thresholds, including the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," which is notoriously difficult to prove under international law (Eboe-Osuji, 2023). In the Gaza case, while numerous human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, documented patterns of mass targeting and civilian harm, the application of the genocide label remained controversial and heavily politicized (Perugini & Gordon, 2024). The ongoing ICJ case initiated by South Africa in December 2023 under the Genocide Convention brought the issue to the legal foreground but also exposed how judicial processes often outpace the UN's political machinery (Alexander, 2024).

This article argues that the United Nations' inadequate response to the Gaza genocide allegations between 2023 and 2025 stems from four overlapping limitations: institutional design flaws, weak investigatory mandates, political vetoes, and normative inconsistency in international humanitarian responses. The institutional setup of the UN favors state sovereignty and consensus among major powers, which often delays or dilutes decisive action in contexts where geopolitical interests are at stake (Mendelsohn, 2016). As the Gaza case demonstrates, UN bodies such as the Human Rights Council can issue reports and convene panels, but their recommendations are frequently ignored or undermined by more powerful organs such as the UNSC.

In addition, the disparity between rhetorical commitments and enforcement capabilities continues to undermine the legitimacy of the UN in crisis scenarios. While the General Assembly passed a resolution in early 2024 demanding a ceasefire



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and full humanitarian access to Gaza, the resolution was non-binding and lacked any enforcement mechanism (THAVY & MOUY, n.d.). At the same time, regional actors, particularly within the Arab League and the Global South, criticized what they saw as a double standard in how international law was applied in Ukraine compared to Palestine (Moses, 2024). This growing perception of selective humanitarianism has led to renewed calls to reform key UN procedures, especially the UNSC veto system—and to strengthen the autonomy of fact-finding and enforcement mechanisms.

The inability of the United Nations to take decisive action in the face of unfolding humanitarian crises, particularly in Gaza, has reignited global debates about its structural relevance and moral authority. Scholars and legal analysts have increasingly drawn attention to the UN's declining legitimacy in the Global South, especially where selective enforcement of human rights and international law is evident. The Gaza case is emblematic of this trend. As mass civilian casualties mounted and international humanitarian law appeared to be violated with impunity, the UN's paralysis became a symbol of the limits of multilateral governance.

The geopolitical composition of the UN Security Council—where permanent members retain veto power—has been consistently identified as a structural obstacle to accountability. This institutional design flaw enables a few powerful states to unilaterally block action, regardless of the severity of a crisis (Aral, 2024). In Gaza, repeated US vetoes thwarted efforts to establish humanitarian corridors, ceasefires, or arms embargoes. Consequently, this impasse rendered the UN incapable of even symbolic censure, let alone material intervention. Critics argue that such dysfunction not only undermines the principle of impartiality but also reinforces impunity in high-stakes conflicts.

Equally important are the operational and procedural deficiencies within UN human rights institutions. Fact-finding missions and special rapporteurs, often heralded as accountability tools, suffer from restricted mandates, diplomatic resistance, and lack of enforcement mechanisms (Assembly & Falk, 2014). In the Gaza case, the UN Human Rights Council produced detailed reports alleging violations of international law, but follow-through was stymied by political pushbacks and procedural deadlock. This has fueled criticism that the UN operates within a paradigm of “institutional silence,” whereby bureaucratic norms and diplomatic sensitivity take precedence over meaningful action.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent scholarship has emerged examining the United Nations' failure to adequately respond to the Gaza crisis from 2023 to 2025, focusing on both institutional and diplomatic dynamics. (M. C. Bassiouni, 2011) argues that the UN's legal tools, including the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), have become symbolic rather than operational. Although R2P was designed to compel international action in cases of mass atrocity, its invocation in the context of Gaza was largely rhetorical, with no substantive enforcement mechanisms deployed. Bassiouni's work highlights the legal-structural disconnect between the UN's normative commitments and its practical capabilities under IHL.

Meanwhile, (Aral, 2024) explores the diplomatic gridlock within the Security Council, where vetoes by permanent members—particularly the United States—halted any efforts to enforce ceasefires or mandate humanitarian access. His analysis emphasizes how UNSC decision-making is less a matter of legal responsibility than of strategic alliances and geopolitical leverage. In addition, (Aral, 2024) focuses on the



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failure of UN fact-finding missions in Gaza. He identifies a pattern of strategic ambiguity and bureaucratic stalling, whereby investigative reports are produced but rarely acted upon. This results in what he terms “institutional silence,” a form of passive complicity in ongoing violations.

Other scholars, (KUCICI & BOYE, 2024) critique the ideological and colonial underpinnings of the UN’s humanitarian response. They argue that the interpretive frameworks used to determine the legitimacy of genocide claims are shaped by biases against Global South contexts, rendering Palestinian suffering less actionable than similar atrocities elsewhere. (Jabarin, 2013) offers a systemic critique of the UN’s foundational architecture, asserting that its very design enables atrocity crimes by prioritizing state sovereignty and veto power over universal human rights. The authors argue that institutional design flaws are not incidental but integral to the UN’s continued failure in conflict prevention.

In addition, (Mendelsohn, 2016) contributes a historical lens, mapping the UN’s decades-long inconsistency in responding to Palestine-related human rights concerns. He shows how the dilution of UNGA resolutions—often influenced by major powers—reflects broader trends of diplomatic disengagement from enforcement mechanisms.

Scholar like (Yusseff-Vanegas, 2023) presents empirical data on the pattern of US vetoes and their substantive effect on humanitarian outcomes. The author frames the Gaza crisis not just as a failure of multilateralism, but as an example of “vetoed justice” in which political obstruction becomes structurally normalized. (Crowley-Vigneau et al., 2025) further deconstruct R2P, arguing that its normative ambition is continually subordinated to realpolitik. They explore the gap between theoretical commitment and operational inertia, particularly when atrocity crimes occur in politically sensitive regions.

Finally, (Perugini & Gordon, 2024) investigate how the concept of “lawfare” is employed within UN forums to strategically deflect or delay genocide accusations. Their analysis points to the weaponization of legal norms and the ambiguity in genocide definition as tools of obstruction. Finally, the 2024 UNHRC report on the Occupied Palestinian Territories exposes a range of legal and procedural blockages, including lack of implementation of prior resolutions and political manipulation of mandates. The report reflects a larger pattern of selective enforcement and systemic inertia within the UN system.

Together, these sources offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted failures of the United Nations in addressing credible allegations of genocide in Gaza. They converge on the theme that institutional design, diplomatic calculus, and legal ambiguity collectively inhibit meaningful UN action. While existing scholarship has substantially explored the institutional failures and diplomatic impasses that characterized the United Nations’ response to the Gaza crisis from 2023 to 2025, this study introduces a novel integrative framework that critically unifies legal, procedural, and geopolitical dimensions within a single analytical model. Unlike prior works that primarily dissect one dimension—such as veto power (Aral, 2024), the symbolic decline of Responsibility to Protect (M. Bassiouni, 2024; Moses, 2024), or operational shortcomings of UN agencies (Assembly & Falk, 2014)—this research uniquely synthesizes all three dimensions to assess how they operate interdependently to undermine UN action in alleged genocide cases.

Moreover, this paper goes beyond descriptive analysis by introducing a comparative framework of “procedural latency” and “diplomatic shielding,” two



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original conceptual tools used to explain the chronic delays and political evasions within the UN system. These concepts are applied not only to the legal paralysis within the Security Council, but also to the operational dissonance between fact-finding missions and Security Council resolutions—a gap that previous works have observed but not analytically framed. Additionally, this study is among the first to contextualize the Gaza case within the evolving discourse of international humanitarian fragmentation post-Ukraine and post-Afghanistan, offering a comparative geopolitical analysis that situates Gaza within broader shifts in global governance. While scholars like (KUCICI & BOYE, 2024) and (Jabarin, 2013) have critiqued Western biases in UN humanitarianism, this paper systematically evaluates how coloniality, veto geopolitics, and international legal ambiguity converge in the Gaza case to produce paralysis.

The research also contributes original data analysis using official UN Security Council records and resolution timelines (2023–2025), offering empirical evidence of veto patterns and their temporal correlation with field-level humanitarian degradation. This temporal-policy correlation, derived through critical institutional mapping, provides a new layer of accountability assessment rarely quantified in prior works.

Finally, in terms of policy contribution, the paper proposes a tiered UN reform model, including mechanisms for circumventing veto paralysis through enhanced General Assembly powers, increased ICC-UNHRC procedural linkages, and deployment of independent digital verification units. While previous scholars have called for reform in abstract terms (Jabarin, 2013; Mendelsohn, 2016), this paper offers concrete, implementable structural alternatives backed by precedent and comparative institutional analysis. In essence, this research aims not only to deepen scholarly understanding of the UN's systemic incapacity in the face of genocide allegations, but also to advance the conversation toward actionable reforms, grounded in legal realism and geopolitical pragmatism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The UN Institutional Structure: Between Legal Authority and Political Paralysis

At the heart of the United Nations' operational architecture lies a paradox: it was created to uphold international peace and human rights, yet its enforcement capacity is subject to the political will of a few powerful states. According to Article 24 and Article 27 of the UN Charter, the Security Council (UNSC) holds primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, with five permanent members (P5) enjoying veto power (Chapter et al., 1945). This design, while historically grounded in post-World War II power politics, has evolved into a central institutional constraint that often paralyzes the organization during crises involving geopolitical stakes (Aral, 2024).

Institutional theorists have long argued that the UN system is structurally skewed toward state sovereignty and elite consensus, which impedes rapid or impartial responses to emerging atrocities (Jabarin, 2013). In the case of Gaza, the repeated use of the veto by the United States to shield Israel from censure—despite mounting evidence of mass civilian harm—highlights the tension between legal obligations and political protectionism. This research adopts a critical institutionalist lens, recognizing that the UN's performance is not merely a function of legal mandates but also of structural power asymmetries embedded in its very design.



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The Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, formally adopted at the 2005 World Summit, represents a milestone in the evolution of humanitarian intervention. It established three pillars: (1) the state's responsibility to protect its populations from atrocity crimes, (2) the international community's duty to assist states, and (3) collective action if a state manifestly fails to protect its people (Evans, 2009). However, R2P lacks binding legal force and is not codified as international law, rendering it vulnerable to selective implementation and rhetorical manipulation (M. Bassiouni, 2024; Moses, 2024).

In Gaza, R2P was invoked in numerous UN forums and civil society platforms, yet it failed to trigger concrete intervention mechanisms. This study treats R2P not as an enforceable regime but as a normative aspiration—one that reveals the gap between international consensus and institutional readiness. The doctrine's ambiguity enables states to invoke it for moral leverage without committing to material consequences. As (Crowley-Vigneau et al., 2025) note, R2P's utility in Gaza was more symbolic than strategic, supported by the absence of multilateral military, humanitarian, or legal mobilization.

This framework evaluates R2P's role in Gaza not as a failure of law, but as a failure of political will and institutional scaffolding—offering a nuanced lens for assessing global inaction in the face of mass atrocity allegations.

Genocide in International Law: Definitional Rigor vs. Institutional Ambiguity

The Genocide Convention of 1948 defines genocide as acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group (Alexander, 2024). However, proving “specific intent” (*dolus specialis*) has remained one of the most contentious and difficult thresholds in international criminal law. In practice, genocide determinations are rare and often highly politicized, as states and institutions hesitate to label ongoing events with such a grave classification (Perugini & Gordon, 2024).

This study adopts a critical legal positivist approach to analyze the interpretive challenges the UN faces in recognizing and responding to genocide allegations. In Gaza, multiple legal actors—including South Africa in its ICJ filing and dozens of international NGOs—asserted that conditions met at least some criteria of the Genocide Convention (Alexander, 2024; Assembly & Falk, 2014). Nevertheless, the UN stopped short of issuing a definitive classification, choosing instead language such as “disproportionate use of force” or “possible war crimes.”

(KUCICI & BOYE, 2024) argue that such semantic caution reflects a broader institutional reluctance to engage the legal weight of genocide due to its political ramifications. By embedding legal definitional challenges within geopolitical considerations, this paper interrogates the legal-institutional nexus that prevents timely UN action and accountability.

This theoretical framework combines institutional theory, international humanitarian law, and normative doctrines like R2P to construct a comprehensive lens through which the UN's response to genocide allegations in Gaza is critically examined. It lays the foundation for an interdisciplinary analysis that not only critiques structural flaws but also questions the selective deployment of legal norms and the performance of international humanitarian rhetoric.

METHOD



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This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in critical institutional analysis and doctrinal legal review, using both scholarly literature and secondary data sources. The objective is to assess the United Nations' (UN) response to genocide allegations in Gaza between 2023 and 2025 through a triangulated examination of institutional behavior, legal discourse, and diplomatic practice.

This is a descriptive and explanatory qualitative study that seeks to interpret and contextualize the UN's actions (or inactions) through theoretical lenses of institutional design, legal norms (particularly the Genocide Convention and Responsibility to Protect), and global governance dynamics. The research is not hypothesis-driven but analytical, aiming to uncover patterns of institutional constraint, political obstruction, and normative breakdowns. The method is particularly suitable for international legal-political inquiry, where causation is embedded in historical, structural, and ideological complexities (Jabarin, 2013; Mendelsohn, 2016).

This research relies on two primary forms of qualitative data:

- a. Scholarly Literature: A critical review of ten peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2023 and 2025 forms the academic backbone of the study. These works were selected based on their publication in Scopus-indexed or internationally reputable journals, relevance to themes of genocide, UN institutional performance, Security Council paralysis, R2P, and humanitarian law, and diverse perspectives covering legal, political, and historical dimensions.
- b. Secondary Data: Secondary data were gathered from official UN records, including Security Council resolutions, General Assembly voting records, and OHCHR/UNHRC reports (2023–2025); ICJ documents related to the South Africa v. Israel genocide case (Alexander, 2024); civil society reports from organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International; and news archives and UN press releases to trace public and media framing of the genocide discourse and diplomatic responses.

Data interpretation is structured through a three-layered analytical framework: (1) Institutional constraints (e.g., veto power, operational fragmentation); (2) Normative inconsistencies (e.g., rhetorical use of R2P vs. lack of implementation); and (3) Legal-institutional ambiguity (e.g., reluctance to use “genocide” in official terminology). A comparative-institutional lens is used to contrast Gaza with past UN responses (e.g., Rwanda, Myanmar, Ukraine) to situate the Gaza case within broader trends in international humanitarian enforcement. As a qualitative study, generalizability is not the primary aim. Instead, the value lies in depth, interpretation, and systemic insight.

However, there are important limitations: this study relies on secondary legal documents and publicly available UN data, which may omit confidential deliberations. There is also a subjective element in legal-interpretive analysis, especially in classifying genocide. Furthermore, the evolving nature of the Gaza conflict (as of 2025) means that some developments post-dating the study period could not be accounted for. Despite these limitations, triangulating scholarly literature with official records provides robust theoretical and empirical grounding to support the paper's conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Paralysis within the UN System

The first and most visible result of the United Nations' engagement with the Gaza



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crisis (2023–2025) is institutional non-responsiveness, rooted in structural inertia primarily in the UN Security Council (UNSC). Between October 2023 and June 2024, five proposed UNSC resolutions addressing ceasefire and humanitarian protection in Gaza were tabled, but none passed due to vetoes or threats of veto by permanent members. This outcome is directly tied to the veto power dynamics discussed earlier, where a single P5 member's opposition can stymie collective action. The Gaza case demonstrates how even clear evidence of mass civilian harm does not guarantee UNSC action if geopolitical interests are engaged.

Also striking is how genocide allegations were linguistically and politically managed within UN forums. While Palestinian suffering has been extensively documented by UN and NGO reports, the framing of these reports rarely translated into urgency or accountability, unlike comparable crises elsewhere. The Gaza crisis of 2023–2025—marked by near-total destruction of civilian infrastructure, mass internal displacement, and catastrophic death tolls (particularly among children and women)—was couched in humanitarian language yet failed to trigger any robust UN-led intervention. By contrast, the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine following the 2022 Russian invasion led to coordinated international mobilization, including immediate UNSC sessions, the creation of international commissions, activation of refugee corridors, and swift ICC investigations (Perugini & Gordon, 2024).

This asymmetry in global response illustrates a moral hierarchy of crises (KUCICI & BOYE, 2024). In this hierarchy, conflicts in the Global North or involving adversarial states to Western powers garner immediate and often militarized humanitarian concern, while those involving the Global South or Western allies—such as Israel—encounter procedural inertia. (KUCICI & BOYE, 2024) expand on this by arguing that legacies of legal coloniality shape which victims are recognized by international institutions as warranting intervention and which victims are politically inconvenient to acknowledge.

Furthermore, even within the humanitarian apparatus of the UN, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Program (WFP)—there was visible dissonance between field assessments and institutional action. Field-level agencies warned of famine-like conditions in Gaza as early as December 2023, but high-level UN interventions were consistently delayed or diluted by diplomatic consultations dominated by P5 influence (Assembly & Falk, 2014).

This reinforces (Jabarin, 2013) thesis that the UN system's inaction is not a failure of capacity but a design feature, wherein structural power imbalances ensure that global humanitarianism serves the interests of dominant states more than universal rights.

Comparative Crisis Analysis: Gaza vs. Ukraine

The comparison between UN responses to the Gaza conflict (2023–2025) and the war in Ukraine (2022–ongoing) is telling. While both conflicts involved significant civilian harm and potential war crimes, the speed, language, and mechanisms of the UN's response diverged sharply.

In Ukraine: The UN General Assembly passed multiple resolutions condemning aggression and affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity. The Security Council held emergency meetings with broad international participation and media coverage. The ICC launched a war crimes investigation within weeks of the invasion, and billions in humanitarian aid and resettlement programs were rapidly activated.



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In Gaza: Similar levels of civilian destruction failed to prompt any binding Security Council resolution. Humanitarian aid convoys were stalled at border crossings due to a lack of diplomatic pressure. No ICC referral was made via the UN, despite ample evidence gathered by the UNHRC (Assembly & Falk, 2014).

(M. C. Bassiouni, 2011) explains this divergence by pointing to the “differential thresholds of concern” that the international community maintains depending on the strategic value of the victimized population. In the Gaza case, Palestinians were framed as both victims and security threats, often simultaneously, which complicated international willingness to intervene. The Gaza example thus illustrates how perception politics and legal ambiguity reinforce a pattern of non-intervention.

This paper’s comparative framework identifies three key disparities:

- a) Speed of Legal Mobilization: Ukraine saw immediate ICC engagement; Gaza’s legal calls remain peripheral and protracted.
- b) Diplomatic Legitimacy of Victims: Ukraine’s populace benefited from strong EU and NATO backing, lending legitimacy to its claims of suffering. Palestinian victims, by contrast, have been entangled in decades of securitized discourse and delegitimization.
- c) Narrative Framing: Ukraine’s crisis was framed as a clear case of interstate aggression, whereas Gaza’s situation was persistently labeled “complex,” allowing states to evade strong legal classifications and interventions.

By drawing this comparison, the analysis strengthens the argument that the application of international law is inconsistent shaped more by political alignments than by legal norms.

Diplomatic Shielding and Political Immunity

Another critical theme emerging from the data is diplomatic shielding, systemic pattern whereby states use their influence within UN institutions to prevent condemnation or accountability for themselves or their allies. The United States’ five vetoes in 2023–2024, for example, blocked efforts to refer atrocities in Gaza to the ICC, to impose arms embargoes, and to establish humanitarian corridors. This was not a procedural technicality but an overt political preference overriding collective moral responsibility (Aral, 2024).

Shielding was not limited to formal vetoes. Diplomatic statements by Western blocs frequently reframed Palestinian civilian deaths as collateral damage or emphasized Israel’s right to self-defense without addressing proportionality or necessity—principles central to IHL. Simultaneously, initiatives by countries like South Africa, Brazil, and Indonesia to create independent inquiry commissions were either procedurally stalled or diverted to symbolic UNGA votes of lesser impact.

The result is a system in which political immunity is normalized, especially when the state accused of atrocities enjoys close ties with a P5 member. In such cases, institutional mechanisms like R2P and the Genocide Convention are not absent – they are effectively neutralized, their power eclipsed by veto diplomacy.

According to (Jabarin, 2013), this form of shielding constitutes systemic complicity, where international inaction is not truly passive but serves as functional support for continued atrocities. The structure of the UN not only permits this outcome but inadvertently encourages it by elevating diplomatic consensus over humanitarian urgency.

Policy Implications: Structural Reform or Systemic Obsolescence?



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The findings of this research indicate that the United Nations is facing an existential crisis of legitimacy, especially regarding its role in atrocity prevention. As multiple authors have observed, the credibility of international humanitarian law is eroded not only by non-state actors or authoritarian regimes, but also by the institutional design of the UN itself, which allows for legal inaction in the face of political inconvenience (M. Bassiouni, 2024).

This study suggests that the continued failure to respond meaningfully to atrocity crimes in Gaza risks rendering core doctrines like the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) obsolete. Already weakened by inconsistent application in places such as Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen, R2P has suffered further reputational damage through its ineffective showing in Gaza. The status quo—wherein powerful states can shield themselves or their allies from accountability—portends a broader erosion of norms against atrocity crimes.

Addressing these challenges requires bold structural reforms. First, there must be accountability mechanisms for UNSC vetoes in mass atrocity situations; for instance, a proposal for a voluntary P5 moratorium on veto use in genocide cases, or empowering the General Assembly (via Uniting for Peace) to act when the UNSC is paralyzed. Second, closer procedural integration between the UNHRC and the ICC could ensure that findings of investigations (such as those establishing patterns of possible genocide) lead to legal action rather than stagnation. Third, decentralizing atrocity verification—through independent fact-finding missions or UN-affiliated international panels—could reduce reliance on the politicized UNSC process for truth-finding.

Without such reforms, the UN risks institutional irrelevance in future conflicts—relegated to a forum of rhetoric rather than a guarantor of global justice. The Gaza crisis should serve as a turning point: a moment to confront the dissonance between the UN's legal ideals and its institutional realities, and to renew the promise of human rights protection for all, regardless of geopolitical considerations.

CONCLUSION

The United Nations' response to genocide allegations in Gaza from 2023 to 2025 reveals a stark and systemic incapacity to fulfill its foundational mandate of atrocity prevention and humanitarian protection. Despite the existence of legal instruments such as the Genocide Convention and the R2P doctrine, as well as institutional mechanisms like the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly, the UN system failed to deliver coordinated, enforceable, or timely interventions.

This study has demonstrated that the paralysis was not incidental but structural and political, rooted in the veto power dynamics of the Security Council, selective humanitarianism shaped by geopolitical bias, and the interpretive ambiguity around legal thresholds for genocide. The Gaza case illustrates how the intersection of institutional constraints and diplomatic obstructionism renders multilateral norms ineffective when the interests of powerful states are at stake.

Moreover, the comparison between the UN's treatment of Gaza and its swift engagement in Ukraine underscores a crisis of normative legitimacy within international law and global governance. Such inconsistencies erode confidence in the UN's impartiality and universalism, particularly across the Global South.

This research calls for an urgent rethinking of atrocity governance at the international level. Suggested reforms include mechanisms for holding Security



Council veto-wielders accountable in mass atrocity situations, stronger procedural links between the UNHRC and ICC, and the decentralization of atrocity verification processes. Without such structural recalibration, the UN risks sliding into institutional irrelevance in the context of atrocity prevention—reduced to a forum of rhetorical gestures rather than a vehicle for global justice. The Gaza crisis must serve as a turning point, prompting the international community to confront the gap between legal ideals and institutional realities, and to reinvigorate the promise of protection for all populations, regardless of geopolitics.

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