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Israel Has No Right to Self-Defense as 'Occupier,' Russia Says

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Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vasily Nebenzya. **Eduardo Munoz Alvarez / AP / TACC**

Israel has no right to self-defense against Hamas militants in Gaza as an occupying power in Palestine, Russia's ambassador to the United Nations said Wednesday.

Vasily Nebenzya used his speech at the special UN General Assembly session on Palestine to condemn Western "hypocrisy" over Palestinian civilian deaths amid their criticism of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The only thing [the West] can muster is continued pronouncements about Israel's supposed right to self-defense. Although, as an occupying power, it does not have that power," Nebenzya said.

He cited a 2004 advisory opinion by the Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ), which states that Israel cannot invoke the UN Charter's article on the right to self-defense when acting against threats from occupied territory.

Israel argues that it has not occupied Gaza since 2005, when it withdrew military and civilians from the region. However, a number of international organizations say that Israel has occupied Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip, since 1967.

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In a thinly veiled reference to his country's 21-month invasion of Ukraine, Nebenzya said: "In other situations, [Western nations] call for the respect of humanitarian law, set up inquiry commissions and impose sanctions on those who use force as a last resort to stop years of violence."

Nebenzya said Israel's right to ensure its security "can be fully guaranteed only in the case of a just solution to the Palestinian problem on the basis of the well-known UN Security Council resolutions."

"We don't deny Israel's right to fight terror, but fight terrorists and not civilians."

Nebenzya slammed Washington and its allies for "remaining silent" as the civilian death toll from Israel's bombardment in Gaza continued to grow.

Russia has called on Israel and Hamas authorities in Gaza to reach a cease-fire agreement and allow mediators to work on a diplomatic solution to the decades-long conflict.

Moscow maintains ties with both Israel and Hamas, which sent a delegation to Russia last week.

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