



PRESS RELEASE – 16 December 2025 Paris / Brussels

Hearing of 16 December 2025, 10:30 a.m. – Court of First Instance of Nivelles

JURDI’s legal action against SWIFT: finally addressing the systemic mechanisms that fuel serious violations in Israel/Palestine

The French association JURDI - (Jurists for the Respect of International Law) announces that it has filed summary proceedings seeking interim relief (référé) before the Court of First Instance of Nivelles (Belgium) against **SWIFT**, the international cooperative that provides global financial messaging services.

This action seeks an order for the targeted suspension of access to the SWIFT network for several Israeli banking entities whose activities, according to multiple United Nations reports and international organizations, directly contribute to the financing of operations liable to constitute serious crimes, notably under the 1948 Genocide Convention and international humanitarian law.

Why taking action against SWIFT is necessary now

Because violations are not driven by weapons alone: they are enabled by systems that make their criminal use possible.

For months, the United Nations, including the International Court of Justice, Special Rapporteurs, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), but also INGOs such as Amnesty International and numerous others have warned that:

- the systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure,
- the humanitarian stranglehold,
- massive violations of fundamental rights,
- and the plausible risk of genocide, continue despite temporary ceasefires.

These violations do not stem solely from military decisions.

They are made possible by a financial and technological ecosystem that continues to operate as if nothing were happening.

At the heart of this ecosystem stands SWIFT: a critical infrastructure that facilitates cross-border financial communications from Belgium.

SWIFT is neither a State nor a bank.

However, its network is **indispensable to the international operations of Israeli banks** involved in:

- financing the arms industry,
- illegal settlement projects,
- operations directly linked to serious violations of international law.

SWIFT has already implemented targeted exclusions in the past (Iran in 2012, Russia in 2022). It therefore possesses the technical capacity to act, without disrupting the global financial system.

Yet, despite repeated alerts from the United Nations and numerous organizations, SWIFT has taken no action — not even an internal review.

Why JURDI is acting: a legal and moral duty

Under international law, Belgian law, and peremptory norms (*jus cogens*):

- no actor may contribute, even indirectly, to maintaining a situation involving serious violations of international law;
- private organizations must prevent foreseeable harm when they have the means to do so;
- States, as well as entities under their jurisdiction, must avoid any assistance to violations of international law.

This legal action follows that logic: to bring an end to a systemic contribution which, by enabling cross-border financial flows, materially fuels serious violations.

Relief sought by JURDI

JURDI seeks a targeted, proportionate, and strictly temporary measure, namely:

- the suspension of access to the SWIFT network for six specified Israeli banks;
- the continued processing of humanitarian transactions;
- the immediate lifting of the suspension once the conditions of compliance are established.

This is neither a political boycott nor a unilateral financial sanction, but a technical measure, analogous to measures previously adopted by SWIFT, intended to prevent its network from contributing to serious and large-scale harm.

The core message: We can no longer turn a blind eye to the systemic mechanisms that enable these violations.

International law is not an abstract concept.

It also applies to the infrastructures that make operations on the ground possible.

Where a technology, a company, or a cooperative materially enables the continuation of serious violations - despite repeated warnings from international institutions - it must act, or be compelled to do so through judicial means.

This is the purpose of this action.

Statement by JURDI

“We can no longer confine ourselves to denouncing violations. We must act on the systemic mechanisms that enable them. Our action seeks to hold accountable a global actor that, in full knowledge of the relevant facts, continues to provide essential operational capacity to banks involved in serious violations. When human lives are at stake, inaction is no longer an option.”

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