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SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

MARCH/APRIL 2024 VOL. 24 NO. 2



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United Auto Workers Must Move from Ceasefire Declaration to Stopping Weapons for Israel

By UAW ARAB CAUCUS

Note: The articles we have included about Israel's genocidal war on Palestine have been written at different times, so the numbers of Palestinian deaths reported in them vary based upon when they were written.
—*Socialist Viewpoint*

"The union must take action to translate the UAW's ceasefire declaration to practical interruption of the weapons our UAW siblings are making, sending to Israel, and are being used to kill our families." —UAW Arab Caucus to union president Shawn Fain

February 12, 2024

Shawn Fain

President, United Auto Workers

Dear Shawn,

We write to you as an Arab caucus in the UAW on day 129 of the U.S.-funded Israeli genocide of Gaza's Palestinians to ask you meet with us this week.

Yesterday, Americans watched the Superbowl, including vicious Israeli propaganda ads that lawyers have said

violate FDC regulations. Thinking that people who have been steadfastly resisting our complicity as taxpayers in this genocide would be distracted by the Superbowl (as they did during Thanksgiving, Black Friday, and Christmas,) Israel aerial bombed Palestinian homes, mosques, and hospitals in the "Safe Zone" region of Rafah—the last place that Palestinian civilians can go. As you know, the weapons Israel is using are paid for by U.S. taxpayer money—14.5 billion dollars was sent since October 2023 in addition to the 3.8 billion dollars the U.S. sends every year. On this same Super Bowl Sunday massacre, the U.S. Senate met in a secret session and advanced another 14.1-billion-dollar package to Israel. On top of it all, many of the weapons being supplied are made in UAW unionized shops. It is abundantly clear how central our role as U.S. residents, laborers, and American voters is to Israel's U.S.-supported ethnic cleansing campaign—and it's never been more clear to us the role that the UAW can play in putting an end to it.

As Arab members of the UAW, we have been asking for a meeting with you since late October.

In addition to emailing you ourselves, our fellow UAW members sent hundreds of emails on our behalf, and people who see you regularly have asked directly for this meeting. We've been given a wide range of excuses as to why this meeting hasn't yet happened. All the while we are grieving

the loss of dozens of family members, livelihoods, witnessing direct violence and incitement to violence against Arabs in the U.S.—including those of us who are members of Local 600 in Dearborn which a *Wall Street Journal* Op-Ed just called the "jihad capital of America." We are terrified that this war is intended to expand to the entire Middle East region, and harm more and more of us here in the U.S. (Americans have already been killed in Gaza and the West Bank, and Palestinians targeted in the U.S.)

It is abundantly clear how central our role as U.S. residents, laborers, and American voters is to Israel's U.S.-supported ethnic cleansing campaign—and it's never been more clear to us the role that the UAW can play in putting an end to it.

We need you to meet with us now—you must take action to translate the UAW's ceasefire declaration to practical interruption of the weapons which our UAW siblings are making, sending to Israel, and which are being used to kill our families. We have lots of ideas of what that can look like, but we need the support of our reform leadership. You must show your accountability to your rank-and-file workers by sitting down with us, coming up with a plan of action for Palestine, and then following through on it.

Continued on page 51



UAW members at mass "Labor for Palestine" rally and march in Oakland, California, December 16, 2023.

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Which Side Are You On?

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

“No matter what Biden does in whatever number of days, or years left for him on this earth, his fate has been sealed: He shall be remembered as the man who has enabled one of the worst genocides in modern history. Shame on anyone who supports or defends this brute.” — Ramzy Baroud, December 24, 2023¹

February 12, 2024—We have been witnessing the horror of Israel’s genocide against the people of Palestine since October 11, 2023, and it has not ended yet. The death toll in Gaza is more than 30,000—with at least 12,000 children among the dead. Tens-of-thousands more have been wounded.

According to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNWRA, nearly 1.9 million people—more than 85 percent of the population in Gaza—have been displaced across the Strip since October 7.² “On the internationally recognized 5-phase scale used to classify food crises, more than half-a-million people in Gaza—a quarter of the entire population—are now believed to be at the most severe Phase-5 ‘catastrophic’ level, meaning a high risk of mass starvation and death. More than 80 percent of all people currently classified as being in Phase-5 worldwide are in Gaza.”³

Israel has been forcing Palestinians to move to the southern end of Gaza “to stay safe.” Over 1.4 million Palestinians have relocated to the city of Rafa, closest to the southern, Egyptian border. But Israel is not satisfied with this—now they want to “evacuate” Palestinians from Rafa completely while they bomb it to rubble—but there is no place else for them to go.

Tens-of-millions of people around the world have been protesting the U.S./Israeli war of genocide in Gaza and the West Bank, but the genocide still rages on.

The protests must continue to build—to reach out to more and more community and labor organizations in support of Palestine and against Israel’s murderous invasion of Gaza and against U.S. aid to Israel—to build participation in protests, to pass resolutions in favor of a permanent ceasefire, and to reach out to other communities that have not spoken out yet and ask them to join the protests. This is basic and essential. But we must also know what we are up against and what the stakes really are.

Capitalism’s downfall

On November 23, 2023, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said about Israel on X, “Israel is a stronghold for us... It’s almost like having an aircraft carrier in the Middle East. This is our oldest ally.”⁴

This is why billions of our tax dollars are going to arm Israel—because it bolsters the strategic military power U.S. capitalism needs to maintain their hegemony in that region, and as a warning to the world.

Understanding capitalism on class terms

To really understand what’s going on in the world we must look at the basic nature of capitalism.



The economic system of capitalism is made up of two diametrically opposed economic classes. The “ruling class,” are the commanders of capitalism who own and control the means of production—the land, natural resources, and industry of society—which is made valuable only by the labor of the working class. The ruling class contributes nothing to this value.

The working class own only their own labor power. Workers sell their labor power to the capitalist class in exchange for wages that barely cover the necessities of life. Wages amount to a tiny percentage of the wealth our labor creates.

But the capitalist economy is based upon the working class getting only a small fraction of that wealth. All that extra value and wealth after wages are paid is called surplus value and all of it belongs to the capitalist class. Under capitalism’s laws, owning the means of production gives the capitalist class the right to all of the surplus value we workers create—and there’s no limit to how much wealth any one capitalist can accumulate.

There was a meme circulating on Facebook, “It’s 80,000 BC. You are immortal. The world is still frozen in an ice age. You decide to save \$10,000 every day, never spending a cent. 82,021 years later, it’s 2021. You still don’t have as much money as Elon Musk.” That’s an example of how much surplus value they are allowed to accumulate on an individual basis.

Under capitalism might makes right

The United States is the single most powerful capitalist country in the world. The U.S. is the political and military leader of all the allied countries of the Western world. The U.S. military budget per year is \$816 billion. In comparison, Russia’s military budget is \$213 billion, and China’s is \$69.5 billion, per year.⁵

Every single dollar the U.S. government spends on war, cops and jails are paid for out of the taxes that workers

pay. Even the cost of social services—schools, public housing and hospitals, parks, *etc.*—come out of the pockets of the working class.

The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the working class

While the military might of the capitalist world may seem unstoppable, the truth is, the capitalist system is in its death agony. It is on its last legs.

The only chance for the world’s survival is to take the power out of the hands of capitalists—to dismantle the entire capitalist world’s military industrial complex and render it useless.

To achieve this, we workers must stop producing weapons on the assembly lines, and take the control of industry and the vast amount of surplus value we create into our own hands for the benefit of all workers everywhere.

We have the ultimate power to do it. We do the work, and we are the majority of humanity. In solidarity with each other and in the interests of all workers, we are vastly more powerful than the capitalists because without our labor they are nothing.

The expansion of the war by the U.S., Israel, and their Western allies

What the death agony of capitalism means is that capitalism can’t expand and increase their rate of profit anymore without the use of force. And the war in the Middle East/Southwest Asia is a war over who controls the resources in that part of the world and, ultimately, the whole planet.

The U.S., Israel and England have escalated the war on Gaza to involve scores of targets throughout the region:

“Friday: [February 2, 2024] the United States carried out airstrikes on more than 85 targets in Syria and Iraq, aiming at Iranian-backed forces including the group it said was responsible for the Jordan strike. ... Saturday: [February 3, 2024] American and British warplanes, with support from six allies, launched

strikes at dozens of sites in Yemen controlled by Houthi militants.”⁶

“Israel has launched attacks on positions in Syria and Lebanon, as part of its ongoing campaign against opposing militaries and armed forces in the Middle East. ... [Israeli military] fighter jets also struck Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure in Lebanon,” it added, promising it would ‘continue to operate against any threat to Israel’s sovereignty.’ Israel’s military has been engaged in cross-border fighting with Hezbollah and has launched repeated air raids on Syria since its war on Gaza began on October 7, raising fears of the conflict spilling over into the wider region.”⁷

Israel’s continued blockade of Gaza

The Gaza Strip stretches 25 miles along the Mediterranean Sea. No Palestinian vessels are allowed further out than nine nautical miles. Its width varies from 3.7 to around 8 miles wide—a total area of 141 square miles.

It’s a small, narrow strip, separated from Israel on the east by a 30-foot-tall, 37-mile concrete, militarized separation wall, along the south by the eight-mile-wide armed border with Egypt, and on the militarized northern border with Israel, which is six miles wide.

Gaza has one of the world’s highest population densities with around 2.3 million people.⁸ For comparison, the city of Detroit is 139 square miles with 632,464 people—about a quarter of the population of Gaza. There is nowhere for anyone to be in Gaza that is not in the close vicinity of masses of people—and that includes those in active resistance to Israel’s occupation. There is no such thing as “military outposts” in Gaza because there simply isn’t any land that could become military outposts.

In addition to basic construction materials such as cement and steel, which Israel claims can be used to build tunnels and weapons, Israel has blocked civilian goods such as school supplies, diapers, feminine hygiene

products, light bulbs, candles, matches, books, musical instruments, crayons, clothing, shoes, mattresses, sheets, blankets, pasta, tea, coffee, chocolate, nuts, shampoo and conditioner, paper, soda, juice, jam, spices, shaving cream, potato chips, cookies and candy from entering Gaza since 2007.⁹ The complete list is not publicly available and fluctuates at the whim of Israel.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel has blocked everything—food, water, electricity, medical supplies. Nothing comes in unless Israel inspects it and lets it in—including humanitarian aid. And Gaza itself has been bombed back into the stone age.¹⁰

Israel's wars on Gaza since 1948

The whole of what is now Israel—from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean Sea—was Palestinian territory. That territory was captured with the help of England since WWI, and its western allies—including the United States over the years—and became Israel in 1948.

The Palestinian population was, *en masse*, militarily expelled or had to flee from their homes, and were forced into the Gaza Strip as refugees. Israel has repeatedly carried out wars against the

occupied people of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem:

“Israel has fought 15 wars against the Gaza Strip. ...Israel fought four wars against Egyptian-administered Gaza Strip: 1948 Palestine War; border attacks of 1949-1956; first occupation of Gaza during the Suez Crisis; and the capture of Gaza in 1967. During the first occupation, one percent of Gaza Strip's population was either killed, tortured, or imprisoned by Israel. Following two periods of low-level insurgencies, a major conflict between Israelis and Palestinians erupted in the First Intifada (523 Gazans killed.) The 1993 Oslo Accords brought a period of calm. But, in 2000 the Second Intifada erupted killing 3,000 Gazans. Towards the end of the Second Intifada, Israel disengaged from Gaza in 2005, Hamas won the 2006 election and took control of Gaza in 2007.”¹¹

Israel wants all the territory devoid of Palestinians so they can claim it for their own, giving the U.S. commanders of capital an even more powerful base in the Middle East/Southwest Asia.

Israel is surrounded and outnumbered by the rest of the Arab world. Without U.S. support Israel would be

overwhelmed and defeated leaving the U.S. without any armed base of support in that region.

Israel is dropping 2000-pound bombs on the people of Gaza—supplied by the U.S. government—with the full approval of the U.S. commanders of capitalism. These are the stakes at issue today.

What we can do to stop them


The world's capitalist class, in league with the commanders of U.S. capital, are doing all they can to convince us that we have no power of our own and that the best we can hope for—to put it in terms of Gaza—is to get a few more aid trucks through to the homeless, wounded, and starving while they continue to bomb and destroy the entire territory, its people and infrastructure. We can't let them get away with this.

Solidarity among the world's working class has the potential to be the most powerful social force that ever existed—a force with the strength to change the balance of power between we, the masses, and the commanders of capital—who are a tiny portion of the human population who, but for the mis-informed cooperation and support of the masses of the working class—would be powerless.

What's happening in Gaza will eventually happen to us

No one is safe from capitalism's wars. Anywhere the capitalists feel their wealth or power is being threatened they are striking out with military action and supplying military aid to other capitalist commanders to stop any resistance to their rule anywhere.

There is nothing stopping them from using force here in the U.S.—especially if workers stop supporting them—stop voting for them, stop signing up for the military and police, stop allowing our unions to support and contribute our dues to the capitalist parties.



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But we have the ultimate power in our hands to stop them in their tracks by withholding our labor—rendering them helpless.

We must build and support our own workers' party democratically controlled and run by the working class and dedicated to fighting for our interests—a party against war, environmental destruction, police repression, racism, and sexism. A party that stands for turning the ownership and control of the means of production and the surplus value our labor creates over to the world's working class.

We have the means right now to build a Labor Party of our own that supports socialism and opposes all capitalist parties—a party that can win freedom, democracy, economic and social equality, and justice—a socialist world under the democratic control of the masses of working people.

1 <https://twitter.com/RamzyBaroud/status/1739040192005300387>

2 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/12/1144387#:~:text=8%20in%2010%20Gazans%20now,the%20Strip%20since%207%20October.>

3 <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/gaza-now-worlds-worst-hunger-crisis-and-verge-famine#:~:text=On%20the%20internationally%20recognised%205,of%20mass%20starvation%20and%20death.>

4 <https://twitter.com/dimitrilascaris/status/1722585943935254770?lang=en>

5 https://armedforces.eu/compare/country_Russia_vs_China

6 <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2024/02/04/world/us-strikes-israel-hamas-news>

7 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/2/israeli-army-launches-attacks-on-targets-in-syria-and-lebanon>

8 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaza_Strip

9 https://www.huffpost.com/entry/israels-blockade-of-gaza_b_605780

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaza-Israel_conflict

11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaza-Israel_conflict

As Israeli's Mass Murder Continues, U.S. Makes it Worse

By CHRIS KINDER

February 5, 2024—The world is riveted, as it should be, on Israel's horrifying war on Gaza. The fact that Israel, critically supported by the most powerful imperialist state in the world, is committing the worst crime of genocide the world has seen since World War II, has sunk in, even in the U.S.

Most Americans, especially the young adults, are disgusted by what Israel is doing, and showing it, by conducting numerous demonstrations demanding "Cease Fire Now!," and dropping President Biden's approval rating into the toilet.

At this writing, in today's news, there are reports of 8,000 displaced people having to be evacuated from Al-Amal Hospital in Khan Younis following a two-week siege by Israeli forces, and reports that people in South Gaza are afraid of a looming Israeli assault on Rafa, the city near the border with Egypt. Displaced people are the vast majority in a country where nearly everyone has had their homes destroyed and their living space made

unlivable. Making Gaza unlivable is precisely what Israel wants.¹

Starvation and expulsion is Israel's plan

From the very beginning of this phase in the hundred years' war on Palestine, Israel's intent of starving Palestinians to death is a major part of its plan, and it is enabled in this by the fact—too often left out of news reporting—that Gaza has been an open-air prison since 2017, when Israeli settlers moved out.² Israel tightly controls who can go in and out, and how much food, drinkable water and medicines Gaza's people can receive, and even how many entry and exit points there are in Gaza.

And tightening those supply shipments leading to starvation and disease-causing limits was Israel's first act (along with the bombing) after October 7th.

Now, at least a quarter of the population of Gaza is starving to death as we speak, and famine threatens everyone there. Diseases from lack of medical



Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hugs U.S. President Joe Biden upon his arrival at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport on October 18, 2023.

supplies are out of control. All this is adding numbers to the tally of victims. Based on statistics from Gaza's Ministry of Health, over 100,000 Gazans have been either killed, wounded, or declared missing—no doubt many are buried under the rubble left by Israel's terrifying bombing campaign, and what is left of working hospitals are overwhelmed.

Israel's war strategy is frighteningly similar to how the Jews were kept in concentration camps and poorly fed before being killed in the Nazi Holocaust during the war.

U.S. complicit in this genocide, and spread of war

The U.S. is the main off-theater culprit in this genocide. The immediate response to Israel's declaration of war was Biden announcing, "We support Israel." This was a giant understatement, as the U.S. is by far the biggest financier and supplier of weapons that Israel has. The war could not be going on without U.S. support.

Behind U.S. complicity is also hypocrisy of the first order. After howling out loud for weeks that this war must not spread, the U.S. is the chief spreader. When the Houthis of Yemen began attacking ships in the Red Sea that were headed for Israel, in order to prevent the reinforcement or aid they carried from reaching Israeli ports, the U.S. started bombing Houthis' sites and who knows what else in Yemen.

The Houthie action was an attempt to interrupt or slow down the war, but the U.S. spread the war. Also, Iranian, and allied entities in the Mid-East started attacking U.S. bases which are all over the region, without killing U.S. personnel until just recently, I believe, and so the U.S. bombed 85 Iranian targets in Iraq and Syria. But the U.S. spreading of the war pales before enabling it to exist in the first place with its funding and weapons!

UN/U.S. sabotage UNRWA's aid to Gaza

The latest piece of this starvation strategy is Israel's move to banish

UNRWA, the UN's Relief and Works Agency, from Gaza. UNRWA is the major supplier of life-saving aid in Gaza, like food, medicines, etc., with over 13,000 workers in Gaza. Israel's fascist government slashed the amount of aid UNRWA can bring into Gaza after October 7th, but it was pleasantly surprised to learn—directly from UNRWA top officials, according to a *New York Times* report—that a handful of UNRWA workers had been onsite and aided the Hamas operators on that attack.

The international reaction was immediate: withdraw funding! UNRWA's biggest financier, the U.S., was the first, and a few others also suspended their funding. UNRWA officials said that with this, they would be unable to continue their work in a few weeks. Thirteen-thousand lifeline workers in Gaza were, in effect, tried, convicted, and sent to purgatory so Israel could starve more Palestinians into submission on the basis of an assertion that a handful had helped the fight against an occupying power. Biden has the same blood on his hands that Netanyahu is swimming in.

This report is on a fast-moving situation, and it is time-limited by its date, so big changes will be in place by the time you read this. One example is a recent report in *Haaretz*—an Israeli news outlet—stating that Israel is now pleading with the U.S. and allies to resume some funding to UNRWA, probably because famine threatens to get too far beyond its control.

Palestinians in Palestine? Can't have that!

Whatever the story is behind that report, Israel's drive to force Palestinians out of Palestine is never ending. A *Haaretz Today* issue dated February 1st reports on the "astonishing path Israel is...forging for the future," as laid out by its fascist government. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, one of the hard-right mem-

bers of Netanyahu's inner circle, said in a TV interview that "We must not let the aid in through UNRWA ... we will get aid in and distribute it by ourselves." The *Haaretz* report goes on, "When the hosts argued how dangerous it would be, he [Smotrich] said, 'Listen to what I am saying: There. Will. Be. a military government in Gaza. because everyone agrees that we need to stay in Gaza and control it militarily, and there is no military control without civilian control.'"³

Smotrich is thus trying to leverage the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza as a launchpad for the future occupation-annexation of Gaza, in connection with the expulsion of the majority of Palestinians, and doing all this in apparent compliance with international law and the International Court of Justice. What he is really doing is implementing the founding program of the state of Israel, which is that Palestine must become dominated by an explicitly Jewish state which claims all the land of Palestine as its own. That in turn takes us back to the origin point of Zionism in the late 1800s.

Enter an upper-class racist from Vienna

The story begins with the Viennese journalist, Theodor Herzl. Herzl was the author of a book, *Judenstaat*, and the founder of the Zionist project in the waning days of the 19th Century. In the congresses of this new organization, held in Basel Switzerland in 1897 and '98, Herzl dominated the debates among the various elites with an explicit call for a state for the Jews in Palestine, with the sovereign right to control immigration—and, by the way, no mention of the existing people of Palestine. Later, he did mention them, in the context of getting rid of the unwanted.

Herzl visited Palestine once during this time, but already he had a detailed plan for a complete take-over, writing in his diary that "We must gently

expropriate” certain estates, and “spirit the penniless across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our own country.” He goes on to say, “the property owners will come over to our side.”

Note that this upper-class snob refers to the poor population as “it” and that he safely asserts that the upper class will welcome this take-over and accept the banishment of the poor, no doubt with a hearty “good riddance!” Nevertheless, most Palestinians stayed right where they were. But Zionists persisted, and soon became adopted by the British Empire.

Palestinians come from the Ottoman Empire

Palestine at this time was part of the Ottoman Empire, which was beginning to shift out of feudalism toward a capitalist economy. Along with this, the Empire was beginning to divide into nationalist entities, led largely by the area of Anatolia, which soon became Turkey. Although it was still mostly rural, and largely dominated by a landed autocracy, capitalist entities were developing. Palestine was involved with all of this, with the exception that it never was able to develop into a recognized nation.

It is important at this point to recognize that the culture of the Ottomans, even as capitalism and nations developed within it, lacked militarism and the endless wars and cultural conflicts that dominated Europe as it moved from feudalism to capitalism. It always seemed to have a sense of tolerance for differing cultures that Europe lacked. The Ottomans gave refuge to ethnic and national groups that were driven out of Europe’s purges and mass expulsions, such the Jews in Spain who were banished to the last person by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492.

Culture clash, and a world war

Culture clash was a part of the story for the Palestinians who hadn’t faced

national oppression for generations, but now faced it as WWI—the world’s first inter-imperialist war —invaded their lands. Palestinians were caught in the middle, and as the Ottoman Empire broke up in defeat, and the British and French imperialists chopped it up. Palestinians were stuck with the British “Mandate,” which allied with and promoted the Zionists.

Palestinians negotiated with the British, held half-a-dozen conferences promoting the idea of a Palestinian state, all of which was for naught. The British treated the Zionists as if they were an allied country of theirs, which they might as well have been since they did wind up being one. Only problem, they were stealing the land of an ancient and proud people who had been there for too many centuries to count, and who were the overwhelming majority in the land. The Palestinians were more welcoming and generous as a people than the Brits and Zionists, due to their long history as part of the Ottomans, and lack of background as a feudal-then-capitalist nation. This is not to say that the Palestinian society was not a class society, it was, but the big land-owners were equally victimized, except some who sold out to the imperialists.

What’s the plan?

Now comes the question of what is the plan for saving this persecuted and terrorized people? It’s certainly not killing off the Jews, which no one wants, but which some imperialist/terrorists assert is the case. And it is certainly not a “two state solution,” which is a ridiculous folly. Two people—one more powerful and murderous than the other—living side by side with the same paper border that they have now? Really?

First, we must note, that these two peoples lived side by side in peace in the same area for centuries before feudal-capitalist cultures screwed everything up.

Second, the boundaries and inequalities of nationalism and capitalism must be scrapped by scrapping nation-

alism and capitalism and replacing them with equality and socialism. This means that the state of Israel—along with any entity that equates a political entity with a religion—must be demolished. The Palestinians have never been a recognized state.

Last and most important, a secular, united, and socialist Palestine, uniting all ethnicities and based primarily on none, and linked in with a socialist federation of Mid-East socialist states, must be the goal. It will, of course, be necessary for nationalism and capitalism to be abolished first, in a revolution of the working-class masses.

I won’t live long enough to see this, but I hope you will!

1 *Aljazeera* is one of the best sources for day-to-day news on this war. aljazeera.com.

2 *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine* is the title of a very useful book, by Rashid Khalidi, which details the long history behind this war.

3 “Netanyahu allies want to use Gaza Aid as Launchpad for Occupation-annexation of the strip,” *Haaretz Today*, February 1, 2024. haaretz.com.

A New World Order in the Making

The International Court of Justice Israel decision

BY HAIDAR EID

Now that we have heard the interim judgement the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered in South Africa's genocide case against Israel, we can confidently say a new world order is in the making.

The World Court confirmed January 26, 2024, that South Africa's charge under the Genocide Convention is that "Israel has engaged in, is engaging in and risks further engaging in genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza" is "plausible." It has further ruled that Israel must "take all measures" to avoid acts of genocide in Gaza. The court has stopped short of calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, which has already been demanded by an absolute majority of world nations. Still, most of the "provisional measures" called for by the Republic of South Africa have been endorsed by the court. It is difficult to see how Israel can implement these measures and fulfil its obligations

under the Genocide Convention, without agreeing to a ceasefire.

There is no indication, of course, that Israel has any intention of heeding the Court's provisions. In fact, since the ICJ heard South Africa's case two weeks ago, Israel has doubled down on its genocidal acts in Gaza.

Israel's message to the Court, and the world at large, is clear: It does not care for the opinion, demands or "measures" of any international institution—legal or political. It will do as it pleases.

In the past 24 hours alone, it carried out 21 mass killings, murdering 200 and injuring 370 civilians. So, Israel's

message to the Court, and the world at large, is clear: It does not care for the opinion, demands or "measures" of any international institution—legal or political. It will do as it pleases.

All in all, more than one percent of the population of Gaza has been killed and another 2.2 percent has been injured in the past three months. Most of the enclave has been destroyed, and almost all of its more than two million residents have been displaced. The relentless siege, coupled with the deliberate targeting of hospitals, led to the collapse of the healthcare system. Medical services are all but non-existent and people are dying of famine and disease, including hepatitis A and Leishmania. Even the smallest of injuries can prove to be a death sentence, as it is extremely difficult to maintain hygiene and prevent infections. Hundreds of women had miscarriages and many others died in childbirth due to lack of medical care.

In this context, it is no surprise that the World Court has found it "plausible" that Israel may be committing a genocide in Gaza. But, given its lack of interest in complying with international law—and the unconditional support it enjoys from the West—there is little reason to expect it to alter its conduct due to the court's damning interim ruling.

So why did South Africa take Israel to the ICJ, and why does today's ruling really matter?

Why?

As affirmed by South Africa, "Israel's genocidal acts" must be understood "within the broader context of Israel's 75-year apartheid." Israel has committed many violations of international law since 1948, includ-



Protesters gather outside the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as judges rule on emergency measures against Israel following accusations by South Africa that the Israeli military operation in Gaza is a state-led genocide, in The Hague, Netherlands, January 26, 2024.

ing war crimes and crimes against humanity. Its apartheid regime and illegal occupation denied the most basic human rights of the Palestinians for nearly a century. It passed a racist “nation-state law” that states that “the right to exercise national self-determination” in Israel is “unique to the Jewish people,” establishes Hebrew as Israel’s official language, and establishes “Jewish settlement as a national value” and mandates that the state “will labor to encourage and promote its establishment and development.”

After ethnically cleansing most of historical Palestine of its indigenous population through massacres and theft in 1948, it went on to imprison the population of Gaza within the Strip, committing what brave Israeli historian Ilan Pappé defined in his latest book, *The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of Gaza and the Occupied Territories*, as “ethnic cleansing by other means.” “[Palestinians in Gaza] are contained inside their own areas, but do not have to be counted in the overall national demographics since they cannot freely move, develop or expand, nor do they have any basic civil and human rights,” explained Pappé.

Since the moment of its very inception, Israel worked to eliminate the indigenous population of Palestine through ethnic cleansing, apartheid, ghettoization and segregation. And now, it is committing the very first livestreamed and globally watched genocide in human history.

How could South Africa, a nation that itself experienced the worst of settler-colonialism, ethnic cleansing and racial segregation, a nation that has successfully destroyed a vicious apartheid regime and replaced it with a multi-racial, multicultural, progressive democracy remain silent in the face of Israel’s crimes?

It could not.

South Africans recognized that taking no action on Israel’s continuing genocide in Gaza would have meant no

lesson had been learned from the Sharpeville and Soweto massacres, from everything they endured under settler-colonial rule, from years of apartheid.

They realized that now that Israel’s occupation and oppression reached their genocidal climax, the international community no longer has the luxury of waiting, issuing statements and hoping for the best. Every single minute of inaction brings more loss, more death, and more despair to Palestinians.

So, they took action—they took Israel to the highest court of the world and accused it of committing the world’s most heinous crime: genocide.

Israel may not heed the court’s rulings and provisions, but South Africa’s historic stance will still have consequences. As stated by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa after the ICJ’s interim decision: “Third States are now on notice of the existence of a serious risk of genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. They must, therefore, also act independently and immediately to prevent genocide by Israel and to ensure that they are not themselves in violation of the Genocide Convention, including by aiding or assisting in the commission of genocide. This necessarily imposes an obligation on all States to cease funding and facilitating Israel’s military actions, which are plausibly genocidal.”

With this case, South Africa has put not only Israel, but the entirety of the global justice system on trial. This case is a major turning point for humanity, because it marks the first time in history when a Global South country bravely crossed a red line drawn by the colonial West and demanded its favorite settler colony, Israel, be held to account for the crimes it has long been committing against an Indigenous people. Today, thanks to South Africa, the entire colonial West, and its centuries-long history of theft, dispossession, and injustice is on trial at the World Court.

Future generations will remember January 26, 2024, as the day on which the world has finally decided to hold a genocide state, and its powerful backers, accountable for repeated, long-standing violations of international law. Yes, a new world order is in the making.

Haidar Eid is an associate Professor at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza.

—Al Jazeera, January 26, 2024

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/1/26/icj-israel-decision-a-new-world-order-in-the-making>

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Genocide Applies to the Governments Arming Israel, Too

BY RAY ACHESON

January 28, 2024—War profiteers are on notice. On January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that South Africa's case against Israel for its genocide of Palestinians has merit. While the Court has not yet ruled on whether Israel's mass slaughter of Palestinians since October 7, 2023 is genocide—a ruling at which it may take years to arrive—it did order Israel to prevent and not commit genocidal acts against Palestinians, prevent and punish public incitement to commit genocide, ensure the provision of humanitarian aid, preserve evidence related to allegations of genocide, and submit a compliance report within one month. These orders have a significant impact on the provision of weapons to Israel: governments arming genocide can be held accountable for genocide themselves.

The ICJ stopped short of ordering a ceasefire or an end to Israel's military operations in Gaza. Despite this failing of the Court, representatives of the State of Palestine and South Africa, along with many Palestinians and activists,

academics, legal scholars, and others around the world, have welcomed the Court's interim ruling and argue it must be treated as a *de facto* ceasefire order. As many analysts and officials have pointed out, Israel cannot comply with the interim measures without stopping its murderous rampage in Gaza.

**...governments arming
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accountable for genocide
themselves...**

Complicit in genocide

That said, of course, the Israeli and the U.S. governments are trying to spin the lack of an explicit demand for a ceasefire as an affirmation of Israel's "right to action." This is incorrect, to say the least—and will have consequences. The United States, and other governments supplying Israel with weapons, such as

Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, could be found complicit in the commission of genocide if they continue to provide Israel with bombs, missiles, guns, and other military equipment and support. Now that the ICJ intends to rule on South Africa's case against Israel, the governments fueling Israeli violence should be very worried.

As noted in an earlier article for *CounterPunch*, arms transfers to Israel—even before the ICJ interim ruling—violate customary international law, including the International Law Commission's Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, as well as international humanitarian law, including Common Article 1 to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. For states that are members, arms transfers to Israel also violate the Arms Trade Treaty, the European Union's Common Position on Arms Exports, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)'s Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers.

Each of these agreements work separately and together to bind states to a system of collective responsibility. And the Genocide Convention, under which South Africa has charged Israel at the ICJ, prohibits not only the commission of genocide but also complicity in it. While it is Israel under scrutiny in this particular case, legal experts and academics have noted that the governments supporting the genocide could be charged at the Court later.

The continued provision of weapons to Israel might also render states complicit in internationally wrongful acts through the aiding or abetting of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This could give rise to individual criminal responsibility of senior officials of these states under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.



Palestinians searching for those trapped in rubble in Gaza after Israeli bombing.

As for the weapon companies—the CEOs of Lockheed Martin and Raytheon and all the corporations making billions from genocides, wars, and armed violence worldwide—it is less clear how these responsible parties can be held to account. The UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights has acknowledged that accountability for the arms industry is challenging, including because it is government officials that make decisions about whether or not to sell weapons or grant licenses to a particular recipient. But as the Working Group points out, in many of the major arms exporting countries, the weapon companies “are almost naturally interwoven into the domestic national security fabric of their home States ... which can cause States to approve arms exports despite genuine human rights risks that should prevent them.” The lack of separation between the entity producing the weapon and the entity approving its sale is a recipe for corruption and for the continued export of violence in the name of profits or “national interest.”

There’s a treaty specifically for this situation

But this doesn’t mean there is no recourse to action. We do have one treaty that regulates the international arms trade and provides a potential tool for accountability.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), adopted at the United Nations in 2013, explicitly prohibits states parties from fueling genocide and other international crimes with weapons. All of the countries supplying weapons to Israel, except for the United States, are party to this treaty. Most of them even “championed” its negotiation. While this fact should give anyone pause about the treaty’s value, the ATT’s letter and spirit are clearly oriented towards preventing human suffering, even if some of its members are egregiously violating it. If nothing else, the ATT provides a clear legal framework

for holding these governments to account on the international legal stage, which some of them still arguably care about. This means that activists and lawyers do have important tools to help end the steady flow of weapons to Israel right now.

Under the ATT, a state party is prohibited from transferring weapons “if it has knowledge at the time of authorization that arms or items would be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such, or other war crimes as defined by international agreements to which they are a Party.”

...it did order Israel to prevent and not commit genocidal acts against Palestinians, prevent and punish public incitement to commit genocide, ensure the provision of humanitarian aid...

It is not possible for anyone to reasonably deny that Israel is committing genocide anymore. The people buried under the rubble of houses and hospitals know this is genocide. The medical professionals murdered for saving lives, the journalists targeted for exposing the truth, and the millions of displaced and traumatized Palestinian civilians know that this is genocide. The vast majority of people around the world know this is genocide.

But regardless of whether the ICJ eventually rules that Israel is committing (or, by the time the ruling is finalized, has committed) genocide against Palestinians, arms transfers to Israel are still unlawful under the ATT. Israel has

dropped thousands of bombs on the densely populated Gaza Strip, willfully destroying hospitals, houses, schools, refugee camps, sanitation and water infrastructure, and convoys of fleeing civilians. The Israeli forces have targeted medical workers and journalists, they have made life unlivable for millions of people, and they are generating wider regional unrest and violence, with the potential for broader conflict.

All of these acts render arms transfers to Israel unlawful. Beyond its prohibition of fueling genocide, the ATT also requires its states parties to conduct risk assessments to evaluate that the likelihood that the weapons transferred could be used to undermine international peace and security, or be used to commit human rights violations or violations of international humanitarian law. The treaty even specifically mandates a risk assessment to see if the weapons could be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. If these risks are found, the state party is not allowed to authorize the export of weapons.

With more than 10,000 children among the more than 25,000 civilians killed to date, it is not possible for any government to deny that weapons being sent to Israel are not “at risk” of being used to commit violence against children. Similarly, with thousands of pregnant people being killed by Israeli soldiers, denied access to healthcare, forced to give birth in extremely unsafe conditions, facing escalating rates of premature births and the death of newborns from preventable causes—to the extent that South Africa charged Israel with “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group”—it is not possible to deny that pregnant people are not facing gender-based violence. Men, often targeted in armed conflict under the assumption that men are militants, not civilians, are also subject to gender-based violence by the Israeli forces.

While it is Israel under scrutiny in this particular case, legal experts and academics have noted that the governments supporting the genocide could be charged at the Court later.

Beyond a ceasefire

The list of human rights and international humanitarian law violations is extensive; South Africa has done a good job of collating many in its very dark submission to the ICJ. But the unlawful provision of weapons to Israel extends much further back than October 7, 2023. Over decades, unchecked military support to Israel has enabled, facilitated, and maintained Israel's decades-long settler colonial and apartheid regime imposed over the Palestinian people.

A ceasefire to end the current slaughter is imperative. But a ceasefire is insufficient to prevent the ongoing and relentless genocide of Palestinians that Israel has pursued since its creation. Only the dismantling of Israel's structures of apartheid and occupation can protect Palestinian life.

In light of the ICJ case, the Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Coordinating Committee (PAACC), which includes the Anti-Apartheid Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the Anti-Apartheid Committee of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) movement, the Palestinian Human Rights Organization Council (PHROC), and the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), has called on states to impose

a two-way military embargo on Israel, work to adopt a mandatory arms embargo on it at the UN, and adopt other punitive measures to prevent and suppress its acts of genocide, and end the provision of economic and diplomatic support to it. This reflects the calls from the open letter prepared by Al-Haq, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in November 2023, which was signed by hundreds of organizations.

Only the dismantling of Israel's structures of apartheid and occupation can protect Palestinian life.

At the national level, many activists have been and continue to campaign to end arms transfers to and from Israel. Some have organized letter writing campaigns and petitions to government officials, others continue to engage in blockading weapon production factories or ports through which weapons are being shipped to Israel. These actions are practical and meaningful and must continue. So must efforts to hold governments and weapon contractors accountable through national and international courts, and to demand reparations from those who have profited from the death, displacement, and dispossession through the barrels of their guns.

The ICJ interim measures are just that—interim. In and of themselves, they will not save Palestinian lives or end the brutal occupation of Palestine. But the pressure and community that can be built through acting against the arms trade with Israel will be essential to disrupting the merchants of death now and in the future.

Ray Acheson is Director of Reaching Critical Will, the disarmament program of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

—CP+, January 28, 2024

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2024/01/28/icjs-order-to-prevent-genocide-applies-to-the-governments-arming-israel-too/>

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Our Narrative...Operation Al-Aqsa Flood

By HAMAS MEDIA OFFICE

Introduction

We re-publish verbatim the Hamas statement on Operation Al-Aqsa Flood published in January 2024. The narrative is composed of five sections as follows: Why Operation Al-Aqsa Flood?; The events of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and responses to the Israeli allegations (including details countering Israeli allegations); Towards a transparent international investigation; A reminder to the world, who is Hamas; and What is needed?

In the short introduction to the narrative Hamas states “We would like to clarify to our people and the free peoples of the world the reality of what happened on October 7, the motives behind its general context related to the Palestinian cause... and put the facts into perspective.”

We agree that this statement accomplishes those tasks beginning with some facts that show how: In 1918 Palestinians owned 98.5 percent of the Palestine land and represented 92 percent of the population on it, up until 1967 after which Israel controlled through expulsion, massacres, and occupation, all of Palestine.

The document continues with a timeline of major events up through 2023. It thoroughly refutes the lies of the Israeli government—lies repeated every day in the U.S. “mainstream” press, radio, TV, and internet. It clarifies and refutes the charge of antisemitism by Hamas, it condemns “the U.S. and other western countries’ complicit[y] and [as] partners to the Israeli occupation in its crimes and in its continued suffering of the Palestinian people.”

The narrative contains important, revealing statistics, officially sourced by the U.N., Israeli media, and Human Rights organizations. One example: “...in the period between January 2000 and September 2023, the Israeli occupation killed 11,299 Palestinians and injured 156,768 others, the great majority of them civilians.”

The answers to the Israeli allegations on the events of Al-Aqsa Flood validate Hamas’s claim that civilians were not the target of the October 7 attack—the purpose of the action was “to arrest the enemy’s soldiers to pressure Israeli authorities to release thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails through a prisoner exchange deal.” This section of the document cites Israeli sources that “many Israelis were killed by the Israeli army and police due to their confusion.” The Intercept article by Jeremy Scahill reprinted elsewhere in this issue of Socialist Viewpoint, explains, and validates these Hamas claims.

As revolutionary socialists, we stand in basic solidarity with the Palestinian people and their struggle for liberation. We support resistance of oppressed peoples to all forms of oppression. We stand for a democratic, secular Palestine where equal rights extends to all people from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. —Carole Seligman

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful Our steadfast Palestinian people, The Arab

and Islamic nations; The free peoples worldwide and those who advocate for freedom, justice and human dignity.

In light of the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and as our people continue their battle for independence, dignity and breaking-free from the longest-ever occupation during which they have drawn the finest displays of bravery and heroism in confronting the Israeli murder machine and aggression; We would like to clarify to our people and the free peoples of the world the reality of what happened on October 7, the motives behind, its general context related to the Palestinian cause, as well as a refutation to the Israeli allegations and to put the facts into perspective.

Why Operation Al-Aqsa Flood?

1. The battle of the Palestinian people against occupation and colonialism did not start on October 7, but started 105 years ago, including 30 years of British colonialism and 75 years of Zion-



The theft of Palestinian territory from 1946 to now.

ist occupation. In 1918, the Palestinian people owned 98.5 percent of the Palestine land and represented 92 percent of the population on the land of Palestine. While the Jews, who were brought to Palestine in mass immigration campaigns in coordination between the British colonial authorities and the Zionist Movement, managed to seize control of not more than 6 percent of the lands in Palestine and to be 31 percent of the population prior to 1948 when the Zionist Entity was announced on the historic land of Palestine. At that time, the Palestinian people were denied from the right to self-determination and the Zionist gangs engaged in an ethnic cleansing campaign against the Palestinian people aimed at expelling them from their lands and areas. As a result, the Zionist gangs seized control by force of 77 percent of the land of Palestine where they expelled 57 percent of the people of Palestine and destroyed over 500 Palestinian villages and towns, and committed dozens of massacres against the Palestinians which all culminated in the establishment of the Zionist Entity in 1948. Moreover, in continuation of the aggression, the Israeli forces in 1967 occupied the rest of Palestine including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem in addition to Arab territories around Palestine.

2. Over these long decades, the Palestinian people suffered all forms of oppression, injustice, expropriation of their fundamental rights and the apartheid policies. The Gaza Strip, for example, suffered as of 2007 from a suffocating blockade over 17 years which turned it to be the largest open-air prison in the world. The Palestinian people

in Gaza also suffered from five destructive wars aggressions all of which “Israel” was the offending party. The people in Gaza in 2018 also initiated the Great March of Return demonstrations to peacefully protest the Israeli blockade, their misery humanitarian conditions and to demand their right-to-return. However, the Israeli occupation forces responded to these protests with brutal force by which 360 Palestinians were killed and 19,000 others were injured including over 5,000 children in a matter of few months.

**Operation Al-Aqsa
Flood on October 7 targeted the Israeli military sites, and sought to arrest the enemy’s soldiers to [put] pressure on the Israeli authorities to release the thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails through a prisoners exchange deal.**

3. According official figures, in the period between (January 2000 and September 2023), the Israeli occupation killed 11,299 Palestinians and injured 156,768 others, the great majority of them were civilians. Unfortunately, the U.S. administration and its allies did not pay attention to the suffering of the Palestinian people over the past years but provided cover to the Israeli aggression. They only lamented the Israeli soldiers who were killed on October 7 even without seeking the truth of what happened, and wrongfully walked behind the Israeli narrative in condemning

an alleged targeting of Israeli civilians. The U.S. administration provided the financial and military support to the Israeli occupation massacres against the Palestinian civilians and the brutal aggression on the Gaza Strip, and still the U.S. officials continue to ignore what the Israeli occupation forces commit in Gaza of mass killing.

4. The Israeli violations and brutality were documented by many UN organizations and international human rights groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and even documented by Israeli human rights groups. However, these reports and testimonies were ignored, and the Israeli occupation is yet to be held accountable. For example, on October 29, 2021, Israel’s Ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan insulted the UN system by tearing up a report for the UN Human Rights Council during an address at the General Assembly, and threw it in a dustbin before leaving the podium. Yet, he was appointed in the following year—2022—to the post of vice-president of the UN General Assembly.
5. The U.S. administration and its western allies have always been treating Israel as a state above the law; they provide it with the needed cover to maintain prolonging the occupation and cracking down the Palestinian people, and also allowing “Israel” to exploit such situation to expropriate further Palestinian lands and to Judaize their sanctities and holy sites. Despite the fact that the UN had issued more than 900 resolutions over the past 75 years in favor of the Palestinian people, “Israel” rejected to abide by any of these resolutions, and the U.S. VETO was always present at the UN Secu-

rity Council to prevent any condemnation to “Israel’s” policies and violations. That’s why we see the U.S. and other western countries complicit and partners to the Israeli occupation in its crimes and in the continued suffering of the Palestinian people.

6. As for “the peaceful settlement process”. Despite the fact that the Oslo Accords signed in 1993 with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) stipulated the establishment of a Palestinian independent state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; “Israel” systematically destroyed every possibility to establish the Palestinian state through a wide campaign of settlements’ construction and Judaization of the Palestinian lands in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem. The backers of the peace process after 30 years realized that they have reached an impasse and that such process had catastrophic results on the Palestinian people. The Israeli officials confirmed at several occasions their absolute rejection to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Just one month before Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented a map of a so-called “New Middle East,” depicting “Israel” stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea including the West Bank and Gaza. The entire world at that UN General Assembly’s podium were silent towards his speech full of arrogance and ignorance towards the rights of the Palestinian people.
7. After 75 years of relentless occupation and suffering, and after failing all initiatives for liberation and return to our people, and also after the disastrous results of the so-called peace process, what did the world expect from the

Palestinian people to do in response to the following:

- The Israeli Judaization plans to the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, its temporal and spatial division attempts, as well as the intensification of the Israeli settlers’ incursions into the holy mosque.
- The practices of the extremist and right-wing Israeli government which is practically taking steps towards annexing the entire West Bank and Jerusalem into the so-called “Israel’s sovereignty” amid plans on the Israeli official table to expel Palestinians from their homes and areas.

It is a well-known fact that the Israeli official narrative had always sought to demonize the Palestinian resistance, while also legalizing its brutal aggression on Gaza.

- The thousands of Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails who are experiencing deprivation of their basic rights as well as assaults and humiliations under direct supervision of the Israeli fascist minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.
- The unjust air, sea, and land blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip over 17 years.
- The expansion of the Israeli settlements across the West Bank in an unprecedented level, as well as the daily violence perpetrated by settlers against Palestinians and their properties.
- The seven million Palestinians living in extreme conditions in refugee camps and other areas who wish to return to their lands, and who were expelled 75 years ago.

- The failure of the international community and the complicity of superpowers to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.

What was expected from the Palestinian people after all of that? To keep waiting and to keep counting on the helpless UN! Or to take the initiative in defending the Palestinian people, lands, rights and sanctities; knowing that the defense act is a right enshrined in international laws, norms and conventions.

Proceeding from the above, Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7 was a necessary step and a normal response to confront all Israeli conspiracies against the Palestinian people and their cause. It was a defensive act in the frame of getting rid of the Israeli occupation, reclaiming the Palestinian rights and on the way for liberation and independence like all peoples around the world did.

The events of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and responses to the Israeli allegations

In light of the Israeli fabricated accusations and allegations over Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7 and its repercussions, we in the Islamic Resistance Movement— Hamas clarify the following:

1. Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7 targeted the Israeli military sites, and sought to arrest the enemy’s soldiers to [put] pressure on the Israeli authorities to release the thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails through a prisoners exchange deal. Therefore, the operation focused on destroying the Israeli army’s Gaza Division, the Israeli military sites stationed near the Israeli settlements around Gaza.
2. Avoiding harm to civilians, especially children, women and elderly people is a religious and

moral commitment by all the Al-Qassam Brigades' fighters. We reiterate that the Palestinian resistance was fully disciplined and committed to the Islamic values during the operation and that the Palestinian fighters only targeted the occupation soldiers and those who carried weapons against our people. In the meantime, the Palestinian fighters were keen to avoid harming civilians despite the fact that the resistance does not possess precise weapons. In addition, if there was any case of targeting civilians; it happened accidentally and in the course of the confrontation with the occupation forces. Since its establishment in 1987, the Hamas Movement committed itself to avoiding harm to civilians. After Zionist criminal Baruch Goldstein in 1994 committed a massacre against Palestinian worshippers in the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in occupied Hebron City, the Hamas Movement announced an initiative to avoid civilians the brunt of fighting by all parties, but the Israeli occupation rejected it and even did not give any comment on it. The Hamas Movement also repeated such calls several times, but received by a deaf ear from the Israeli occupation which continued its deliberate targeting and killing of Palestinian civilians.

3. Maybe some faults happened during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood's implementation due to the rapid collapse of the Israeli security and military system, and the chaos caused along the border areas with Gaza. As attested by many, the Hamas Movement dealt in a positive and kind manner with all civilians who have been held in Gaza, and sought from the earliest days of the

aggression to release them, and that's what happened during the week-long humanitarian truce where those civilians were released in exchange of releasing Palestinian women and children from Israeli jails.

4. What the Israeli occupation promoted of allegations that the Al-Qassam Brigades on October 7 were targeting Israeli civilians are nothing but complete lies and fabrications. The source of these allegations is the Israeli official narrative and no independent source proved any of them. It is a well-known fact that the Israeli official narrative had always sought to demonize the Palestinian resistance, while also legalizing its brutal aggression on Gaza.

The brutal killing of civilians is a systematic approach of the Israeli entity, and one of the means to humiliate the Palestinian people. The mass killing of Palestinians in Gaza is a clear evidence of such approach.

Here are some details that go against the Israeli allegations:

- Video clips taken on that day—October 7—along with the testimonies by Israelis themselves that were released later showed that the Al-Qassam Brigades' fighters didn't target civilians, and many Israelis were killed by the Israeli army and police due to their confusion.
- It has also been firmly refuted the lie of the "40 beheaded babies" by the Palestinian fighters, and even

Israeli sources denied this lie. Many of the western media agencies unfortunately adopted this allegation and promoted it.

- The suggestion that the Palestinian fighters committed rape against Israeli women was fully denied including by the Hamas Movement. A report by the *Mondoweiss* news website on Dec. 1, 2023, among others, said there is lack of any evidence of "mass rape" allegedly perpetrated by Hamas members on October 7 and that Israel used such allegation "to fuel the genocide in Gaza."
- According to two reports by the Israeli *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper on October 10 and the *Haaretz* newspaper on Nov. 18, many Israeli civilians were killed by an Israeli military helicopter especially those who were in the Nova music festival near Gaza where 364 Israeli civilians were killed. The two reports said the Hamas fighters reached the area of the festival without any prior knowledge of the festival, where the Israeli helicopter opened fire on both the Hamas fighters and the participants in the festival. The *Yedioth Ahronoth* also said the Israeli army, to prevent further infiltrations from Gaza and to prevent any Israelis being arrested by the Palestinian fighters, struck over 300 targets in areas surrounding the Gaza Strip.
- Other Israeli testimonies confirmed that the Israeli army raids and soldiers' operations killed many Israeli captives and their captors. The Israeli occupation army bombed the houses in the Israeli settlements where Palestinian fighters and Israelis were inside in a clear application of the Israeli army notorious "Hannibal Directive" which clearly says that "better a dead

civilian hostage or soldier than taken alive” to avoid engaging in a prisoner’s swap with the Palestinian resistance.

- Furthermore, the occupation authorities revised the number of their killed soldiers and civilians from 1,400 to 1,200, after finding that 200-burnt corpses had belonged to the Palestinian fighters who were killed and mixed with Israeli corpses. This means that the one who killed the fighters is the one who killed the Israelis, knowing that only the Israeli army possesses military planes that killed, burned and destroyed Israeli areas on October 7.
 - The Israeli heavy aerial raids across Gaza that led to the death of nearly 60 Israeli captives also prove that the Israeli occupation does not care about the life of their captives in Gaza.
5. It is also a matter of fact that a number of Israeli settlers in settlements around Gaza were armed, and clashed with Palestinian fighters on October 7. Those settlers were registered as civilians while the fact is they were armed men fighting alongside the Israeli army.
 6. When speaking about Israeli civilians, it must be known that conscription applies to all Israelis above the age of 18—males who served 32 months of military service and females who served 24 months—where all can carry and use arms. This is based on the Israeli security theory of an “armed people” which turned the Israeli entity into “an army with a country attached.”
 7. The brutal killing of civilians is a systematic approach of the Israeli entity, and one of the means to humiliate the Palestinian people. The mass killing of Palestinians in Gaza is a clear evidence of such approach.

8. The *Al Jazeera* news channel said in a documentary that in one month of the Israeli aggression on Gaza, the daily average killing of Palestinian children in Gaza was 136, while the average of children killing in Ukraine—in the course of the Russian-Ukrainian war—was one child every day.
9. Those who defend the Israeli aggression do not look at the events in an objective manner but rather go to justify the Israeli mass killing of Palestinians by saying there would be casualties among civilians when attacking the Hamas fighters. However, they would not use such assumption when it comes to the Al-Aqsa Flood event on October 7.

if there was any case of targeting civilians; it happened accidentally and in the course of the confrontation with the occupation forces. Since its establishment in 1987, the Hamas Movement committed itself to avoiding harm to civilians

10. We are confident that any fair and independent inquiries will prove the truth of our narrative and will prove the scale of lies and misleading information in the Israeli side. This also includes the Israeli allegations regarding the hospitals in Gaza that the Palestinian resistance used them as command centers; an allegation that was not proven and was refuted by reports of many western press agencies.

Towards a transparent international investigation

1. Palestine is a member-state of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and it acceded to its Rome Statute in 2015. When Palestine asked for investigation into Israeli war crimes committed on its territories, it was faced by Israeli intransigence and rejection, and threats to punish the Palestinians for the request to ICC. It is also unfortunate to mention that there were great powers, which claim to be holding values of justice, completely sided with the occupation narrative and stood against the Palestinian moves in the international justice system. These powers want to keep “Israel” as a state above the law and to ensure it escapes liability and accountability.
2. We urge these countries, especially the U.S. administration, Germany, Canada and the UK, if they meant for justice to prevail as they claim, they ought to announce their support to the course of the investigation in all crimes committed in occupied Palestine and to give full support for the international courts to effectively do their job.
3. Despite having doubts from these countries to stand by justice, we still urge the ICC Prosecutor and his team to immediately and urgently come to occupied Palestine to look into the crimes and violations committed there, rather than merely observing the situation remotely or being subject to the Israeli restrictions.
4. In December 2022, when the UN General Assembly passed a resolution seeking opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal consequences of “Israel’s” illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, those (few) countries who back “Isra-

el” announced their rejection to the move that was approved by nearly 100 countries. And when our people—and their legal and rights groups—sought to pursue prosecutions against the Israeli war criminals in front of the European countries courts—through the system of universal jurisdiction—the European regimes obstructed the moves in favor of the Israeli war criminals to remain running free.

5. The events of October 7 must be put in its broader context, and that all cases of struggle against colonialism and occupation in our contemporary time be evoked. These experiences of struggle show that in the same level of oppression committed by the occupier; there would be an equivalent response by the people under occupation.
6. The Palestinian people and peoples across the world realize the scale of lies and deception these governments that back the Israeli narrative practice in their attempts to justify their blind bias and to cover the Israeli crimes. These countries know the root causes of the conflict which are the occupation and the denial of the right of the Palestinian people to live in dignity on their lands. These countries show no interest towards the continuation of the unjust blockade on millions of Palestinians in Gaza, and also show no interest towards the thousands of Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails held under conditions where their basic rights are mostly denied.
7. We hail the free people of the world from all religions, ethnicities and backgrounds who rally in all capitals and cities worldwide to voice their rejection to the Israeli crimes and massacres, and to show their support for the rights of the Palestinian people and their just cause.

A reminder to the world, who is Hamas?

1. The Islamic Resistance Movement “Hamas” is a Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement. Its goal is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project. Its frame of reference is Islam, which determines its principles, objectives and means. Hamas rejects the persecution of any human being or the undermining of his or her rights on nationalist, religious or sectarian grounds.

...we reject the exploitation of the Jewish suffering in Europe to justify the oppression against our people in Palestine.

2. Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine. Yet, it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity.
3. The Palestinian people have always stood against oppression, injustice, and the committing of massacres against civilians regardless of who commit them. And based on our religious and moral values, we clearly stated our rejection to what the Jews were exposed to by the Nazi Germany. Here, we remind that the Jewish problem in essence was a European problem, while the Arab and Islamic environment was—across history—a safe haven to the Jewish people and to other peoples of other beliefs

and ethnicities. The Arab and Islamic environment was an example to co-existence, cultural interaction and religious freedoms. The current conflict is caused by the Zionist aggressive behavior and its alliance with the western colonial powers; therefore, we reject the exploitation of the Jewish suffering in Europe to justify the oppression against our people in Palestine.

4. The Hamas Movement according to international laws and norms is a national liberation movement that has clear goals and mission. It gets its legitimacy to resist the occupation from the Palestinian right to self-defense, liberation and self-determination. Hamas has always been keen to restrict its fight and resistance with the Israeli occupation on the occupied Palestinian territory, yet the Israeli occupation did not abide by that and committed massacres and killings against the Palestinians outside Palestine.
5. We stress that resisting the occupation with all means including the armed resistance is a legitimized right by all norms, divine religions, the international laws including the Geneva Conventions and its first additional protocol and the related UN resolutions e.g. The UN General Assembly Resolution 3236, adopted by the 29th session of the General Assembly on Nov. 22, 1974, which affirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including the right to self-determination and the right to return to “their homes and property from where they were expelled, displaced and uprooted.”
6. Our steadfast Palestinian people and their resistance are waging a heroic battle to defend their land and national rights against the

longest and brutalist colonial occupation. The Palestinian people are confronting an unprecedented Israeli aggression that committed heinous massacres against Palestinian civilians, most of them were children and women. In the course of the aggression on Gaza, the Israeli occupation deprived our people in Gaza of food, water, medicines and fuel, and simply deprived them from all means of life. In the meantime, the Israeli warplanes savagely struck all Gaza infrastructures and public buildings including schools, universities, mosques, churches and hospitals in a clear sign of ethnic cleansing aimed at expelling the Palestinian people from Gaza. Yet, the backers of the Israeli occupation did nothing but kept the genocide ongoing against our people.

7. The Israeli occupation's use of the "self-defense" pretext to justify its oppression against the Palestinian people is a process of lie, deception and turning the facts. The Israeli entity has no right to defend its crimes and occupation but the Palestinian people who have such right to oblige the occupier to end the occupation. In 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) gave an advisory opinion in the case concerning the "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" which stated that "Israel"—the brutal occupying force—cannot rely on a right of self-defense to build such wall on the Palestinian territory. Furthermore, Gaza under the international law is still an occupied land, thus, the justifications for waging the aggression on Gaza is baseless and lacks its legal capacity, as well as lacks the essence of the self-defense idea.

What is needed?

Occupation is occupation no matter how it describes or names itself, and remains a tool to break the will of the peoples and to keep oppressing them. On the other side, the experiences of the peoples nations across history on how to break away from occupation and colonialism confirm that the resistance is the strategic approach and the only way to liberation and ending the occupation. Have any nation been liberated from occupation without struggle, resistance or sacrifice?

The Israeli occupation army bombed the houses in the Israeli settlements where Palestinian fighters and Israelis were inside in a clear application of the Israeli army notorious "Hannibal Directive" which clearly says that "better a dead civilian hostage or soldier than taken alive" to avoid engaging in a prisoner's swap with the Palestinian resistance.

The humanitarian, ethical and legal imperatives necessitate all countries around the world to back the resistance of the Palestinian people not to collude against it. They are supposed to confront the occupation crimes and aggression, as well as to support the struggle of the Palestinian people to liberate their lands and to practice their right to self-determination like all peoples across the globe. Based on that we call for the following:

1. The immediate halt of the Israeli aggression on Gaza, the crimes and ethnic cleansing committed against the entire Gaza population, to open the crossings and allow the entry of the humanitarian aid into Gaza including the reconstruction tools.
2. To hold the Israeli occupation legally accountable for what it caused of human suffering towards the Palestinian people, and to charge it for the crimes against civilians, infrastructure, hospitals, educational facilities, mosques and churches.
3. The support of the Palestinian resistance in the face of the Israeli occupation with all possible means as a legitimized right under the international laws and norms.
4. We call upon the free peoples across the world, especially those nations who were colonized and realize the suffering of the Palestinian people, to take serious and effective positions against the double standard policies adopted by powers/countries that back the Israeli occupation. We call on these nations to initiate a global solidarity movement with the Palestinian people and to emphasize the values of justice and equality and the right of the peoples to live in freedom and dignity.
5. The superpowers, especially the U.S., the UK and France among others, must stop providing the Zionist entity with cover from accountability, and to stop dealing with it as a country above the law. Such unjust behavior by these countries allowed the Israeli occupation over 75 years to commit the worst crimes ever against the Palestinian people, land and sanctities. We urge the countries across the globe, today and more than before, to uphold their responsibilities towards the international law and the rele-

vant UN resolutions that call for ending the occupation.

6. We categorically reject any international or Israeli projects aimed at deciding the future of Gaza that only serve to prolong the occupation. We stress that the Palestinian people have the capacity to decide their future and to arrange their internal affairs, and thus no party in the world has the right to impose any form of guardianship on the Palestinian people or decide on their behalf.

Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine.

7. We urge for standing against the Israeli attempts to cause another wave of expulsion—or a new *Nakba*—to the Palestinians especially in the lands occupied in 1948 and the West Bank. We stress that there will be no expulsion to Sinai or Jordan or any other place, and if there is any relocation to the Palestinians, it will be towards their homes and areas they were expelled from in 1948, as affirmed by many UN resolutions.
8. We call for keeping the popular pressure around the world until ending the occupation; we call for standing against the normalization attempts with the Israeli entity and for a comprehensive boycott to the Israeli occupation and its backers.

—*Palestine Chronicle*, January 2024

<https://www.palestinechronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/PDF.pdf>

Comments from readers

In our decision to publish this important document, friends and readers of *Socialist Viewpoint* helped illuminate its importance, excerpts follow, slightly edited for space.

From Chris Kinder:

As Israel's barbaric, genocidal war rages on in the Gaza Strip, the Islamic Resistance Movement—known as Hamas—has made a statement to the world which reports in some detail the history of Israel's decades-long series of attacks on Palestinians which predate the current war and explain why the events of October 7th were justified. Hamas is not a raving gang of blood-thirsty maniacs looking for Israeli babies to kill and women to rape. Hamas's actions on that date were a counterattack to inhuman treatment at the hands of a colonial settler state which aims to take over all of Palestine for itself. Imperialist oppression by both Britain and the U.S., working in support of the racist Zionist project goes back over 100 years. As for Hamas' actions on October 7th this statement gives us a frank and honest report. The capitalist media machine will burn in hell before they print or even report on this vital statement, so please circulate it widely.

From Mark Harris:

Shortly after the October 7, Anna Baltzer, a Jewish-American writer who wrote a book several years ago on her experiences in the occupied territory, wrote a commentary in October, published in the *San Jose Mercury News*. There she made the point that the Hamas revised charter of 2017 explicitly stated that their enemy was Zionism, not Judaism. This statement reiterates that point in Section Four.

Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the

Jews because they are Jewish, but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine. Yet, it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity.

The University of Chicago foreign policy scholar John Mearsheimer said recently that it is known that a number of the Israelis who died on October 7 were killed not by Hamas but the Israel Defense Force (IDF). He says we don't know how many. This document addresses these issues, too. So, there's much here people should know about.

From Brian Schwartz:

What is overlooked by most [people] is the September 2015 UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), declaring that Gaza could be unlivable by 2020. The Hamas forces, allied with other Muslim groupings, started training for the "Al- Aqsa Flood" (October 7) in 2020, as reported by the *BBC* this past November 23. Ninety-five percent of Gaza's water comes from coastal aquifers and none of it is safe to drink. Gaza was only able to generate enough power to provide 40 percent of the electricity needed for normal consumption. Palestinian refugees relying only on UN food distribution were 72,000 in year 2000, increasing to 868,000 by 2014.

Occupation is occupation no matter how it describes or names itself, and remains a tool to break the will of the peoples and to keep oppressing them.

Norman Finkelstein, whose parents survived the Holocaust, is one of the premier voices defending the Palestinians since the beginning of this

2007 Gaza blockade. Norman was asked how we should approach the Hamas October 7 breakout. Summarized as I heard it, but not verbatim, he told the interviewer, "I read and thought about this question deeply. I looked at the [U.S.] Nat Turner rebellion where the rebel slaves killed unarmed men, women, and children. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison never condemned Nat Turner and his followers. Garrison thought it was a tragedy that women, children, and unarmed men died. Garrison stood firm and declared; 'we warned you that this abominable institution would lead to rebellion.'" Finkelstein couldn't condemn the Hamas raid because Israel had been warned repeatedly that the continued ethnic cleansing of Palestine would bring about dangers for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The Palestinian people have always stood against oppression, injustice, and the committing of massacres against civilians regardless of who commit them. And based on our religious and moral values, we clearly stated our rejection to what the Jews were exposed to by the Nazi Germany.

In 2018, a mass demonstration of men, women, and children, gathered at the Gaza barrier between Israel and Gaza. A few dumb asses threw some projectiles towards the wall, otherwise the intent of the Palestinians was a peaceful demonstration to the world that the Blockade against Gaza had to be lifted.

The only criticism I have of Hamas was the need to better prepare the civilian population with bunkers and small arms for anyone willing to carry them. In addition to an armed and defended populace, there needed to be a plebiscite as to whether the people would rather live and endure the present conditions of blockade, or break it, knowing full well that a fight to the death would follow.

From Henry Johnson:

I thought the fourth section (A reminder to the world, who is Hamas?) was especially important. Zionist and imperialist propaganda have portrayed Hamas as a blood thirsty organization that must be wiped out because it wants to kill Jews. In addition, the imperialist countries have masqueraded as the friends and protectors of the Jewish people when in reality the anti-semitism that led to the Holocaust was a European and Western phenomenon. The Middle East and North Africa often provided havens for Jews when antisemitism in Europe became unbearable. I once saw an elderly Jewish man say that before the Nakba, Jews and Muslims often babysat for each other. He said that on Jewish holidays, Muslims would watch after little Jewish children so that their mothers could go to the synagogue and that on Islamic holidays, Jews would take care of small Muslim children while their mothers went to the mosque.

From John Blackburn:

I do not see Hamas as liberators of the Palestinian people. Various reports that I have read from trusted journalists (Patrick Cockburn in particular) have described Hamas as running Gaza like an Islamic state. I also think that the Israeli secret service would have known this was coming (they have the most sophisticated intelligence service in the world) and allowed the Hamas action to happen as it gave the excuse to invade Gaza. They were just as pre-

pared to sacrifice their own people. This also helps to keep Netanyahu out of prison. That is speculation.

It is clear that they want to establish an Islamic state which of course I am absolutely opposed to and here we should learn from the mistakes made about the Iranian revolution. I have no disagreements with the historical account that they give in as much as I know it and that needs to be continually publicized and reiterated.

My program is for the Muslim, Jewish and non-religious working class in the region to unite and create a democratic secular socialist republic. At root is my adherence to Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. That is considered utopian, but anything other will mean permanent conflict.

The Palestinian people are confronting an unprecedented Israeli aggression that committed heinous massacres against Palestinian civilians, most of them were children and women. In the course of the aggression on Gaza, the Israeli occupation deprived our people in Gaza of food, water, medicines and fuel, and simply deprived them from all means of life.

Netanyahu's War on Truth

Israel's ruthless propaganda campaign to dehumanize Palestinians

By JEREMY SCAHILL

Two weeks before Hamas commandos led a series of raids into Israel on October 7, Benjamin Netanyahu stood before an empty chamber at the United Nations headquarters in New York City. The Israeli prime minister brandished a map of what he promised could be the “New Middle East.” It depicted a state of Israel that stretched continuously from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. On this map, Gaza and the West Bank were erased. Palestinians did not exist.

“What a historic change for my country! You see, the land of Israel is situated on the crossroads between Africa, Asia, and Europe,” Netanyahu bellowed at a handful of spectators in the large hall, nearly all of whom were his loyalists or underlings. “For centuries, my country was repeatedly invaded by empires passing through it in their campaigns of plunder and conquest elsewhere. But today, as we tear down walls of enmity, Israel can become a bridge of peace and prosperity between these continents.”

During that speech, Netanyahu portrayed the full normalizing of relations with Saudi Arabia, an initiative spearheaded under the Trump administration and embraced by the Biden White House, as the linchpin of his vision for this “new” reality, one which would open the door to a “visionary corridor that will stretch across the Arabian Peninsula and Israel. It will connect India to Europe with maritime links, rail links, energy pipelines, fiber-optic cables.”

He was speaking on the grand stage of the U.N. General Assembly, but no world leaders bothered to attend. Outside, some 2,000 people, a mixture of American Jews and Israeli citizens, protested his attacks on the independence of the Israeli judiciary system. The scene served as a reminder of how deeply unpopular his far-right governing coalition, not to mention Netanyahu himself, had become in Israel. At that moment, it seemed that Netanyahu was pushed against the ropes, in a losing battle to continue his political reign.

Just days later, as Hamas commandos penetrated the barriers encircling Gaza and embarked on their deadly raids targeting several military installations as well as kibbutzim, everything changed in an instant. Everything, that is, except the primary agenda that has been at the center of Netanyahu's long political career: the absolute destruction of Palestine and its people.

Just as the Bush administration exploited the 9/11 attacks to justify a sweeping war in which it declared the world a battlefield, Netanyahu is using the horrors of October 7 to wage the crusade he's been preparing for his entire political career. With his grip on power fading last fall, the October 7 attacks provided him with just the opportunity he needed, and he hitched



Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu shows a graphic illustrating his “New Middle East” during his speech at the 78th Session of the U.N. General Assembly on September 22, 2023.

his political survival to the war on Gaza and what could be his last chance to eliminate Israel's Palestinian problem once for all.

In that sense, Bibi was saved by Hamas.

Intelligence failures

Four months in, Netanyahu's war of annihilation against Gaza has become a guerrilla war of attrition. Not a single Israeli hostage has been freed through military force, and Hamas has shown an enduring resilience and ability to pick off Israel Defense Forces soldiers. The Israeli public, outside of the ideological true believer's intent on occupying and settling Gaza, is showing signs of fatigue and desperation. Many family members of captives are growing louder in their demands for an immediate deal with Hamas that centers the lives of their loved ones over the political agenda laid out by Netanyahu and his *clique*. Some have demanded new elections or Netanyahu's resignation. Protests against the war, though small, are beginning to grow inside Israel, with some demonstrations echoing global calls demanding a humanitarian ceasefire and an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

As the death toll in Gaza surpasses a conservative estimate of 27,000 lives, many of the core narratives deployed by the Israeli and U.S. governments to justify the slaughter are coming under increased scrutiny; some have been definitively debunked. In Israel, this is a delicate line of inquiry. That Hamas killed large numbers of Israelis is not in doubt. But how they managed to do so while living under the lauded and vigilant eyes of the Mossad, Shin Bet, the Israeli Security Agency, and the IDF is the subject of mounting public attention.

There have been several credible reports that Israeli intelligence analysts warned that Hamas operatives appeared to be training for raids into Israel. The *New York Times* and other outlets have

reported on the existence of a 40-page internal Hamas document code-named "Jericho Wall." Purportedly obtained by Israeli intelligence, it is said to lay out detailed plans by Hamas to conduct precisely the type of assault against Israeli military installations and villages that occurred on October 7.

While warnings from Israeli analysts who reviewed the document were reportedly brushed aside by senior officials, last July a signals intelligence officer urged the chain of command to take it seriously. Noting a recent daylong training exercise by Hamas in Gaza, the analyst asserted that the training precisely mirrored the operations laid out in the document. "It is a plan designed to start a war," she pleaded. "It's not just a raid on a village."

There is also a mounting body of evidence to indicate that Israeli forces were given orders on October 7 to stop Hamas's attacks at all costs, including the killing of Israeli civilians taken captive by Palestinian fighters.

The night before Hamas's raid, intelligence analysts began reporting significant evidence suggesting that Hamas might be preparing for an attack inside Israel. The head of Shin Bet traveled to the south and orders were issued to deploy a special counterterrorism force to confront any potential incursions, according to an investigative report in the Israeli publication *Yedioth Ahronoth*.

Shortly after 3:00 A.M. on October 7, a senior intelligence official concluded the activity in Gaza was likely another Hamas training exercise, say-

ing, "We still believe that [Hamas leader Yahya] Sinwar is not pivoting towards an escalation."

A few hours later, as Israeli officials gathered in a command center chaotically scrambling to deploy forces to respond to the multipronged attacks led by Hamas, a senior officer silenced the room: "The Gaza Division was overpowered."

Early on in the war against Gaza, Netanyahu sought to deflect blame for failing to foresee Hamas's attacks onto his intelligence services. "Contrary to the false claims: Under no circumstances and at no stage was Prime Minister Netanyahu warned of Hamas's war intentions," read a tweet posted on Netanyahu's official Twitter account. "On the contrary, all the security officials, including the head of military intelligence and the head of the Shin Bet, assessed that Hamas had been deterred and was looking for a settlement. This assessment was submitted again and again to the prime minister and the cabinet by all the security forces and intelligence community, up until the outbreak of the war."

But serious questions lingered over how Hamas was able to lay siege to large sections of what Israel calls the "Gaza envelope" and whether Netanyahu had knowledge that an attack of this very nature was being planned in full view of Israel's extensive surveillance systems and spy networks. There is also a mounting body of evidence to indicate that Israeli forces were given orders on October 7 to stop Hamas's attacks at all costs, including the killing of Israeli civilians taken captive by Palestinian fighters. The Israeli military has indicated that it plans to conduct an "uncompromising" investigation into the intelligence failures, drawing the ire of some far-right members of Netanyahu's government.

Under fire from his own ministers and supporters for impugning Israeli military and intelligence agencies, Netanyahu apologized for his com-

ments, deleted the tweet, and then shifted to the stance he now repeats: There will be a time for such inquiries—but only after Israel achieves total victory in Gaza and eliminates Hamas. “The only thing that I intend to have resign is Hamas,” he said in November. “We’re going to resign them to the dustbin of history.”

Information warfare

The violent ethnonationalist ideology at the center of Netanyahu’s reign was born before his tenure and will endure when he’s gone. But his rule has embodied the most extremist and destructive version of the Israeli state project.

Netanyahu understands the power of defining and dominating the narrative, particularly when targeting it to U.S. audiences. For decades, he has advanced the Israeli propaganda doctrine of *hasbara*—the notion that Israelis must be aggressive about “explaining” and justifying their actions to the West—to manipulate his adversaries and allies, domestic and international, into serving his objectives.

Netanyahu’s “vision of himself as the chief defender of the Jewish people against calamity allowed him to justify almost anything that would keep him in power,” observed former President Barack Obama in his 2020 memoir.

In the aftermath of October 7, Netanyahu cast Israel’s siege of a tiny strip of land the size of Philadelphia as a war of the worlds in which the very fate of humanity was at stake. “It’s not only our war. It’s your war too,” Netanyahu said in his first interview on *CNN* after the October 7 attacks. “It’s the battle of civilization against barbarism. And if we don’t win here, this scourge will pass. The Middle East will pass to other places. The Middle East will fall. Europe is next. You will be next.”

The Israeli government rapidly deployed a multipronged propaganda strategy to win unprecedented support from the U.S. and other Western gov-

ernments for a sweeping war against the entire population of Gaza. To oppose Israel’s war is antisemitic; to question its assertions about the events of October 7 is akin to Holocaust denial; to protest the mass killing of Palestinian civilians is to do the bidding of Hamas.

At the center of Israel’s information warfare campaign is a tactical mission to dehumanize Palestinians and to flood the public discourse with a stream of false, unsubstantiated, and unverifiable allegations.

But there is a problem with the gut-wrenching narratives that have bolstered the underlying justification for the slaughter of Gaza: They are either complete fabrications or have not been substantiated with a shred of evidence. Many have been thoroughly disproven by major Israeli media outlets.

“We were struck Saturday by an attack whose savagery I can say we have not seen since the Holocaust,” Netanyahu told President Joe Biden in a phone call on October 11. “They took dozens of children, bound them up, burned them and executed them.” He added: “We have never seen such savagery in the history of the state. They’re even worse than ISIS and we need to treat them as such.”

“We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly,” said Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on October 9.

The message of these statements and others like them was clear: Israel is confronting monsters, and no one has any business telling the Jewish state, established in the aftermath of World War II under the mantra of “Never again,” how to respond to an attempted genocide. Israeli officials routinely invoke the Holocaust, compare Hamas to the Nazis or to ISIS, and portray the events of October 7 as evidence of an organized effort to commit genocide against the Jewish people.

On October 10, three days after the attacks, the Israeli military organized a tour for international journalists to view the scene at Kfar Aza Kibbutz. As they guided reporters and camera crews through the community, IDF officials spread rumors that as many as 40 babies had been murdered by Hamas, some of them beheaded. “It’s something I never saw in my life. It’s something I used to imagine of my grandmother and my grandfather in Europe and other places,” an Israeli general told reporters. “We got very, very disturbing reports that came from the ground that there were babies that had been beheaded,” said IDF spokesperson Jonathan Conricus in a briefing for international journalists. “I admit it took us some time to really understand and to verify that report. It was hard to believe that even Hamas could perform such a barbaric act.”

Lieutenant Colonel Guy Basson, deputy commander of the Israeli army’s Kfir Brigade, claimed that he saw the aftermath of eight babies who were executed in a nursery at Kibbutz Be’eri. Among the victims, Basson asserted, was also a survivor of the Auschwitz death camp. “I see the number engraved on her arm, and you say to yourself, she went through the Holocaust in Auschwitz and ended up dying on Kibbutz Be’eri.” Another Israeli soldier told a journalist that “babies and children were hung on a clothesline in a row.”

Three weeks after the October 7 attacks, Eli Beer, the head of a volunteer Emergency Medical Service (EMS) squad in Israel, traveled to the U.S. and addressed a gathering at the convention of the Republican Jewish Coalition in Las Vegas. “I saw in my own eyes a woman who was pregnant, four months pregnant,” he said. “They came into her house, in front of her kids, they opened up her stomach took out the baby, and stabbed the little, tiny baby in front of her and then shot her in front of her family and then they killed the rest of the kids.”

Beer offered graphic descriptions of other horrors he claimed to have witnessed. “These bastards put these babies in an oven and put on the oven. We found the kid a few hours later,” he told the U.S. audience on October 28. “I saw little kids who were beheaded. We didn’t know which head belonged to which kid.” Beer, whose stories were widely reported in the international media, also met with Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Israel soon after the attack.

But there is a problem with the gut-wrenching narratives that have bolstered the underlying justification for the slaughter of Gaza: They are either complete fabrications or have not been substantiated with a shred of evidence. Many have been thoroughly disproven by major Israeli media outlets.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, Netanyahu and other Israeli officials presented U.S. and international leaders with a range of graphic images and videos along with unverified narrative explanations for what they allegedly depicted. “It’s simply depravity in the worst imaginable way,” Blinken said after first viewing the photos. “Images are worth a thousand words. These images may be worth a million.”

In a *coup* for Netanyahu’s *hasbara* campaign, Biden and other leaders have laundered many of Israel’s

obscene lies. Beginning just days after October 7, Biden repeatedly claimed that he personally saw photographs of beheaded babies and more atrocities. Even after the White House admitted Biden had seen no such photos, he continued to make the allegation, including after visiting Netanyahu and other Israeli officials in Tel Aviv. “I saw some of the photographs when I was there—tying a mother and her daughter together on a rope and then pouring kerosene on them and then burning them, beheading infants, doing things that are just inhuman—totally, completely inhuman,” Biden said at a campaign event in December.

Israel’s *hasbara* campaign is reminiscent of the Bush administration’s monthslong carnival of lies, sanitized, and promoted by major media outlets, about alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Blinken told the U.S. Senate another harrowing story about how Hamas terrorists had tortured a family in their living room while intermittently taking breaks to eat a meal their victims had placed on the dining table before the horrors began that morning. “A young boy and girl, six and eight-years-old, and their parents around the breakfast table. The father’s eye gouged out in front of his kids. The mother’s breast cut off, the girl’s foot amputated, the boy’s fingers cut off before they were executed,” Blinken said. “And then their executioners sat down and had a meal. That is what this society is dealing with.”

The story Blinken told about terrorists eating a meal while torturing an Israeli family, as well as some of the

assertions about decapitated babies, was based on the speculative fiction invented by Yossi Landau, an official from the scandal-plagued private Israeli rescue organization Zaka, who has repeatedly spread wildly false stories.

There was no Holocaust survivor killed at Kibbutz Be’eri that day. There were no mass beheadings of babies, no group executions in a nursery, no children hung from clotheslines, and no infants placed in ovens. No pregnant woman had her stomach cut open and the fetus knifed in front of her and her other children. These stories are entirely fictional, a set of audacious lies weaponized to generate the type of collective rage used to justify the unjustifiable.

According to major Israeli media outlets that have worked diligently to identify all the victims of the October 7 attacks, there was one infant killed that day: a nine-month-old named Mila Cohen who was shot dead at Kibbutz Be’eri as her mother held her in her arms. Cohen’s mother, who was wounded by gunfire, survived. Among the other civilians killed on October 7, seven of them were between the ages of two and nine years, and 28 were between the ages of ten and 19. Fourteen of these children died in Hamas rocket attacks, not at the hands of the armed commandos who stormed the kibbutzes.

There is no doubt that widespread atrocities and war crimes were committed during the Hamas-led attacks of October 7. It is also true that Israeli military, government, and rescue officials have engaged in a deliberate misinformation campaign about the nature of many deaths that occurred that day.

Israeli officials have toured the world with a film produced at the direction of the IDF. The 47-minute “Bearing Witness to the October 7 Massacre” features video allegedly seized from Palestinian attackers equipped with GoPro cameras and cellphones, according to Israeli officials. The movie has not been released

to the public and has only been available *via* special invitation from the Israeli government. Its audiences have included Hollywood celebrities, dozens of U.S. lawmakers and government officials, journalists, and global luminaries; it has screened at various international venues, including museums established in memory of the Holocaust. While hours of footage of the attacks and their aftermath are available online, including video shot by Palestinians who participated in the raids, the Israeli government has said the footage is too sensitive to be publicly released.

An IDF official, in uniform, personally delivers the professionally produced Digital Cinema Package for the screenings, and viewers are required to sign nondisclosure agreements affirming they will not record or distribute the footage. “It will change the way you view the Middle East and the way you view the war in Gaza,” said Gilad Erdan, Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations, at the Los Angeles premiere of the footage last November. The film was characterized in media accounts as depicting “murder, beheadings, rapes and other atrocities against Jewish adults and children.”

The event, at the Museum of Tolerance, was organized by Israeli actor Gal Gadot, star of the “Wonder Woman” movies, for film executives and other members of the Hollywood industry. “ Hamas must be eradicated. This is the only way to prevent another massacre,” Erdan added. “If Israel doesn’t eradicate this evil, mark my words: The West is next.”

While Israel has emphasized how incendiary the footage is, British journalist Owen Jones, who attended an IDF screening in the U.K., said a “significant amount” of the video is already in the public domain. He said that while there was footage of one IDF soldier who had apparently been decapitated, as well as the already pub-

lic footage of an unsuccessful attempt to behead a migrant Thai worker with a garden tool, there was no footage substantiating allegations of torture, sexual violence, and mass beheadings, including of babies or other children. “Clearly this footage hasn’t been selected at random. You would expect it to be the worst material that they have,” Jones said. “This isn’t to say none of this happened, it’s just not in the footage, which has been provided by the Israeli authorities.”

Calls are growing inside Israel, led by survivors and victims’ families, for the Israeli government to provide a factual explanation of precisely how their loved ones died: Were they killed by Palestinian militants or by the Israeli military?

Israel’s *hasbara* campaign is reminiscent of the Bush administration’s monthslong carnival of lies, sanitized, and promoted by major media outlets, about alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. And Biden directly participated in President George W. Bush’s campaign as well. In his October 2002 Senate floor speech endorsing war against Iraq, Biden declared that Saddam Hussein “possesses chemical and biological weapons and is seeking nuclear weapons.”

Allegations of systematic rape

The Israeli propaganda machine is well oiled. Anyone can look back at Israel’s four-month war against Gaza and trace a pattern: Israel chooses an issue and demands global attention to its agenda at the expense of any other matter.

When news organizations began reporting on the civilian toll of Israel’s initial airstrikes against Gaza, the government accused photographers for major news organizations of being Hamas members or sympathizers who had foreknowledge of the October 7 attacks. Netanyahu said the journalists were “accomplices in crimes against humanity.” Israel then portrayed Gaza’s hospitals as secret Hamas command centers, an allegation that the Biden administration bolstered as the IDF prepared to lay siege to Al-Shifa Hospital last November.

Throughout the war, Israel has sought to direct media and global attention to various new smoking-gun narratives. And in nearly every case, it succeeds in getting the U.S. on board to launder and promote the talking points.

In late November, as the civilian death toll in Gaza climbed, Israel was struggling to retain its dominance of the narrative. Global demands for a ceasefire were mounting, and even some of Israel’s allies were expressing horror at the indiscriminate killing of women and children and the worsening humanitarian catastrophe.

A weeklong truce, during which captives were exchanged, raised hopes that a more enduring peace deal could be on the horizon, despite Israeli insistence that that was out of the question. “A prolonged ceasefire that allows more hostages to be released, and that evolves towards a permanent ceasefire linked to a political process, is something we have consensus on,” said the EU’s top foreign policy official Josep Borrell.

Days earlier, the prime ministers of Spain and Belgium traveled to the Rafah border to push for such a deal and drew the fury of the Israeli government when they publicly condemned the indiscriminate killing of Palestinian civilians. Eli Cohen, then the Israeli foreign minister, accused the leaders of offering “support [for] terrorism,” while Netanyahu released a statement condemning them

because they “did not place total responsibility on Hamas for the crimes against humanity it perpetrated.”

It was at this moment that the Israeli government decided it needed to remind the world of Israel’s victimhood and launched a new phase of the *hasbara* campaign. It began accusing the international community of standing silent in the face of what Israeli officials described as a widespread campaign of rape and sexual violence aimed at Jewish women and orchestrated by Hamas on October 7. By early December, the issue had become a major focus of conservative media and Israel’s allies.

“I say to the women’s rights organizations, to the human rights organizations, you’ve heard of the rape of Israeli women, horrible atrocities, sexual mutilation? Where the hell are you?” Netanyahu said in a December 5 speech in Tel Aviv.

That day, on the other side of the globe, Biden was at a campaign fundraising event in Boston. “Over the past few weeks, survivors and witnesses of the attacks have shared the horrific accounts of unimaginable cruelty: reports of women raped—repeatedly raped and their bodies being mutilated while still alive, of women corpses being desecrated, and Hamas terrorists inflicting as much pain and suffering as—on women and girls as possible and then murdering them. And it’s appalling,” Biden said. “The world can’t just look away—what’s going on. It’s on all of us—the government, international organizations, civil society, individual citizens—to forcefully condemn the sexual violence of Hamas terrorists without equivocation—without equivocation, without exception.”

From the earliest moments following the October 7 attacks, Israel charged that women had been raped by Hamas fighters, though it was often an allegation made in sequence alongside other alleged atrocities. But in mid-Novem-

ber, those assertions began evolving into a sustained public blitz, accusing Hamas of instituting a plan to “systematically rape women.” Israel government spokesperson Eylon Levy spoke of a “Hamas rapist machine.”

“Hamas used rape and sexual violence as weapons of war,” charged Erdan, the U.N. ambassador. “These were not spur-of-the-moment decisions to defile and mutilate girls and parade them while onlookers cheered; rather, this was premeditated.”

Israeli military Brigadier General Barak Hiram has since admitted he ordered the shelling that day. “The negotiations are over,” he recalled saying. “Break in, even at the cost of civilian casualties.”

To date, there has been no credible evidence presented publicly that such a campaign took place, and Hamas has vehemently denied that its fighters committed any acts of rape or sexual assault. The fact that Israel has not produced forensic evidence for individual rapes does not prove that no such deeds took place. Rape investigations are often complex, particularly when the crime occurs amid a chaotic scene of mass violence. Sexual violence is common in warfare, and it often takes years for the full story of such crimes to emerge.

But there is a difference between making specific allegations of rape or sexual assault and charging that organized mass rape was a central component of an operation meticulously planned over the course of years. Israel’s evidence of the latter comes nowhere near to measuring up to its claims.

Israeli rescue workers as well as civilian and military medical officials have described evidence of dead women who were naked or had clothing removed, as well as women who were subjected to genital mutilation, though they have not released documentary or forensic evidence.

But many of the most graphic allegations of mass rapes have been offered by Israeli military or rescue officials who acknowledge they have no training or expertise in forensics. Some of them, whose claims have been featured in many media accounts, also spread false stories about other alleged atrocities.

Shari Mendes, an architect serving in the IDF reserves in a rabbinical unit, was deployed to a morgue to prepare bodies for burial after the attacks. An American originally from New Jersey, Mendes did multiple TV and print interviews about her experiences. “We have seen women who have been raped, from the age of children through to the elderly,” she told reporters, emphasizing, “This is not just something we saw on the internet, we saw these bodies with our own eyes.”

For months, Mendes has served as one of the most visible witnesses bolstering Israel’s allegations of systematic rape. But few media outlets featuring her claims have mentioned the valid concerns about her credibility and her history of promoting a false story. She told the *Daily Mail* last October, “A baby was cut out of a pregnant woman and beheaded and then the mother was beheaded.”

On December 5, as Israel engaged in a global media push around its allegations that Hamas had committed mass rapes, Mendes was a featured speaker at an event in New York organized by Israel’s mission to the U.N. on sexual violence and the October 7 attacks. The *Times of Israel* reported that Mendes “is not legally qualified to determine rape.”

The observations of first responders or members of religious burial units,

particularly those without relevant scientific credentials, are not a replacement for forensic documentation of an uncontaminated crime scene. Israeli authorities have said evidence that would typically be taken in cases of suspected sexual assault was not recovered in the aftermath of the attacks, attributing this failure to a combination of the magnitude of the deaths, the charred nature of some bodies, and to Jewish burial practices.

Some of the evidence publicly cited by Israeli officials is testimony provided by Zaka, the private Israeli rescue organization whose members have been widely documented to have spread false allegations. *Haaretz* published an *exposé* documenting Zaka's role in the rampant mishandling of forensic evidence that day and its subsequent campaign of misinformation.

The Israeli government has maintained that it possesses evidence that has not been made public and has enlisted international teams of forensic and other crime scene experts. Israel's Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs told the *New York Times* there are "at least three women and one man who were sexually assaulted and survived."

But other Israeli officials have stated that there are no known living victims of rape that day, while some have described the challenge of identifying potential victims.

On December 28, the *New York Times* published what instantly became the most widely circulated news story purporting to document a widespread campaign of sexual violence orchestrated by Hamas. That story has come under intense scrutiny, including within the *Times* newsroom.

The family of Gal Abdush, whose alleged rape was at the center of the *Times* article, disputed the article's assertion she was raped. One relative also suggested the family was pressured, under false pretenses, to speak with the reporters. Abdush's sister

wrote on Instagram that the *Times* reporters "mentioned they want to write a report in memory of Gal, and that's it. If we knew that the title would be about rape and butchery, we'd never accept that." A woman who filmed Abdush on October 7 told *YNet* that Israeli journalists working for the *Times* had pressured her into giving the paper access to her photos and videos. "They called me again and again and explained how important it is to Israeli *hasbara*," she recalled. This series of events was documented extensively by *Mondoweiss*.

"They eliminated everyone, including the hostages. There was very, very heavy crossfire," she said. "Everyone was killed there. Just horrible."

Critics of the *Times* story also pointed to the inconsistencies of the accounts of some of the alleged witnesses featured, as well as to its use of information provided by members of Zaka.

Several Israelis who survived the October 7 attacks have publicly claimed that they witnessed rapes by Palestinian assailants, but Israeli investigators have said they are still searching for supporting evidence. Authorities also say they must match alleged victims with specific eyewitness testimony in order to bring potential charges.

What often goes unmentioned in Israel's sweeping allegations is an important fact: Hamas was not the only Palestinian group to attack Israelis on October 7. Many individuals who had no knowledge of Hamas's plans poured across the border and committed acts of violence in what has been referred to as an unplanned "second wave." Some of these non-Hamas

Palestinians also took Israeli hostages back to Gaza.

One survivor of the Nova music festival massacre, a veteran of Israel's special forces, has given multiple interviews to major media outlets, including the *New York Times*, about a rape he claims to have witnessed. During an appearance on *CNN*, Raz Cohen described the assailants as "Five guys—five civilians from Gaza, normal guys, not soldiers, not *Nukhba*," referring to Hamas's elite commando force. "It was regular people from Gaza with normal clothes." Cohen, it must be noted, has told varying, sometimes contradictory, versions of what he witnessed.

Israel has painted all actions on October 7 as being committed by Hamas and its fighters. That storyline obviously serves Israel's military and political objectives, but the truth is more complicated.

In light of Israel's well-documented campaign of lies and misinformation about other events on October 7, incendiary allegations, such as claims that Hamas engaged in a deliberate campaign of systematic rape, should be viewed with extreme skepticism.

Friendly fire

As many U.S. media outlets and politicians have promoted and laundered Israel's claims, spreading them far and wide, there have been strong voices among the Israeli public and media that have exhibited skepticism. This is especially true regarding the actions taken by Israeli forces as they responded to the October 7 attacks. Calls are growing inside Israel, led by survivors and victims' families, for the Israeli government to provide a factual explanation of precisely how their loved ones died: Were they killed by Palestinian militants or by the Israeli military?

Israeli media outlets have aired interviews with survivors and IDF personnel describing what they refer to as "friendly fire" incidents, including the

shelling of a house where Hamas commandos were holding Israeli civilians hostage. Families of some Israelis killed at Kibbutz Be'eri have cited witnesses who said that an Israeli tank fired on a house filled with Israeli civilians held hostage on October 7. A dozen hostages, including 12-year-old twins, died inside the house after Israeli forces began shelling it.

"According to the evidence, the shooting of the tank was fatal and killed many hostages in addition to the terrorists," the families wrote in a January 4 letter to the IDF's chief of staff. Given the "seriousness of the incident, we do not think it is right to wait with the investigation until after the end of the war." They demanded a "comprehensive and transparent investigation into the decisions and actions that led to this tragic outcome." Israeli military Brigadier General Barak Hiram has since admitted he ordered the shelling that day. "The negotiations are over," he recalled saying. "Break in, even at the cost of civilian casualties."

Yasmin Porat, who had escaped the horrors at the Nova music festival and sought refuge in a home at Be'eri, offered extensive details on this incident, as *Electronic Intifada* reported. In a series of interviews on Israeli media, Porat described how Palestinian commandos entered the home and told the Israeli civilians they intended to take them hostage and, after moving them to a location with other hostages at the kibbutz, ultimately used their Israeli captives to contact the police to negotiate. "Their objective was to kidnap us to Gaza. Not to murder us," she told Israeli network *Kan News*. "And after we were there for two hours with the abductors, the police arrive. A gun battle takes place that our police started."

Porat, who said her captors "treated us very humanely," described how she managed to escape the house by convincing one of the gunmen to exit with her. After using her as a "human

shield" to exit the house, the Palestinian was taken into custody, and Porat remained on the scene as Israeli forces laid siege to the house. "They eliminated everyone, including the hostages. There was very, very heavy crossfire," she said. "Everyone was killed there. Just horrible."

Other witnesses at Be'eri have described how Israeli forces were able to retake the kibbutz from Palestinian fighters only after the IDF shelled houses where hostages were being held.

The Hannibal Directive, which dates back to 1986 and has been the subject of great controversy in Israel, authorized military forces to stop the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers at all costs, even if it meant shooting or injuring the captives.

There is also evidence indicating that Israeli forces responding to the attacks at the Nova music festival, where 364 people died, may have killed Israeli civilians as they attacked Palestinian militants, including with munitions fired from Apache helicopters. *Yedioth Ahronoth* and other major Israeli media outlets have published reports detailing the massive fire from combat helicopters and drones unleashed against the gunmen who violently stormed the festival. Military sources described the difficulty in distinguishing civilians from attackers, particularly in the early phases of the Israeli counterstrike.

In the most sweeping journalistic account to date of the events surrounding the Israeli military's operations on October 7, Ronen Bergman and Yoav Zitun—two well-connected

and prominent Israeli journalists — wrote about the state of chaos and panic within the security establishment. They described "a command chain that failed almost entirely and was entirely blindsided; orders to open fire on terrorist vehicles speeding towards Gaza even as there was a concern that they contained captives—some sort of renewed version of the Hannibal Directive."

The Hannibal Directive, which dates back to 1986 and has been the subject of great controversy in Israel, authorized military forces to stop the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers at all costs, even if it meant shooting or injuring the captives. In a 2003 investigation, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported the broadly held understanding of the directive: "From the point of view of the army, a dead soldier is better than a captive soldier who himself suffers and forces the state to release thousands of captives in order to obtain his release."

The Hannibal Directive was allegedly rescinded in 2016. But Bergman and Zitun report that by midday on October 7, the IDF issued a similar order, instructing all units to stop Hamas from bringing hostages back to Gaza and to do so "at any cost." They describe Israeli helicopter gunships, drones, and tanks firing on any and all cars *en route* to Gaza, burning them and in some cases killing everyone inside the vehicles. *Haaretz* reported on an IDF commander, locked in a subterranean bunker, calling in a strike against his own bases "in order to repulse the terrorists."

Beyond the deadly shelling of the house at Be'eri, the public has been given very few details of what exactly transpired when official Israeli military forces deployed to confront the commandos from Gaza. Israeli military and police forces engaged in prolonged standoffs and shootouts with Palestinian gunmen holed up in hous-

es, police stations, military installations, and other buildings, often holding hostages. In some cases, these battles went on for days.

In November, Netanyahu senior adviser Mark Regev was asked by *MSNBC* host Mehdi Hasan about some of the lies told by Israeli officials and soldiers about the events of October 7. Regev remarked that when a claim has been proven false, Israel retracts or clarifies it. “We originally said, in the atrocious Hamas attack upon our people on October 7, we had the number at 1,400 casualties and now we’ve revised that down to 1,200 because we understood that we’d overestimated, we made a mistake,” Regev said. He then added: “There were actually bodies that were so badly burnt we thought they were ours; in the end, apparently they were Hamas terrorists.”

Israel’s social security agency has stated that the death toll from October 7 is 1,139 people. It has identified 695 Israeli civilians killed that day, along with 71 foreigners, most of whom were migrant laborers. Some 373 members of Israeli military and security forces were reported dead.

Israel has estimated that between 1,000 and 1,500 Palestinian fighters were killed that day, many of them during assaults launched with advanced weapons fired from tanks, helicopters, and drones. How many Israelis—soldiers and civilians—were killed in the chaos and had their deaths recorded as killed or sadistically burned alive by Hamas? How many Israeli lives were sacrificed under Hannibal-style orders to prevent them from being taken hostage at all costs?

The truth is that we do not know how many of their own people Israeli forces killed during the counteroffensive on October 7. Nor do we know what happened in the firefights when armed Israelis, including kibbutz private security and military personnel, sought to defend their settlements.

The answers to these questions will bring no absolution to those who initiated the carnage on October 7. No civilians would have died in those Israeli communities had Hamas not launched its operations. It is also true that if Israel had not engaged in a 75-year campaign of ethnic cleansing and apartheid, there would not have been an October 7. The illusion promoted by the Israeli state that its people could live a bucolic life in the “Gaza envelope” while their government enforced the caging and repression of 2.3 million Palestinians next door was shattered.

“From the point of view of the army, a dead soldier is better than a captive soldier who himself suffers and forces the state to release thousands of captives in order to obtain his release.”

The families of the dead deserve to have answers. The specifics of what happened that day also matter because of how these events have shaped the public attitude toward Israel’s war, with its horrifying death toll, particularly among Palestinian children.

Faulty justifications

Cynical manipulation of the truth has been a hallmark of Netanyahu’s career. He has long advocated for Hamas to achieve and maintain power in Gaza precisely because he believed it was the single best path to achieving his own colonial agenda.

“Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas,” Netanyahu told his Likud confederates

in 2019. The logic was clear: The world will never give the Palestinians a state while Hamas remains in power. That’s why, since at least 2012, Netanyahu has facilitated the continued flow of money to Hamas.

By January 18, with the horrors in Gaza intensifying, U.S. and European diplomats were telling anyone who would listen that they were deep into planning for a “day after” scenario that would pave the way for a two-state solution. Netanyahu responded to this chatter by giving a televised speech in Hebrew. “I clarify that in any arrangement in the foreseeable future, with an accord or without an accord, Israel must have security control over the entire territory west of the Jordan River,” Netanyahu said. “That’s a necessary condition. It clashes with the principle of sovereignty but what can you do?”

While it was reported as a defiant rebuke of his U.S. and European allies, there was nothing new in Netanyahu’s position. It has been the Likud party’s official stance since its 1977 charter. “Between the Sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty,” the document reads. “A plan which relinquishes parts of western Eretz Israel, undermines our right to the country, unavoidably leads to the establishment of a ‘Palestinian State,’ jeopardizes the security of the Jewish population, endangers the existence of the State of Israel, and frustrates any prospect of peace.”

The lies that were spread in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 attacks did not end there. Nearly every week, sometimes every day, the Israeli government and military have unloaded a fresh barrage of allegations intended to justify the ongoing slaughter. The hospitals are Hamas, the U.N. is Hamas, journalists are Hamas, European allies are Hamas, the International Court of Justice is antisemitic. The tactic is effective, particularly because the U.S. and other major allies have consistently laundered

Israel's unverified allegations as evidence of the righteousness of the cause.

The latest example is Israel's campaign to destroy UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency], the single most important humanitarian organization in Gaza, which was established in 1949 specifically to protect Palestinians violently expelled from their homes and land by the creation of the Israeli state. Almost immediately after the ICJ [International Court of Justice] ruled against Israel in the genocide case brought by South Africa in The Hague, Israel accused 12 of the organization's 30,000 employees of participating in the October 7 attacks.

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Israel then presented the U.S. and other governments with "intelligence" it claimed to have obtained from the interrogations of Palestinian captives, documents recovered from the bodies of dead Palestinians, seized cellphones, and signals intercepts. Israel charged that ten percent of UNRWA's 12,000-person local staff in Gaza had some form of "links" to Hamas. "The institution as a whole is a haven for Hamas' radical ideology," an anonymous senior Israeli official told the *Wall Street Journal* in a widely cited article penned by a former IDF soldier.

The innuendo-laced allegation of UNRWA staff having undefined "links" to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, or "close

relatives" who belong to the groups is a risible charge given that Hamas is not just an armed militia, but also the governing civil authority in Gaza.

The U.S. responded to Israel's allegations by immediately announcing it was suspending all funding to UNRWA. "We haven't had the ability to investigate [the allegations] ourselves," Blinken admitted on January 30. Nonetheless, he declared: "They are highly, highly credible."

But journalists from *Sky News* reviewed the so-called dossier and reported, "The Israeli intelligence documents make several claims that *Sky News* has not seen proof of and many of the claims, even if true, do not directly implicate UNRWA." Britain's *Channel 4* also obtained the document and determined it "provides no evidence to support its explosive new claim that UNRWA staff were involved with terror attacks on Israel." The *Financial Times*, which also reviewed the materials, reported there were specific allegations of direct participation in the October 7 attacks against four Palestinians employed by UNRWA, not 12 as originally asserted.

This was a transparent attempt by Israel to distract from the rulings in the ICJ genocide case and to obliterate a U.N. agency that Israel has long viewed as an impediment to its goal of denying Palestinians the right to return to the homes and territory from which Israel expelled them. It was also an action that explicitly violated the orders issued by the world court, which directed Israel to "take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance." Based on Israel's sweeping and unverified allegations alone, the U.S. led scores of Western nations to denounce the U.N. agency and pull their funding at the moment it is needed most.

From weapons and intelligence to political, diplomatic, and legal sup-

port, Israel has wanted for nothing from the Biden administration. The mounting pile of Palestinian civilian corpses and their surviving family members, meanwhile, are relegated to the workshopped afterthoughts uttered by Western politicians who have been told they should occasionally squeeze a line or two into their speeches about death and suffering in Gaza.

Propaganda and weaponized lies can only obscure the dead bodies, the forced starvation, the mass killing of children, and the utter destruction of an entire society for so long. Over time, it becomes increasingly difficult to conceal the nexus between the actions taken by Israel after October 7, the mendacious narratives it deployed, and Netanyahu's desperate struggle to retain political power and his personal liberty. The 1,200 Israeli and international victims of October 7, and the more than 27,000 Palestinians whose deaths were justified in their names, deserve an unvarnished rendering of the truth.

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The 1,200 Israeli and international victims of October 7, and the more than 27,000 Palestinians whose deaths were justified in their names, deserve an unvarnished rendering of the truth.

Netanyahu's Dangerous Game

BY FRED WESTON

January 14, 2024—There is much talk in the media about diplomatic pressure being put on the Israeli government by their allies in Washington to avert an escalation of the war in Gaza into a regional conflict. And yet, the whole situation has been moving precisely in the direction of a much wider conflagration, involving several fronts: from the West Bank; to the northern border with Lebanon; to the Houthis in Yemen; and bombings in Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan, also involving Iran. The latest U.S./UK bombing of the Houthis highlights this risk.

But there is another, domestic front, where Israel is facing a crisis unprecedented in its 76-year history. Past wars have generally been fairly short and

sharp operations, with the exception of the 1982-85 conflict in Lebanon. We are now well over 100 days into the present war, and it is expected to last for some time. And yet, despite the immense death and destruction inflicted on the Palestinian people, Netanyahu is nowhere near achieving his stated aims.

The devastation in Gaza is there for all to see—and it is intensifying in and around Khan Younis, with similar scenes to those witnessed in the bombing of Gaza City, including the threats to hospitals and closing of escape routes for civilians. The number of people killed, the level of destruction and the numbers displaced are without precedent in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Israeli officials

say the fighting is likely to continue for several more months.

The real death toll in Gaza has certainly passed well over the 30,000 mark, with over 26,000 officially reported deaths and a further 7,000 missing, buried under the rubble. Two thirds of the victims are women and children. A further 63,000 people have been wounded, while more than 1.9 million have been internally displaced, or 85 percent of the total population.

According to a recent article in *The Guardian*: “[A]bout 65,000 residential units have been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Another 290,000 have been damaged. That means that about half-a-million people have no home to return to.”

It is not just housing that has been affected. 23 of Gaza's 36 hospitals have been destroyed, while over 100 schools have suffered severe damage. The water supply, sewage and energy distribution networks have been severely damaged. Infrastructure has been reduced to rubble and unexploded ordnance and shells litter the ground everywhere.

Even where this or that house has been left standing, it doesn't mean they are fit for habitation. There has been a massive increase in cases of diarrhea affecting children. The situation has led the World Health Organization to sound the alarm that more people could die in Gaza from disease than from Israel's bombings. And now UN officials have stated that one quarter of the population is actually starving.

Netanyahu failing in his objectives

And yet, despite all this, Netanyahu is very far from achieving his goal, which is that of destroying Hamas as a fighting force. The Israeli military claims to have killed around 9,000 Hamas fighters. Prior to this war, esti-



mates of the numbers of fighters available to Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in the Gaza Strip varied from 40,000 to 50,000.

Therefore, as things stand, there is still a significant fighting force embedded in Gaza, not to mention the important support Hamas has gained in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and across the Palestinian refugee camps as a result of the brutality of Israel's genocidal war in Gaza.

Destroying this force would require many months of a drawn-out, systematic, house-by-house, tunnel-by-tunnel, street-by-street, urban war. So far, the Israeli army has lost over 200 soldiers in the fighting in Gaza according to the latest IDF figures, with over 1,000 injured. To achieve Netanyahu's aims, many more would be lost, and the recent killing of 21 soldiers in a single incident (where their own mines, laid to destroy Palestinian homes, were detonated by a lucky RPG shot) confirms this perspective very clearly.

Now, some top Israeli officials have been saying that the two goals—destroying Hamas and freeing the hostages—are mutually exclusive. The hostages, in fact, seem to be the last thing on Netanyahu's list of priorities. But to appease public opinion at home, he has continued to issue promises of rescuing them and bringing them home.

Understandably, the main concern of the families of the hostages is to see their relatives returned home alive. Their anger at Netanyahu's apparent lack of concern was graphically illustrated by a dramatic scene of relatives of hostages storming a Knesset finance committee meeting on January 22, 2024, shouting at those present in the meeting to concentrate on freeing the hostages.

The families of the hostages are in fact an embarrassment to Netanyahu, as they organize demonstrations outside his private home. The fact that at least 27 of the hostages taken on October 7 are reported to have died

under Israeli bombardment, and that three were killed by Israeli soldiers while waving a white flag, adds force to the demands of the families for at least a temporary pause to allow negotiations to proceed.

Families of hostages demand a deal

The families are demanding that a deal be reached, even if this means a lengthy interruption to the fighting, a withdrawal of troops and the release of Palestinian prisoners. The government is under immense pressure on this question, with internal divisions openly being discussed.

The real death toll in Gaza has certainly passed well over the 30,000 mark, with over 26,000 officially reported deaths and a further 7,000 missing, buried under the rubble. Two thirds of the victims are women and children. A further 63,000 people have been wounded, while more than 1.9 million have been internally displaced, or 85 percent of the total population

According to an *Axios.com* news report, there seems to be a proposal on the table for a "pause" in the war that could extend up to a two-month period, allowing for a phased release of the remaining hostages in exchange for the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails. Although subsequent reports indicate that very little progress has been made in reaching such a deal, with unnamed state

officials claiming the whole story to be "fake" and this has widely been reported on inside Israel.

The sticking point is that Hamas has called for a complete end to the war for such an exchange to take place. The Netanyahu government, on the other hand, is proposing to resume the fighting once the hostages have been released.

Netanyahu continues to maintain his position that a deal that envisages allowing Hamas to stay in control of Gaza is out of the question. This is in line with what they have been saying for the post-war scenario, that the Israeli military would continue to be present and would take overall responsibility for "security."

The "deal" as reported by *Axios.com*, is a classic example of attempting to square the circle. It puts the Hamas leaders—should they accept such an offer—in a position of giving up the one bargaining chip they still have with no guarantee that the war would be over. If they release all the hostages and the fighting restarts, the devastation would continue. It seems Hamas may be willing to release some of the hostages in exchange for an extended pause, but would only consider releasing all of them if a permanent ceasefire is agreed to, with big international players guaranteeing the agreement.

In order to facilitate a deal of this kind, the proposal seems to include the release of more Palestinian prisoners in a future exchange for the hostages. The problem is that Netanyahu has excluded any commitment to end the war. Up until recently he excluded any lengthy pause, or ceasefire, being concerned that such a scenario could end up with his government having to accept some kind of international agreement, and being unable to recommence the bombing of Gaza. On this line of argument, he has the backing of his far-right friends in the cabinet.

Netanyahu has insisted that the remaining hostages would be rescued by

the Israeli army in its war on Gaza. So far, however, the fact remains that of the 110 hostages liberated, only one was freed by Israeli forces. Four were released by Hamas unilaterally and the other 105 were released in a prisoner exchange deal. The hostages that were released were returned home as a result of negotiations, during a pause in the fighting.

Netanyahu has been repeating his mantra that the war will go on until all his objectives have been reached. If he continues on this road, the situation risks escalating into a war that could destabilize all the regimes in the Middle East. At the same time, it is adding to the factors that are presently pushing the world economy downwards into a slump. This has major implications for the imperialist powers both in Europe and in North America. The huge reduction in traffic through the Suez Canal is already having an effect.

The war is hurting Israel's economy

The divisions that run through the whole of Israeli society came to the surface last year in the huge movement against Netanyahu's attempts to change the judicial system. Now, by his actions, he has further destabilized the domestic front, both politically and economically.

The Israeli economy is feeling the impact of the present war. The mobilization of around 300,000 reservists is the largest since the war of 1973, and has caused a labor shortage across the whole economy, with GDP shrinking as a consequence.

Palestinian labor played a particularly important role in tourism, which has now all but collapsed, construction and agriculture before this war began. As of October 7, the many Palestinians from the Occupied Territories employed in these sectors have been barred from entering Israel.

Palestinians made up 65-70 percent of the workforce in Israel's building industry. This explains why Israel's construction sector has asked the government to

allow 100,000 workers to be hired from India to replace the Palestinians—who are now suffering the loss of jobs and income on top of everything else.

An article titled, "Half Israel's construction sites shut down," outlines the impact this is having:

"The paralysis of the construction industry is liable to bring... substantial damage to the whole economy. According to estimates by the Ministry of Finance presented to the Knesset Special Committee on Foreign Workers last week, the industry will lose NIS 2.4 billion (\$649 million) product a week, and, since the current situation is expected to continue in the coming months, up to three percent of national annual GDP could be lost."

Biden is pushing the idea of a two-state solution. But what kind of state is he suggesting should be granted to the Palestinians? In his own words, "There are a number of types of two-state solutions. There's a number of countries that are members of the UN that... don't have their own militaries."

A similar situation is being faced by the agriculture sector, which has traditionally relied on thousands of Palestinian workers, together with Thai migrants, to work the land and harvest the crops.

The lack of workers has now left unpicked fruit and vegetables rotting in fields. Yuval Lipkin, deputy director general of Israel's Agriculture Ministry, explained to *Reuters* that, "Israel's agri-

culture is in its biggest crisis since the establishment of Israel." This is being felt in ordinary people's daily lives, with spiraling prices of basic foodstuffs.

Israel's high-tech sector is another example. It is the most productive sector of the economy, employing around 12 percent of the overall workforce, producing 18 percent of gross domestic product, and accounting for roughly 50 percent of Israel's exports. Now, tens-of-thousands of high tech workers have been called up.

On top of this, there is the problem of the 200,000 Israelis who have been internally displaced after the evacuation of people living near the Lebanese and Gaza borders. They have had to abandon their jobs, while those who are self-employed risk seeing their livelihoods destroyed. And according to the Israeli Population and Immigration Authority 470,000 Israelis have left the country since the October 7 attack, that is five percent of the overall population!

According to the Ministry of Labour back in November, the total number of those taken out of the labor market because of the war—either called up into the army, displaced, or left idle because work in their sectors has been interrupted—was estimated to be 18 percent of Israel's workforce.

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, some industries have seen a fall of more than 70 percent in their revenue, with smaller businesses being the hardest hit. Many have gone bankrupt or face the threat of having to close down. There is much criticism from this layer towards the government's policy. They feel the government is not doing enough to help struggling businesses. This also explains the recent de-mobilization of several thousand soldiers in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on the economy.

Economic slump, inflation, and poverty

According to the Bank of Israel, the economy contracted by around two

percent in the last quarter of 2023, while consumer spending has been down since the October 7 attack.

On top of all this, there is the growing cost of the war itself, which has so far reached a figure of about \$60 billion. That is equal to the annual military budget of the United Kingdom for the whole of 2023. But UK GDP was around \$3.2 trillion last year, while Israel's was \$520 billion. Thus, Israel has spent in just three months what the UK normally spends in a year, despite having a GDP just one sixth the size of that of the UK. Israel's National Government Debt stands at close to \$300 billion. The present war is adding significantly to that figure.

The Israeli government recently amended its 2024 budget, adding an extra \$15 billion in spending, mostly to finance the war and to provide compensation to those adversely affected by the present situation. But if the war continues, as Netanyahu has repeatedly insisted, this figure may have to be amended several times over.

It is true that Israel has an advanced economy, and it entered this war with \$200 billion in reserves. But the longer the war goes on, the more it is eating into these reserves. If the war escalates into an all-out conflict with Hezbollah in Lebanon, into the West Bank and beyond, the cost could double or even triple. Serious analysts are saying that the economic impact inside Israel could be unlike anything the country has experienced in decades.

Before October 7, Israel's annual budget deficit for 2023 was expected to be just 0.9 percent of GDP. But the amended budget for 2024 has significantly increased defense spending, while imposing cuts on much civilian spending, pushing up the predicted deficit to 6.6 percent of GDP.

A global slowdown in the world economy, aggravated by the hikes in interest rates, had seen inflation slowly coming down in Israel. Now, however,

the Bank of Israel has expressed concerns that inflation could start to rise again due to the effects of the war.

Food price inflation has been particularly high, affecting the 1.4 million people (14.5 percent of the population) who suffer from food insecurity even in "normal times." According to a *Times of Israel* article, 20 percent of Israel's agricultural land is located near the Gaza border, and a further ten percent is near the northern border with Lebanon.

As the article explains:

"Countrywide, around 40 percent of the agricultural workforce (30,000 people) has been lost. Foreign workers, largely from Thailand, went home after the war began, while Palestinians are not presently allowed to enter the country."

And this has had an impact on the price of some basic food products:

"In the first week after the outbreak of war, tomato prices rose by about 50 percent, and by December the wholesale price was still 33 percent higher than it had been just before the war, the report said. The price of cucumbers increased by about 90 percent during this time. The price of potatoes rose by about 40 percent in the first two weeks of the fighting, and by December the wholesale price was still about 20 percent higher than the prewar price."

This is hitting the poorer layers of Israeli society, Israel already being one of the most unequal high-income countries in the world. The top ten percent earn 19 times more than the bottom 50 percent of the population. This particularly affects Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship, as they make up two-thirds of those suffering from food insecurity. But a layer of the Jewish population has also been affected.

Netanyahu, Hamas, and major security failure

As we can see, Netanyahu has obviously failed many people in Israel, particularly the ordinary working peo-

ple of the country and small businesses. He has tried to portray himself as the man who can make the Jews of Israel feel safe. And he has failed abysmally on this front also.

It is common knowledge that, for years, he promoted a policy of keeping Hamas in power in Gaza. Why? Because in this manner, Gaza and the West Bank remained politically divided. A divided Palestinian people was seen as the best way of pushing back on any idea of Palestinian statehood.

An interesting piece on this question was published in December by the *New York Times*, "Buying Quiet: Inside the Israeli Plan That Propped Up Hamas." The article explains that "For years, the Qatari government had been sending millions of dollars a month into the Gaza Strip—money that helped prop up the Hamas government there. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel not only tolerated those payments, he had encouraged them." The article goes on to outline the thinking behind this policy.

A more recent article that appeared on the *BBC* website, "They were Israel's 'eyes on the border'—but their Hamas warnings went unheard," based on interviews with young, female Israeli soldiers who were stationed in the Israeli military's observation posts near the Gaza border, is very revealing. It was their job to report on any suspicious movements across the perimeter fence. The article reports that, "In the months leading up to the October 7 attacks by Hamas, they did begin to see things: practice raids, mock hostage-taking, and farmers behaving strangely on the other side of the fence."

These observations were reported to higher officials, but nothing was done about it. Other such warnings have been reported on since the October 7 attack, pointing the finger at Netanyahu himself.

Considering Netanyahu's past record, it is credible that he may have been aware of an attack being prepared, but may not have realized how

serious it would be. He probably thought that, considering the growing opposition he was facing on the home front, a minor attack would be useful as an instrument to whip up “national unity” and distract attention from the many problems in Israeli society, not to mention his personal scandals.

The attack, of course, turned out to be far more serious than he had imagined, putting his role in the whole management of security in the spotlight.

Open conflict in the war cabinet

The tensions that run through the whole of Israeli society are being reflected in the open split in the government itself. The former military chief Gadi Eisenkot has called for elections to be held within months, and has accused the government of not telling the public the truth about the war in Gaza. In a televised statement he said, “we should say bravely that it is impossible to return the hostages alive in the near future without an agreement [with Hamas].” He also raised the idea that the government should consider putting a stop to the fighting for a “significant” period to allow such a deal to materialize. This is in line with the *Axios.com* report quoted above.

Under this pressure, three key figures that make up this cabinet—Netanyahu, the Defense Minister Yoav Gallant (who Netanyahu attempted to sack but was forced to reinstate in April last year) and the former head of the Israeli military, Benny Gantz—are openly criticizing each other in public. Relations between them have become so bad that there are reports that Netanyahu and Gallant are barely on speaking terms.

Two big issues are fomenting the division: whether Israel should begin negotiations to bring an end to the conflict, thus preparing the ground for the hostages to be freed; and how Gaza should be administered once the war ends. Gallant is pushing for the government to adopt a plan that envisages

some kind of Palestinian self-administration in Gaza, combined with an international “peacekeeping” force.

Gantz, expressing far more forcefully the pressure of the families of the hostages and the strong public opinion on this question, is pushing for negotiations with Hamas to get the remaining hostages freed. There are also divisions over how long to pursue the fighting in Gaza, whether to start winding down operations or whether to continue.

Biden is pushing the idea of a two-state solution. But what kind of state is he suggesting should be granted to the Palestinians? In his own words, “There are a number of types of two-state solutions. There’s a number of countries that are members of the UN that... don’t have their own militaries.”

This would therefore be a state without an army of its own—without any “armed bodies,” one that could never resist the Israeli army coming in whenever the Zionist ruling class deems it necessary, a “state” that could never resist future bombings like the present butchery taking place. This is more or less a rehash of the discredited Palestinian Authority, *i.e.*, it is not a state at all.

Up until very recently, Netanyahu, together with his more far-right friends in the cabinet, had been resisting the pressures to move towards some kind of negotiated deal with Hamas. On January 18, 2024, he stated he would “continue the fight with full force” until “total victory over Hamas.”

And in reply to Biden, he has stated that he is opposed to any kind of “two-state solution,” even the non-state the U.S. Administration is suggesting, and that he would settle for nothing short of “full Israeli security control of all territory west of the Jordan River.”

The western imperialists don’t seriously believe in a two-state solution, but they must continue to pay lip service to the idea that they are committed to a future Palestinian state (of some description) in order to legiti-

mize their full backing for Israel. Although, even they are split, with the likes of Trump taking a more belligerent position. By openly renouncing such an outcome, Netanyahu has placed the likes of Biden and the EU in a very embarrassing position.

The open conflict right at the top of the Israeli government reflects the more longstanding conflict within the ruling class, which led to last year’s constitutional crisis, but it has been greatly sharpened by the war.

Fighting to stay in office

Netanyahu has had one main objective throughout this whole crisis: to stay in office at all costs. He has done nothing for the lower income layers of Israeli society, either Jewish or Palestinian. But in an attempt to “unite the nation,” or at least the Jews of Israel, he has ratcheted up the Zionist propaganda and has leant ever further to the far right.

That explains why he has so many ultranationalists and ultra-orthodox, extreme right-wing Zionists in his cabinet, such as Ben-Gvir, who heads the far-right Jewish Power Party; or Smotrich, who heads the hardline Religious Zionism Party, both of whom are illegal settlers in the occupied West Bank, and have never made a secret of their extreme racist views. Both have been trying to provoke an escalation with the final aim of the expulsion of the Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Under Netanyahu, they have been given plenty of opportunities to pursue their aims.

According to a recent poll, however, only 15 percent of Israelis think Netanyahu should stay in office after the war in Gaza ends. And if elections were held today, his party, the Likud, would win only 16 seats, down from the 32 seats in the 120-member Knesset that it presently holds. His coalition as a whole would secure just 45 seats, compared to the thin 64 seat majority it has at present.

The Likud would do somewhat better if Netanyahu were no longer the party leader, although it would still fall back significantly. Meanwhile, Benny Gantz's National Unity party would triple its seats from 12 to 37, and a coalition around Gantz would emerge with a strong majority in the Knesset.

Netanyahu is therefore very conscious of one fact: once the war ends, and elections are called, his political career is over. There has been growing criticism from within the Zionist camp itself. The military commentator Amos Harel, writing in *Haaretz*, considered a liberal newspaper, has stated that: "It is no longer the good of the country Netanyahu is thinking about, but his own political and legal salvation."

He has been charged with bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in court cases that have been brought against him. It is clear that he has one wing of the ruling class working against him, as we saw last year during the huge street protests against his government.

Netanyahu knows his days are numbered. That explains why he has been dragging out the war. He desperately needs some kind of military achievements to boast about, in an attempt to claw back some of the support he has lost. The provocative assassination of Hamas' second-in-command in Beirut, the killing of a high-level Hezbollah commander in the south of Lebanon, and the targeting of Iranian officials in Syria, are all clearly part of this strategy.

This also explains why he keeps pushing back against U.S. imperialism, who have shown concerns that the present war could escalate. Netanyahu knows full well that Israel is the only real stable ally of U.S. imperialism in the region. And he also knows that, whatever he does, the U.S. government will have to back him, even if he provokes an escalation of the war.

As we have seen, Netanyahu has failed ordinary Jewish people living in Israel on many fronts. His policies are

plunging Israel into a deep economic crisis. People are at risk of losing their jobs and their businesses. The October 7 attack exposed the fact that the Israeli security forces are not the invincible, all-powerful, all-seeing body that they are presented as, capable of guaranteeing the safety of Jewish people in Israel. Netanyahu's role in all these crises has been placed in public view for all to see. He has also failed the families of the hostages.

This does not mean that there is mass opposition to Netanyahu's war on Gaza. All opinion polls show that the overwhelming majority of Jews in Israel support the war. In one recent poll, 87 percent of Israeli Jews expressed support for the idea that Hamas should be destroyed. A huge section of the population feels unsafe after the October 7 attack, and the Zionists are exploiting this mood to the full. It is also true, however, that a significant layer is unhappy with the way Netanyahu has managed the whole situation, and especially the question of the release of the hostages. All this will become even more evident once the war is over.

What has kept Netanyahu in office so far has been the war. But things can turn into their opposite as all the contradictions come to the surface, especially as it becomes clearer that Netanyahu cannot achieve his objectives. Sooner or later, this war must end. When it does, Netanyahu will be removed, and he could be sentenced in the courts. All these factors explain why he has an interest in provoking greater and greater conflict, pushing Israel closer and closer to the abyss, and spreading the war to other fronts.

On Monday, January 15, the IDF withdrew several divisions from the Gaza Strip, and moved a special unit from there to the West Bank. According to *Haaretz*, IDF officials describe the situation there as "being on the brink of explosion."

The risk of escalation was further highlighted by a recent statement by Israeli Chief of Staff, Herzl Halevi, speaking to Israeli soldiers, that "the chances of a war in the north are higher than ever." Halevi added that the IDF "is increasing its readiness for a clash. We have learned many lessons from the fighting in Gaza, very relevant to the fighting in Lebanon, and there are some that need to be fixed."

If open warfare were to break out on the Lebanese border, and within the West Bank, this would dramatically change the whole situation. The scenario discussed by many serious commentators of wider destabilization throughout the whole region and the impact this would have on the world economy would become a reality.

Such a scenario would become a key factor in further destabilizing the entire world situation. In times of severe economic crisis, the many unresolved national questions, responsibility for which lies on the shoulders of the imperialists, can explode with a vengeance. And the Palestinian national question is of a particularly acute character. The imperialists, in particular, the U.S., have backed the Zionist elite of Israel for decades in their criminal oppression of the Palestinians. This is now coming back to haunt them as their system sinks deeper and deeper into crisis.

—*Marxist.com*, January 14, 2024

<https://www.marxist.com/israel-netanyahu-s-dangerous-game.htm>

How Corporate Media Whitewash Israeli Crimes: A Personal Narrative

BY MNAR ADLEY



Mnar Adley, founder, CEO and editor in chief of MintPress News.

Transcript—Like many of you, my heart is weighed down so heavily by the ongoing turmoil in Gaza. And every day, I witness in absolute horror what Israel is doing to Palestinians, as it commits war crime after war crime; it's watching dismembered children with their limbs blown off or helpless fathers carrying their decapitated babies while collecting the body parts of their wives and children in plastic bags. Or mothers carrying the dead bodies of their children, crying, and screaming for them just to wake up. Or the newlywed wife who embraces her deceased husband, her lover, and gives him her last kiss and hug goodbye. It almost feels like we're watching a sadistic horror movie right on the screens of our smartphones, but we're not—we are watching in real-time a genocide of my people unfold before our eyes.

And the death toll stands stark and horrific—over 20,000 Palestinians have been killed by merciless bombs, guided missiles, and white phosphorous—weapons handed directly to an out-of-control apartheid state by our government and paid for by our taxpayer money.

If anything good has come out of this horrific war, it's that the moral depravity of the so-called "rules-based order" has been exposed to the masses. The mask has fallen from the Neoliberal class. For far too long, liberal Western politicians have tried to convince us that they live by the standards of human rights, freedom of speech, and democracy. These are the same individuals and countries that say Israel has a right to defend itself against the world's largest concentration camp. Our so-called leaders in Washington, London, and Brussels have weaponized human rights to sell the world's so-called humanitarian wars and to expand its settler colonial projects. But let's not forget that this ruling class is what brought us the wars in Iraq,

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they see their stock
prices go up.**

Afghanistan, Libya, and Somalia and the brutal maximum pressure campaigns, sanctions, and regime change operations against sovereign nations like Syria, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, and so many more countries who are resisting Western imperialism. Israel's war in Gaza is just an outward representation of what the Neoliberal class represents—a bloodthirst for war that fuels the military-industrial complex. Lockheed Martin and Raytheon applaud this genocide. Think tanks that are funded by these weapon manufacturers draft the war policies for our politicians to make these wars inevitable. We see dead children; they see their stock prices go up.

But it's clear that no matter how many millions they spend to manufac-

ture consent for their wars and support Israeli apartheid, Palestinians have won the hearts and minds of humanity. Never have I seen such global dissent and awakening to Israel's war in Gaza. We're seeing a global awakening. Millions have taken to the streets, mass sit-ins at our elected officials' offices have been organized, and boycotts. The massive coffee company Starbucks lost 12 billion dollars in a matter of one month from our boycott campaign. We have to disrupt the money-making mechanisms that make these wars possible. The capitalist system is meant to make us feel powerless, but we have the power to stop this war. And Israel knows this.

That's why Israel is spending millions on propaganda, but it's also systematically targeting Palestinian journalists in Gaza. Over 100 journalists have been killed so far in less than 70 days. These courageous individuals, committed to unveiling the truth, have become direct targets of a regime desperate to cloak its genocidal actions from the world's scrutiny. Israel doesn't want the world to see the reality of its genocidal onslaught in Gaza, so it's assassinating the messengers. In most parts of the world, wearing a flak jacket marked "press" gives you protection. But right now, in Palestine, it may as well be a target, as Israel has turned Gaza into what the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has called a "cemetery for journalists."

And you'd think mainstream corporate journalists would talk about the targeting of journalists in Gaza, but they're not. If legacy media outlets like the *New York Times* or *CNN* cover Palestinian journalists killed in Gaza, they don't have the basic journalistic integrity to say who killed them and fail to point out that Israel is system-

atically targeting them. Corporate media are whitewashing Israeli crimes and playing the fool, pretending not to understand where the missiles come from. They pretend not to hear the genocidal rhetoric emanating from Tel Aviv, who are openly calling Palestinians subhuman who need to be cleansed out of Gaza. Brave journalists have lost their lives trying to document the Israeli onslaught—we will not forget Palestinian journalist Ayat Khadoura, who was killed in her home by an Israeli airstrike. In her “last message to the world” posted on Instagram, she said: “We used to have big dreams, but now our dream is to be killed in one piece, so they know who we are.”

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Today, my dear friend and colleague journalist Motaz Azaiza has chronicled with full transparency the horrors of life under incessant bombs. And people around the world are flocking to his page to get live coverage of the war because it's become evident that Western corporate media are biased towards Israeli apartheid, pushing atrocity propaganda about October 7th to justify Israel's genocide... Western media leave out the context that Israel is occupying Palestinian land and fail to mention the many crimes against humanity Israel is committing every single day according to the Geneva Convention. It's no coincidence. It's because organizations like the *New York Times Jerusalem* bureau are built on a Palestinian house in al-Quds, which belongs to a noted Palestinian writer, Ghada Karmi, a survivor of the *Nakba*.

The *NYT* also cooperates with Israeli officials by receiving and obeying gag orders from the Israeli government. The *New York Times* Israel bureau chiefs Ethan Bronner, Isabel Kershner, and David Brooks had their adult children enlisted in the Israeli army while they were actively covering Israel and Palestine for the newspaper. The so-called paper of record never made this public to its readers, raising serious questions of bias and a conflict of interest. The *New York Times* also has a history of firing journalists like Gaza-based photographer Hosam Salem following an intervention from the Israel lobby group Honest Reporting. *CNN* and others who are embedded with the Israeli military have to get their footage approved by Israel before publishing it.

These are minor examples that don't even scratch the surface of how other media outlets work directly with Israel to control the narrative on Palestine or even how BIG Tech works with NATO and Israeli-funded think tanks like the Atlantic Council and the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) to crack down on alternative information on social media platforms. Consider this: In a matter of 60 days, Motaz amassed over 17.5 million followers. While the *New York Times* has 9.4 million digital subscribers.... We are winning the information war, and people are breaking through the propaganda. Journalists like Motaz Azaiza, Younis Tirawi, Muhammad Smiry, Motasem Mortaja, Wael Dahdouh, Hind Khoudary, and Bisan, to name a few, are showing us in real-time the courage it often takes to be a journalist.

As Israel continues to pound Gaza and we continue to see images of death, blood, and destruction, it's easy to feel hopeless. It's easy to be left speechless. But our story doesn't end here... for every bomb dropped, every child left to survive but orphaned, limbs lost, every person pulled from under the rubble but left horrified... for every person

left to survive... they survive to tell our story. We are the survivors—and our existence is our resistance. Israel thought it could bury us, but we turned out to be seeds. I was once that little girl who sat on her rooftop in Shufat-al-Quds and watched in horror Israeli jets drop bombs on homes in Ramallah. I was once that little girl who sat in her classroom only to look around to find my classmates missing each day because they were either killed or blocked from crossing a checkpoint to get to school...

Western media leave out the context that Israel is occupying Palestinian land and fail to mention the many crimes against humanity Israel is committing every single day according to the Geneva Convention.

I was once that little girl who was too afraid to look outside her window as Israeli soldiers pointed their rifles toward us during a militarized curfew... I was once that little girl who had her water cut off and had to hide in her barricaded home so that Israeli settlers wouldn't come inside and attack her family. By 13-years-old, I had already witnessed human rights abuses by a state that had convinced the world it was a civilized democracy. No child should have seen what I had seen, let alone what the children of Gaza are seeing today. By 13, I had already witnessed Palestinians subjected to discriminatory laws, having their travel controlled, and living behind a 30-foot-tall concrete apartheid wall separating them from the world. Every single day was a matter of survival while living under martial law and occupation. When I finally moved

back to the U.S. when I was 13 years old—to the pristine suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota—where the lawns were perfectly mowed and perfect... life was calm... but my mind was racing with thoughts of children being killed by bombs, families left homeless from airstrikes, electricity, and water cutoffs. I couldn't stop thinking about the men and young boys who were abducted by Israeli police in the middle of the night raids and held in indefinite detention without trial and on no charge. I could not unsee what I had seen.

Little did I know moving overseas to Palestine as an American child would shape not only my perspective on the world but how the media operates. When we moved back to the U.S. in 2001, it was just a few months before 9/11. I was absolutely traumatized. I suffered from what soldiers who fight in wars suffer from when they return home: PTSD, severe anxiety, and survivor's guilt. I was just 13-years-old and felt like no one understood what I had witnessed. While most teenagers in America were worried about football games, shopping, and partying, I turned to the media to stay up to date on the war I could not let go of. But what I got were images of Palestinian men covering their faces and bearing guns, stoking fear in the hearts of Americans while framing Palestinians as the aggressors. Media outlets like CNN and MSNBC gave Israeli leaders, and political figures paid millions of dollars by the Israeli lobby unlimited airtime on their networks to spew dehumanizing rhetoric about Palestinians and how much we hated ourselves, and that we wanted our children to die.

The media instilled fear in the hearts and minds of Americans to paint us as savages and barbaric to help justify Israel's apartheid and fascist policies on a defenseless population. Why wouldn't they? The U.S. gives Israel over \$10.4 million a day to the apartheid regime. After 9/11—the media

propaganda machine went on steroids to dehumanize Muslims as barbaric and painted a caricature of jihad narrative about us to justify the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—that left four million people dead. It became clear that Americans' lack of understanding about the world was because of the media... And it's as if they are all given the same script to talk about wars overseas. It's no wonder six corporations own 90 percent of what Americans see, hear, and read. Americans are the most propagandized people on the planet.

**The U.S. gives Israel
over \$10.4 million a day
to the apartheid regime.**

Now, despite feeling alone, traumatized, misunderstood, and at times almost losing hope when I was 13, having lived under Israeli occupation and now living in a post 9/11 America, watching in horror on my TV screen U.S. bombs being dropped on Iraq and Afghanistan.... It was this rock-bottom place where I found courage and catharsis in pursuing journalism to speak up not just for Palestinians but for all people around the world who are living under war. It was at 13-years-old that I decided to become a journalist. And in 2009, against all odds, I became the first American woman to wear the hijab while anchoring and reporting the news in the U.S. While I thought this was a great accomplishment at the time, I soon realized that very little change could be made within corporate media that is directed by marketing strategies and not actual journalism. I would just become the face of diversity at these stations while pushing dumb-down stories to the masses.

This is why I started *MintPress* soon after when I was 24 years old—and about ten years later, *MintPress* is now a leading independent investigative news outlet in this country and around

the world that exposes the profiteers of the war machine. Our investigations have been cited by politicians, major news organizations, academic journals, books, and much more across the globe. Our reporting has been used in negotiations between the U.S. and Russia that helped stop a full-blown U.S. invasion of Syria. But this route hasn't been an easy one—my name has been dragged through the mud, I've been labeled and smeared... I've appeared on the front pages of major media outlets with my face plastered next to Bashar al-Assad, calling me an agent of Iran, of Hamas—you name it. *MintPress* has been targeted financially by British intelligence, who ordered PayPal to ban us—we've been banned by TikTok, and our *Wikipedia* page has been written and edited by Israel lobby groups. I've lost friends on the way and have had my own family turn against me for standing staunchly against war and not falling for sectarian division.

But this is by design—it's a psychological war against the truth-tellers to intimidate us into stopping—to push us into a corner. No matter the information war waged against us, we will not back down because there are innocent lives at stake who need us to be their voice. Journalism became my outlet for the helplessness that I felt growing up when I suffered from PTSD, the trauma that I carry because of my life in a war zone and knowing that so many people I left behind in Palestine are still suffering, whether it be in Gaza or anywhere in the world living under war. Israel thought it could bury us, but we turned out to be seeds.

Mnar Adley is founder, CEO and editor in chief of MintPress News, and is also a regular speaker on responsible journalism, sexism, neoconservatism within the media and journalism start-ups.

—Sheerpost, January 6, 2024

<https://sheerpost.com/2024/01/06/how-corporate-media-whitewash-israeli-crimes-a-personal-narrative/>

Why Israel's War Is Genocide

By SETH ACKERMAN

January 26, 2024—Since October, Israel has killed more than 25,000 Palestinians, an estimated 70 percent of them women and children, in what a leading scholar of aerial bombing has called “one of the most intense civilian punishment campaigns in history.” Israel has been killing more than five times as many Gazans per day as the Nazis did, *per capita*, in the London Blitzkrieg. It killed roughly fifteen times as many children in the war's first two months alone as Russia did in Ukraine in the invasion's first eighteen months.

The *Associated Press*, citing analysts who specialize in mapping wartime bombing damage, reported that “the offensive has wreaked more destruction than the razing of Syria's Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine's Mariupol or, proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II.” Israel's campaign has destroyed the homes of a third of Gaza's residents, damaged almost two-thirds of all dwellings, and displaced 85 percent of its population, or 1.9 million people, through forced evacuations. More than ten Gazan children per day, on average, are estimated to have lost one or both of their legs.

The carnage is entirely deliberate. As a leaked analysis by the Dutch defense *attaché* in Tel Aviv put it, Israel “intends to deliberately cause enormous destruction to the infrastructure and civilian centers;” this is what explains the “high number of deaths” among civilians.

Israel's claim that the civilian destruction is the inadvertent consequence of strikes targeting Hamas fighters is merely “a fig leaf for harming the civilian population,” according to a detailed investigation of the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) targeting protocols published jointly by the Israeli

news sites +972 and Local Call. Citing “conversations with seven current and former members of Israel's intelligence community,” journalist Yuval Abraham reported that the IDF's established procedure is to identify the type of civilian site it wishes to destroy, such as a residential high-rise, and then afterward search a database to find some link to a militant group.

Within the IDF, strikes of this nature are called “power targets.” “If you want to find a way to turn a high-rise into a target, you will be able to do so,” explained a former intelligence official quoted in the report. Official claims that such targets are tied to Hamas are “an excuse that allows the army to cause a lot of destruction in Gaza,” said a source who was involved in developing targets in previous rounds of fighting in Gaza. “That is what they told us.”

“It doesn't get any worse”

In the current conflict, Israel has devoted special effort to destroying hospitals—which it openly admits to

targeting. Of Gaza's thirty-six hospitals, only sixteen remain partially functional, with occupancy rates “reaching 206 percent in inpatient departments and 250 percent in intensive care units,” the UN reports. “What we have been witnessing is a campaign that was planned. It was a plan to close down all the hospitals in the north,” said Léo Cans, head of mission for Palestine with Doctors Without Borders.

In the first half of January, aid groups planned twenty-nine critical missions to deliver emergency medical supplies to the northern Gaza Strip; twenty-two of them were refused by Israel. As a result of its attack on Gaza's health system, “doctors operate on screaming children without anesthetic, using mobile phones for light,” the UN's top human rights official said in Geneva.

In addition to direct attacks, “the Israeli government is using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare,” Human Rights Watch reports. “Israeli forces are deliberately blocking the



Smoke rises during Israeli bombardment on the Gaza Strip on November 12, 2023.

delivery of water, food, and fuel, while willfully impeding humanitarian assistance, apparently razing agricultural areas, and depriving the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival.” Israeli inspectors turn away aid trucks without providing a reason, and “if a single item is rejected,” the *New York Times* reported, “the truck must be sent back with its cargo and repacked to restart the inspection process.” The security alibi is bogus: as the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem notes, Israel is prohibiting humanitarian organizations from purchasing food from Israel itself, a step that would obviate the need for security inspections.

Alex DeWaal, a leading expert on humanitarian crisis response at Tufts University, wrote that Israel’s starvation of Gaza “surpasses any other case of man-made famine in the last 75 years” in terms of “the rigor, scale, and speed” of its blockade of needed supplies and destruction of humanitarian infrastructure. According to the UN’s famine prevention unit, the proportion of Gaza households experiencing a life-threatening lack of access to food is currently “the largest ever recorded” by the organization, and if current conditions continue, by May a minimum of twenty thousand Gazans per month will likely be dying of famine. “I have never seen something at the scale that is happening in Gaza. And at this speed,” said Arif Husain, chief economist of the UN World Food Program. “It doesn’t get any worse.”

He is not alone in that view. “Officials at humanitarian and health-care organizations with lengthy experience in major conflict zones said Israel’s war in Gaza was the most devastating they had seen,” the *Washington Post* reported in December. “For me, personally, this is without a doubt the worst I’ve seen,” said Tom Potokar, a Red Cross chief surgeon who has worked in conflicts in South Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, and Ukraine.

“What’s happening right now in Gaza is beyond any disaster that I’ve witnessed at least in the last 15 years or so,” said Zaher Sahloul, a doctor who heads a humanitarian medicine NGO and worked in Aleppo during the battle for the city. Martin Griffiths, UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, called it “the worst ever,” adding: “I don’t say that lightly. I started off in my twenties dealing with Khmer Rouge . . . I don’t think I’ve seen anything like this before, it’s complete and utter carnage.”

The reason the carnage is as great as it is, is that Israel is trying to kill or expel as much of the Palestinian population of Gaza as possible.

“Stay and starve, or leave”

The reason the carnage is as great as it is, is that Israel is trying to kill or expel as much of the Palestinian population of Gaza as possible. Its direct attacks on civilians are part of a larger plan: to create “conditions where life in Gaza becomes unsustainable,” as Major-General Giora Eiland, an adviser to Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant, put it. “Israel needs to create a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, compelling tens-of-thousands or even hundreds-of-thousands to seek refuge in Egypt or the Gulf,” the adviser wrote in October.

In the policy jargon of the Israeli government, this is referred to as “voluntary emigration.” It will be presented as a choice: in Eiland’s words, “The people should be told that they have two choices: to stay and to starve, or to leave.”

The “voluntary emigration” plan is not just a hypothetical scenario. It is government policy—although, as the pro-Benjamin Netanyahu newspaper

Israel Hayom reported in December, “It is not discussed in these forums [official meetings of the Security Cabinet] due to its obvious explosiveness.” The plan was explored in an October 17 paper by an influential think tank close to the Netanyahu government, which spoke of “a unique and rare opportunity to evacuate the whole Gaza Strip.”

The same conclusions were advanced in an internal Intelligence Ministry paper, which found that the “transfer of Gaza residents to Sinai” could “provide positive and long-lasting strategic results.” According to *Israel Hayom*, the prime minister has tasked his confidant, Ron Dermer, the minister of strategic affairs, to “examine ways to thin out Gaza’s population to a minimum.” At a party caucus meeting of Knesset deputies in late December, Netanyahu personally pledged that he was working to “ensure that those who want to leave Gaza to a third country can do so,” according to news site *Israel Hayom*, adding that the matter “needs to be settled” because it had “strategic importance for the day after the war.”

These objectives are widely understood within the Israeli government and military. “Whoever returns here, if they return here after, will find scorched earth. No houses, no agriculture, no nothing. They have no future,” said the deputy head of the Civil Administration, Col. Yogev Bar-Shesht, on November 4. “All the civilian population in Gaza is ordered to leave immediately,” said Energy and Infrastructure Minister Yisrael Katz on October 13. “They will not receive a drop of water or a single battery until they leave the world.” “We are now actually rolling out the Gaza *Nakba*,” said Avi Dichter, the former head of Israel’s internal security agency, on Israel’s *Channel 12 news*, in a reference to the 1948 mass expulsion of Palestinians.

By law, Israel’s supreme authority in national security matters is the inner ministerial grouping known as the

Security Cabinet; its decisions are binding policy. Dichter and Katz are currently members, as are Netanyahu and Dermer. Adding the two extremist ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir, at least six of the fourteen members of the Security Cabinet are on record as being in favor of “voluntary emigration;” only three are generally believed to be opposed to it—Gadi Eisenkot, Benny Gantz, and Yoav Gallant.

“A textbook case of genocide”

There is a consensus among scholars of genocide that ethnic cleansing does not automatically imply genocide, but that the two often go together. According to Omer Bartov, an Israeli American professor of Holocaust and genocide studies at Brown University, “Functionally and rhetorically we may be watching an ethnic cleansing operation that could quickly devolve into genocide, as has happened more than once in the past.” From this he concludes that “the possibility of genocide is staring us in the face.”

There are many signs that this is already happening. Reports are multiplying of point-blank field executions of civilians by Israeli troops, such as a December 13 incident in which, according to eyewitnesses who spoke to *Al Jazeera*, “women, children, and babies were killed execution-style by Israeli forces” while they were sheltering inside the Shadia Abu Ghazala in northern Gaza. Or a December 19 incident, confirmed by the UN, in which soldiers “summarily killed at least 11 unarmed Palestinian men in front of their family members in Al Remal neighbourhood, Gaza City.”\

“The IDF allegedly separated the men from the women and children, and then shot and killed at least 11 of the men, mostly aged in their late 20s and early 30s, in front of their family members. The IDF then allegedly ordered the women and children into a room, and either shot at them or threw a grenade into the room, reportedly seriously

injuring some of them, including an infant and a child.”

These reports can hardly be surprising: the Israeli command authorities have clearly communicated to their troops that the objective of the war is to rid Gaza of Palestinians. The defense minister has announced, “I have released all the restraints.” Moshe Saada, a member of Netanyahu’s party who sits on the National Security Committee of the Knesset, recently rejoiced that even left-leaning Israelis now agree on the need for a policy of extermination: “Former colleagues who once fought with me on political matters,” he said, now “tell me, ‘Moshe, it is clear that all the Gazans need to be destroyed.’”

**“a unique and rare
opportunity to evacuate
the whole Gaza Strip.”**

This is why other genocide experts, such as the Israeli historian Raz Segal, endowed professor in the study of modern genocide at Stockton University, are more definitive than Bartov. “What we’re seeing in front of our eyes is a textbook case of genocide,” Segal said. The same terms were used by Craig Mokhiber, the New York director of the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a thirty-year veteran aid official, who called Gaza “a textbook case of genocide” in his October 28 resignation letter. Fifteen UN special rapporteurs—senior independent experts who are neither employed by the UN nor nominated by any government—released a statement in November calling the situation a “genocide in the making.”

Biden’s complicity

In a recent op-ed for the *New York Times*, Daniel Levy, a veteran Israeli negotiator who has served several prime ministers, urged the Biden administration to exercise “the very

real diplomatic and military leverage at its disposal” to push Israel to accept a cease-fire. “That demand cannot be one of rhetoric alone. The administration should condition the transfer of further military supplies on Israel ending the war.” The former Israeli ambassador to France, Élie Barnavi, made a similar point in an interview last month: “You know, we can’t make war without munitions or replacement parts for our planes,” he noted. “Either a solution will be imposed or there won’t be one. The Americans, upon whom we’re extremely dependent, can force our government.”

Joe Biden, however, has made his choice, however reluctantly: he’s supporting Israel’s operation. On December 29, his administration approved an emergency weapons sale to Israel using a legal loophole allowing it to go around Congress—the second time it had done so that month. “Despite Netanyahu’s defiance, Biden is committed to persuading him through private appeals,” the *Washington Post* reported last week. “There is no serious discussion inside the White House about changing the strategy in any significant way, according to several senior admin officials and outside advisers.”

The choice Biden has made has earned him the sobriquet “Genocide Joe” in some quarters—an epithet many consider unfair. They have a point. There should be no rush to judgment. Like Antony Blinken, Brett McGurk, and the state of Israel itself, he is fully entitled to his day in court.

—Jacobin, January 26, 2024

<https://jacobin.com/2024/01/israel-gaza-war-genocide-biden>

Shame on Israel for Exploiting the Holocaust to Justify Genocide

By SIG GIORDANO

If my grandparents were alive today, this October would have marked the 80th anniversary of their meeting. In 1943, my grandparents, Isidor and Marianne, met in Theresienstadt, a concentration camp in what was Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. I was quite close to my grandfather, Isi, who outlived my grandmother. Among some of his things, he entrusted me with a yellow cloth “Jewish” star he was made to wear in the camp, with the word “Jude” on it.

Resistance takes place against those in a place of power.

At a United Nations (UN) meeting, on October 31, Gilad Erdan, Israel’s UN Ambassador, put on a Jewish star reminiscent of my grandfather’s. Addressing the UN Security Council, he said the reason he wore the star was to denounce their silence regarding the October 7 attack on Israel. Erdan compared this silence to the silence that allowed for

the Holocaust to happen. In response to Erdan, Dani Dayan, the director of Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust memorial museum, quickly called out this misuse of the star, arguing that Erdan was “disgrac[ing] the victims of the Holocaust as well as the state of Israel.”

Dayan was absolutely right to call attention to how offensive it was for Erdan to don the yellow star. Dayan’s reasons, however, are entirely wrong. To make his point, Dayan argued that the yellow star symbolizes the weakness of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, continuing a disturbing and false historical narrative.

Zionists have long sought to paint Holocaust victims as weak to make the case for the founding and then maintenance of the state of Israel. These moves began even before the Holocaust when some Zionists aligned themselves with the eugenic racial science of the day, arguing that Jews must purify their own race creating their own strong breed. Arthur Ruppin, a leading social scientist and head of the World Zionist Organization’s Palestine office in the early 20th century, promoted the settlement of Palestine as

the answer to the dangerous results of “racial-mixing” for European Jews. He was not alone, as many Jewish intellectuals argued that forming the Zionist state would allow Jews to “regenerate their own bodies” which were degenerated by the conditions of both assimilation and oppression in Western and Eastern Europe, respectively.

Also, oppression, by definition, is about being on the losing side of a power dynamic.

Once Israel was founded, Holocaust victims were regularly treated as weak and as examples of the opposite of what the Zionist state represented, leading to poor treatment for those survivors who became Israeli citizens. As Dayan, himself reiterated, the Holocaust represents a cautionary tale about the weakness of Jews in the diaspora to be juxtaposed with the strength of Jews in the State of Israel.

Despite their disagreement, Israeli leaders like Erdan and Dayan regularly make use of the Holocaust to defend state violence against Palestinians. Unlike Erdan and Dayan, learning about the genocide against my ancestors has allowed me to understand that what is happening today in Palestine is genocide. To know a genocide is happening is painful in and of itself. To know a genocide is being carried out supposedly in one’s name (as a Jewish person) is extra painful. But, to know a genocide is being justified through an appropriation of my family’s suffering, is infuriating. I am furious. How dare the state of Israel insult my family’s history.

The horrors that my family endured are unimaginable to most. My grand-



Permanent representative of Israel, Gilad Erdan, at the UN wearing a yellow star. (Photo: screenshot from video on the Telegraph YouTube Channel.)

mother and grandfather, teenagers when they met at the camp, were the only surviving members of their families. My grandfather was part of a resistance in the camp, hiding people who were on lists to be transported to Auschwitz. My grandfather literally saved my grandmother's life. This is not a story of weakness. However, it is a story from which I have learned many lessons about the conditions that allow for genocide.

The lesson of the Holocaust is that those with economic and political power used nationalism and the idea of so-called inferior types of people being a threat to the nation-state to justify genocide.

I remember being eight or nine years old, sitting at the kitchen table for breakfast while my mother cooked. The radio was on as it was every morning listening to 1010 WINS news, "You give us 22 minutes, we'll give you the world." In the headlines, a resistance group claimed responsibility for a bombing somewhere outside of the U.S. I asked my mom, "What is a resistance group?" She explained the idea of resistance by talking about the Holocaust and her father's struggle to fight back. While not every person claiming to resist is automatically righteous, I realized when I was older that how one views resistance in any given situation is based on their vantage point. That may seem obvious, but in Western media, politics, and educational contexts, we regularly see an association made between resistance groups and terrorism which creates a taken-for-granted right and wrong side.

In the days after September 11, 2001, as a U.S. citizen living in the United States, I was reminded when I challenged the drive to invade Afghanistan, that I was either with "us" or "against us." To me, the forced nationalism reminded me of the studies I had taken up during college about the Holocaust. The creation of the "Us vs. Them" mentality to protect Germany was a key part of bringing on board large segments of non-Jewish Germans to the fight against Jewish people.

Resistance takes place against those in a place of power. Also, oppression, by definition, is about being on the losing side of a power dynamic. Then, how is it that, Israel, a country with one of the most powerful militaries in the world, supported by the most powerful military and economic power in the world, the United States, has tried to paint itself as champion of an oppressed people who must fight against Palestinian resistance movements?

Jonathan Greenblatt, director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), published an opinion piece in *Time* magazine after the October 7 attack, arguing that there is no way to understand Hamas' attack except as "hate" and "toxic intolerance in its purest form." Instead of exceptionalizing Jewish experience so that the Holocaust becomes one example in thousands of years of Jewish hatred, what would it look like to pay attention to the real lessons we can learn from the horrors of the Holocaust? The lesson we need is not that Jewish people have always been and always will be hated. The lesson of the Holocaust is that those with economic and political power used nationalism and the idea of so-called inferior types of people being a threat to the nation-state to justify genocide. Many Jewish and non-Jewish people resisted as much as they could. The problem was not a weak resistance, the problem was the strength of nationalist, eugenic narratives.

The good news is that millions of Jewish people and others are undertaking critical study of the situation and pushing against the messages being brought to us by the most powerful Israeli and U.S. leaders. We are standing in solidarity with Palestinians who are fighting for their right to existence and self-determination. We see changes in public opinion polls, and the number of Jewish-led and supported actions against the current genocide is greater than ever before. Many are speaking out and saying loudly, Never Again means Never Again for Anyone.

Mondoweiss, December 18, 2023

<https://mondoweiss.net/2023/12/shame-on-israel-for-exploiting-the-holocaust-to-justify->

The problem was not a weak resistance, the problem was the strength of nationalist, eugenic narratives.

AFL-CIO's Ceasefire Call Shows Power of the Movement for Palestine

BY OTTO FORS

On February 8, 2024, the AFL-CIO called for a ceasefire in Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza. The statement came after months of silence, during which the largest union federation in the United States had gone as far as to force a Washington-based labor council to remove its ceasefire resolution. The AFL-CIO's call shows that the movement for Palestine and rank-and-file ceasefire organizing has forced labor to shift its position on the assault—and this movement must go further.

The AFL-CIO's statement comes after more than 28,000 Palestinians—40 percent of whom are children—have been killed by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Around 80 percent of the population is internally displaced, as over half of all buildings in Gaza have been destroyed. To survive, Palestinians in northern Gaza are subsisting on rice, animal feed, and contaminated water. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is now planning a ground invasion of the crowded southern city

of Rafah, where around 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering.

In response to the Zionist state's genocide, hundreds-of-thousands across the world have flooded the streets for Gaza. Protests in the United States have been the largest since the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, and the largest ever for Palestinian liberation. Young people are reinvigorating the student movement by mobilizing on college campuses against the genocide, and people are taking to their workplaces to show solidarity with Gaza.

**Unions should demand
an end to U.S. funding
and arms shipments to
Israel.**

This powerful movement, and rank-and-file labor organizing for Palestine, are what have forced union leaderships like

that of the AFL-CIO to shift their stance.

The AFL-CIO is just the latest in a growing list of labor organizations supporting a ceasefire. As early as October, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 3000 and the United Electrical Workers (UE) sponsored a ceasefire resolution. More recently, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) made similar statements.

Of course, despite these ceasefire calls, labor organizations are still far from demanding Palestinian liberation. In fact, the AFL-CIO's tepid call mentions a need for "humanitarian aid" for Gazans, without mentioning that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are directly responsible for the destruction and dire conditions in Gaza. The AFT's statement is even worse: Israelis are described as being "slaughtered" by Hamas, while the "tens-of-thousands of civilian Palestinian deaths" seemingly lack a known perpetrator.

While a ceasefire is a progressive demand that all unions should have taken up months ago, it is far from enough. Unions should demand an end to U.S. funding and arms shipments to Israel. Workers must force their leaders to, like Starbucks Workers United and UAW Local 551, condemn the apartheid, occupation, and state violence inflicted on Palestinians, and support Palestinians' self-determination. And unions must end their direct, long-standing support for Zionism, including buying millions of Israeli government bonds.

A key limit and contradiction in the ceasefire calls is also union bureaucracies' ties to the Democratic Party. While the movement has forced labor to break from, or at least rhetorically oppose, the bipartisan regime's policy



Ceasefire demonstration in Washington, DC.

of supporting genocide, major organizations including the AFL-CIO, the AFT, and the UAW have endorsed Biden—Israel’s chief ally—for president. In other words, these unions are calling for an end to Israel’s bloody assault while supporting the imperialist regime that is directly funding and providing weapons for the mass slaughter. This is a betrayal of workers everywhere, not just the U.S. workers who’ve spoken out against their leaders’ hypocrisy and opposed the presidential endorsements.

Labor leaders’ embrace of imperialism is no accident. As Jason Koslowski explained,

“Our union leaders’ position there, atop the federation, helps drive those leaders into the U.S. government’s arms. They earn their (substantial) paychecks from playing the role of national go-between for labor and the U.S. government, building relationships, and fostering their prestige with government officials like presidents. Union leaders’ jobs are tied up with those of the

imperialist state politicians they are linked to. And so they tend to see the U.S. government and Western imperialism as allies, or at least potential allies, helping secure capitalist profits around the globe in a way that they think will help them, too.”

It’s time for workers to use our power to stop this genocide and ramp up the struggle against imperialism.

Union bureaucracies’ need to toe the Democratic Party line is evident in their ceasefire statements, in which they attempt to tie this demand to support for a two-state solution—which is increasingly becoming the line of the Biden administration. In this context, these organizations are trying to co-opt the rank and file and the movement in the streets by granting a concession. In other words, unions are offering a luke-

warm ceasefire statement while trying to convince us that what we are fighting for is actually a two-state solution instead of actual liberation for the Palestinian people from the river to the sea.

Workers need to fight to wrest back control of our unions and definitively break from imperialism, from Zionism, and from both Democrats and Republicans. Neither Biden, nor Donald Trump—who has been courting an endorsement from the Teamsters union—are friends of the working class, whether in the United States or abroad. A ceasefire demand is a first step, but the 12.5 million workers across 60 unions that make up the AFL-CIO have the power to grind the war machinery everywhere to a complete halt. It’s time for workers to use our power to stop this genocide and ramp up the struggle against imperialism.

—Left Voice, February 11, 2024

<https://www.leftvoice.org/afl-cio-ceasefire-call-shows-power-of-palestine-movement/>

Gas, Gaza, and Western Imperialism

BY TARA ALAMI

December 20, 2023—The current assault on Gaza cannot be seen as separate from the theft of resources like fuel and the systemic destruction of life-sustaining infrastructure throughout Palestine. Only ten days after the beginning of the most recent assault on Gaza, the World Health Organization announced that fewer than “24 hours of water, electricity and fuel left” in Gaza. By October 24th and amid brutal bombing, Gaza’s Ministry of Health warned of an impending fuel shortage that would shut down several hospitals within 48 hours, including the Beit Lahia Indonesian Hospital. On November 20, news broke that the U.S. was exploring plans to exploit the gas fields off the coast of Gaza as part of an

“economic revitalization plan.” While some took this to mean that these gas fields were an ulterior motive for the years of Zionist and U.S.-backed attacks on Gaza, the current assault should be understood as an escalation of an ongoing attempt to ethnically cleanse Gaza that is part and parcel of the Zionist settler-colonial and imperial project.

The Gaza Marine natural gas field

Besides its long-term goal of building a settler-colonial ethnostate, the Zionist project sustains itself as an imperialist proxy for the Western empire in the region. One important way it plays this role is through its involvement in exporting stolen gas to the European Union (EU) and by strik-

ing gas deals with local normalizing neighboring states, like Jordan, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Twenty-five years ago, British Gas Group (BGG) discovered natural gas off the coast of Gaza between the Zionist-occupied Leviathan gas field and the Egyptian Zohr gas field. These fields have become known as Gaza Marine 1 and Gaza Marine 2 and are a tremendous point of interest for the Zionist state and its American sponsor, who seek to profit off of Palestinian natural resources in the Mediterranean Sea.

Most of Gaza’s energy and water is controlled by the Israeli occupation and plans to introduce and maintain independent energy-producing infrastructure inside the Strip have continu-

ously been thwarted by both the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Zionist state. Instead, the Occupation, and to a lesser extent the PA, both benefit from stolen gas and desalinated water from Gaza's shores while Palestinians in Gaza endure increasingly catastrophic energy crises.

Only a few months before October 7, Netanyahu announced approval for the development of this gas field in collaboration with the PA and Egypt. Right now, after more than 20,000 Palestinians had been killed by airstrikes or execution-style, 8,000 reportedly stuck underneath the rubble, hundreds kidnapped and tortured, tens-of-thousands injured, and a deliberate energy crisis in Gaza designed by the Zionist state to deplete life-saving infrastructure, energy giant Chevron resumed gas extraction from the Tamar and Leviathan fields to supply Egypt and Israeli settlers.

Regional domination

To understand the Zionist state's interest in extracting gas from fields off the coast of Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt, it's essential to situate it within the Israeli occupation's imperial aims, solidified in the 1990s by the Oslo Accords and, within them, the Paris Protocol.

Beyond promoting settlement expansion, the militarization by the state, and the nullification of the Palestine Liberation Organization's grassroots legitimacy, the Accords effectively placed Palestinians under complete economic subjugation to the Zionist regime. The Accords' division of the occupied West Bank into arbitrary categories by means of colonial map-making additionally physically restricted Palestinians' access to life-sustaining natural resources, and, importantly, paved the way for the comprador PA regime being "given" access to the Palestinian gas fields off the shore of Gaza and Egypt while stolen gas is exported abroad.

Thirty years after Oslo, Palestinians remain in a state of deliberate underdevelopment designed to sabotage any potential for economic stability

Thirty years after Oslo, Palestinians remain in a state of deliberate underdevelopment designed to sabotage any potential for economic stability, facili-

tated by the PA and its lackeys, and exacerbated by consistent incursions, invasions, bombings, and colonial violence by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF).

No place is this more clear than Gaza. Before Hamas was elected by Palestinians in 2007, "peace" negotiations between then-prime minister Ehud Olmert and the PA included the Israeli occupation purchasing \$4 billion worth of gas annually, starting in 2009. But Hamas' win in 2007 effectively nullified potential agreements as a brutal air, land, and sea blockade was placed on Gaza. In the background, the Zionist regime was planning its impending 2008 invasion of Gaza while simultaneously attempting to reach a 15-year deal with BGG.

Once Egypt signed a gas deal with the Zionist state in 2005, followed by the discovery of the Tamar gas field in 2009, the need to extract and export gas from Gaza's shores became less urgent. But as we're seeing today, the plans to eventually exploit the Gaza Marine fields while maintaining a medieval siege on Gaza did not halt.

Nor were these plans restricted to Gaza's shores.

Lebanon has been embroiled in a dispute with the Israeli occupation over maritime borders since 2010. In October 2022, a historic maritime border deal, brokered by the U.S., was finally signed. The deal effectively places the U.S. as a permanent observer, supervisor, and mediator of all extractions from gas fields, in addition to mandating that data of "all currently known, and any later identified" resources be shared with the U.S. Further, the deal only allows "reputable, international corporations" approved and supervised by the U.S. to extract gas from the fields and restricts Lebanese control over roughly one-third of the disputed area. Lebanon's concessions are likely due to the country's increasingly dire economic conditions, readily exploited by the deal's American brokers.



Leviathan offshore gas field in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Israel.

Similarly, in 2016, Jordan's National Electric Power company signed a controversial 15-year normalization deal with the Zionist state and energy corporations Delek Drilling, Ratio, and Noble Energy. In December 2019, the Zionist state began exporting stolen gas to Jordan from the Leviathan field. In 2022, Jordan's King Abdullah II met with Isaac Herzog at Egypt's COP27 summit to sign a memorandum of understanding for a deal exchanging stolen water from the Mediterranean Sea for Jordanian solar-power-generated energy.

Challenging imperialism

The case of the Zionist regime's interest in gas fields surrounding the borders of Palestine is a textbook example of imperialism as defined by Lenin or Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*: namely, the concentration of production and monopolies (namely by U.S. and British-affiliated energy corporations) and the export of capital.

Though attempting to hide this resource theft from Palestinians behind the smokescreen of "solving" a global energy crisis sparked by NATO's proxy

war in Ukraine and the Nord Stream pipeline explosion, the UK, U.S., EU, and the Zionist state have long been interested in solidifying stolen gas exports from the Leviathan gas field in the European energy market, beyond the confines of deals with Jordan, Egypt, and now Lebanon. This is why Yemeni strategic attacks on shipping routes to and from the Zionist state are a true threat to the viability of this

True liberation therefore means the end of the Zionist project in all its forms, from colonial borders, military checkpoints, and blockades, to its parasitic reach beneath our waters.

genocidal regime: if the energy cost of this attack on Gaza is too high, mega-corporations that supply the Israel Occupation Forces with energy and

weapons are more likely to halt shipments altogether, threatening the global trade economy.

Accompanying every announcement of further theft from Palestinian and Arab gas fields is an emphasis on the Zionist state's attempt to maintain "safety" and "security" around its colonial borders. The theft of natural resources and the potential profit for the Zionist regime and its sponsors, including giant energy corporations like Chevron and Total, is indeed the driving force behind its insistence on encroaching Gaza's shore. But, crucially, it all rests on the larger backdrop of the Zionist settler-colonial project and its function as an imperialist proxy: ethnic cleansing, land theft, dispossession, and the structural economic subjugation of Palestinians. True liberation therefore means the end of the Zionist project in all its forms, from colonial borders, military checkpoints, and blockades, to its parasitic reach beneath our waters.

—Mondoweiss, December 20, 2023

https://mondoweiss.net/2023/12/gas-gaza-and-western-imperialism/?ml_recipient=108179028638172730&ml_link

Continued from page 2

We aim to realize the dream of the original UAW Arab caucus, which undertook a wildcat strike in November 1973 in Dearborn, demanding the UAW divest from Israeli bonds. Fifty years later, nearly to the date this November, we celebrated as you and our elected leadership passed a cease-fire resolution and created a committee to look into Divestment and a Just Transition—fulfilling the Arab caucus's demands. We are grateful for your leadership on calling for an end to the genocide and as our Arab caucus before us, we urge you to do much more.

The question of Palestine has moved U.S. residents in sustained resistance for months in ways unprecedented in decades. If United Auto Workers

Dearborn (UAWD) and the reform leadership is going to stay in power and continue to push the labor agenda in this country, we will need to move beyond the supposed priorities of the traditional and often white male labor activists. We will need to work on campaigns and in ways that touch a wider range of diverse younger workers—Palestinian liberation is one such campaign, and we, as Arab unionists, know also that our liberation is interconnected. That is, we are already and will continue to work to connect with our more marginalized union siblings to bring all of our pressing issues to the forefront of the union.

This kind of work will bring more active members into the reform caucus

and actually ensure the expansion of the UAW reform program. In fact, issues like the genocide in Palestine have already proven to be one of the most powerful activating and mobilizing forces for the labor movement. Fear, on the other hand, that taking an active stance on Palestine will alienate rank and file or leadership members of the Admin Caucus, will get us nowhere. Instead, it will just reproduce the same dynamic that UAWD is supposedly trying to shift. If our union's power is to continue into the future in a diverse America, we must grow and become more committed to the cause of workers everywhere.

We need you to take action on Palestine, starting by meeting with us

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Reports of Torture in Israeli Jails

BY THE PALESTINIAN INFORMATION CENTER

February 2, 2024—Testimonies by Palestinian prisoners recently released from Israeli occupation prisons revealed a number of violations and practices of torture being committed against them in detention.

Israeli occupation authorities have recently released 114 Gazan prisoners and returned them to the Gaza Strip through Karm Abu Salem crossing in the southern tip of the enclave.

Local sources reported that nine of the released prisoners were transferred to Abu Yusef Al-Najjar Hospital to receive treatment and undergo medical examinations after their health conditions deteriorated as a result of the brutal torture they were subjected to at the hands of Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF). The rest of the released detainees were transferred to shelter centers, the sources added.

Released prisoners narrated details of cruel torture they encountered inside Israeli prisons, as signs of torture and beatings were so obvious on their bodies and skins.

Speaking to *Aljazeera*, the elderly Mahmoud Al-Nabulsi said, “The IOF

stormed my house in Al-Amal neighborhood in Khan Yunis. I told them I was sick and could not move, but they arrested me anyway and put me inside a demolished house before being transferred to an Israeli detention center. I spent ten days in prison. We were beaten and tortured every day. I had never seen this torture in my life. They carried out the worst violations against us.”

“If I had stayed in prison for two more days, I would have lost my life. They kept asking me about Hamas’s tunnels and Israeli captives. I told them I did not know anything. I am 70 years old,” Al-Nabulsi added.

“We were deprived of drinking water for four days. They were pouring water on the ground in front of us while we were thirsty,” he said.

The released prisoner, Nidal Mansour, said while lying on his back in hospital that he was arrested with others after the IOF destroyed his house in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood north of Gaza City in mid-November. There are hundreds of other prisoners who are still held in detention camps inside and around the Gaza Strip and

subjected to the most severe forms of torture by the IOF, he added.

In one testimony from Khaled Al-Nabris from Khan Yunis, he said, “When we evacuated Khan Yunis and passed the checkpoint, I was kidnapped by Israeli troops who took me along with others to prisons where we were subjected to severe torture. We were forced to use wet blankets under extreme cold with no water to drink.”

“The IOF transferred us to another place. There, we were subjected to a new kind of torture as we witnessed a different kind of torture in each place we were taken to. The officer hit me on the head, and when I complained, he would hit me more. I could not sleep because of the cold. Besides physical torture, we went through a process of psychological insults and humiliation.”

Al-Nabris pointed out that “There are minors who were terrified of the torture practices inside prisons as they were subjected to increased doses of torture and got attacked by dogs while asleep.”

Detainees from Gaza are subjected to enforced disappearance as the IOF refuses to disclose their names or places of detention and prevents any party from contacting them.

The exact number of detainees from Gaza is still unknown, while some estimates indicate thousands of detainees are being held amid the continuation of daily arrests.

—*The Palestinian Information Center*, February 2, 2024

<https://english.palinfo.com/news/2024/02/02/313727/>



Tortured Palestinian prisoner released from Israeli jail.

From Ukraine to Palestine: Poisons of Denialism

By DAVID FINKEL

“Israel pursuing similar goals to Russia” —Sergay Lavrov

RT News, Thursday, December 28, 2023: “The fight against Nazism is what historically unites Russia and the Middle Eastern country, the foreign minister said. The declared goals of Israel in its ongoing operation against Hamas militants in Gaza seem nearly identical to Moscow’s in its campaign against the Ukrainian government, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said in an interview with RIA Novosti on Thursday.”

Sergay Lavrov is on to something: the doctrine that the strong and powerful of the world “do what they can and the weak suffer what they must” (Thucydides). Call it the solidarity of the oppressors and ethnic cleansers or, if you like, the Henry Kissingers of all the great powers.

Since October 7, 2023, world events have swirled around the deadly Hamas raid in southern Israel and the Israeli military’s massive bombing and ground assault on Gaza that has rapidly escalated to genocidal proportions and continues with no end point or coherent “day after plan” in sight. Over 27,000 Gaza Palestinian are dead (an undercount,) starvation and disease are spreading, the infrastructure of the society is shattered, and much of the region is a tinderbox.

This catastrophe of course is widely covered and debated in its many dimensions, including the hemorrhaging of the Biden administration’s support internally and internationally as well as the swelling Israeli political crisis. My topic here, however, is one that bedevils much of the progressive movement: how the question of the right of self-determination—and the poisonous denial of that democratic right—pertains to both Palestine and Ukraine.

For many if not most Americans, the connection between these two brutal conflicts may seem limited to a toxic Congressional deadlock, entangling U.S. aid to Ukraine and \$14 billion in new military subsidy to Israel with imposing brutal new border measures against desperate migrants seeking asylum in the United States. For a casual TV news watcher, the continuing war in Ukraine might be an occasional reminder or afterthought.

How is it possible for a genuinely internationalist left not to support both of these struggles for self-determination and national survival?

But long before October 7, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Israel’s escalating violence and ethnic cleansing in Palestine were already two centers of

a deepening global crisis. For the international left, the Ukraine war and Palestine catastrophe, both on their own and together, pose very big tests of theory and more importantly, of politics.

A question has bedeviled the left: Is it possible to support both the Ukrainian and Palestinian struggles, and oppose imperialism, at the same time? Actually, the question should be reversed: How is it possible for a genuinely internationalist left not to support both of these struggles for self-determination and national survival?

The situations are very distinct of course, but also with important parallels and connections. On the face of it, the biggest difference lies in the stance of the United States and its allies—providing massive military support to Ukraine’s war of defense and applying economic sanctions against Russia, while at the same time, for more than five decades now, enabling the Israeli state’s drive to crush the Palestinian people’s aspirations for survival and self-determination.



Palestinian and Ukrainian women share the stage at an antiwar protest. (Image by Anastasia Nelen.)

For some of the left, sadly, global struggle revolves only around the crimes of U.S. imperialism and its allies—to the point that not only the role of other imperial oppressors, but the agency of real people and oppressed peoples fighting for their own freedom, fades to irrelevance. From what's sometimes called the “campist” point of view, to simultaneously support both Ukraine and the Palestinian struggle seems like a hopeless contradiction.

The hypocrisy of Western rhetoric about the “rules-based international order” and “democracy against authoritarianism” is, of course, overwhelming. If such rules meant anything, there would have been no 56 years of Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, nor the U.S. invasion of Iraq, nor many other examples. But this is neither new nor surprising in the light of centuries of colonial and imperial history.

For those of us striving to be consistent anti-imperialists, the starting point isn't which imperial camp happens to be stronger or “the main enemy” in some global schema, but rather the rights of nations and peoples and their legitimate struggles.

That's a vital parallel between the Ukrainian and Palestinian struggles—the denial of Ukrainian nationhood by Vladimir Putin, calling it an artificial creation of the godless Bolsheviks, and the denial of Palestinian nationhood by all the Israeli and Zionist movement ideologues who maintain “there was no such thing as Palestinians” (Golda Meir) and “there was never a Palestinian state.”

Ideologies of denial

Are we equating Ukraine and Palestine? Certainly not—the issue here is denialism. In each case we're talking about denial of the right of self-determination. This kind of twisted ideology has consequences, up to and including de-humanization that paves the road to mass murder.

In the case of Palestine, denialism facilitates a myth—absurd on its face

and long discredited, but still widely circulated—that the native Palestinian population was mostly comprised of recent arrivals drawn by the prosperity generated by Zionist settlement. Although factually vacuous, it serves as a convenient ideological backstop for the continuing confiscation of Palestinian land and property for the sake of “rebuilding the Jewish homeland.”

This narrative stretches across time and politics from the Labor Zionist Golda Meir to the present Israeli Finance Minister, the extreme religious-nationalist Bezalel Smotrich: “There's no such thing as a Palestinian nation. There is no Palestinian history. There is no Palestinian language.”

First and foremost, in Ukraine and Palestine, the struggle is about the rights of peoples and nations, and the poisonous consequences when those rights are denied.

Rightwing U.S. Christian nationalists pick up the theme: “There's really no such thing as the Palestinians,” says former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee.

This attempted erasure of the Palestinian people's reality reached its climax, at least in U.S. circles, with the publication of a screed by Joan Peters (or ghostwritten for her,) *From Time Immemorial* (1984). It was debunked in toto by Norman Finkelstein, and discredited by scholars including Israeli historian Yehoshua Porath who called it a “sheer forgery,” but as a useful Zionist narrative it has continued to circulate.

Peters' thesis took a new lease on life when its falsehoods were lifted, without attribution, by Alan Dershowitz for his 2003 book *The Case for Israel*. (Norman Finkelstein returned to the exposure of

both Peters and Dershowitz in his 2008 book *Beyond Chutzpah*. Dershowitz denied attempting to pressure University of California Press not to publish Finkelstein's book. Among other things, in retrospect the affair illustrates some aspects of Dershowitz's character that ultimately drew him to Donald Trump.)

For many liberal (Jewish and other) friends of Israel, the brutality of the Occupation when it's impossible to ignore becomes a cause of alarm and handwringing, but the idea that Palestinians are something less than a “real” nation serves as a partial anesthetic. They can rationalize the “violence on both sides” as the result of Palestinians' unreasonable “rejectionism” (i.e., refusal to accept the theft of 80 percent of their homeland.)

It also has debilitating consequences for Israeli politics, as we'll see below.

In the Ukraine war, Putin's claim that Ukraine is naturally part of “the Russian heartland” is historically ridiculous, but since it's promoted by powerful state propaganda it doesn't need to be backed up by facts. The myth puts a gloss on Moscow's annexationist claims on the provinces of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson, as well as Crimea.

In his July 2021 essay “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” Putin wrote regarding the “time bomb” planted in the Soviet Union at its founding:

“The right for the republics to freely secede from the Union was included in the text of the Declaration on the Creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and, subsequently, in the 1924 USSR Constitution. By doing so, the authors planted in the foundation of our statehood the most dangerous time bomb, which exploded the moment the safety mechanism provided by the leading role of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] was gone, the party itself collapsing from within.”

Back in April 2008 at a NATO summit in Bucharest, Putin reportedly claimed: “Ukraine is not even a state! What is Ukraine? A part of its territory is [in] Eastern Europe, but part, a considerable part, was a gift from us!”

The noted scholar of European history, Donald J. Trump, was reported to have exclaimed in an August 2017 briefing that Ukraine “wasn’t a ‘real country,’ that it had always been part of Russia.” (*Washington Post*, November 2, 2019, “A presidential loathing for Ukraine is at the heart of the impeachment inquiry.”)

Denial of Ukraine’s nationhood helps enable the most ignorant and dishonest sectors of the global left to label Ukrainian nationalism as led by “Nazis” worthy of extermination, while more pacifist-oriented elements regard Ukraine’s territory as bargaining chips to be negotiated in order to stop the carnage.

If Ukraine is regarded as an artificial construct—regardless of what Ukrainians may think—how much then should it really matter if Donetsk is part of Ukraine, or Russia, or semi-independent? Thus, we see, for example, how CodePink and allied groups calling for “peace” systematically refuse to answer the simple question, “Is Ukraine a ‘real country’ and does it have the right to defend itself?”

This refusal makes it more comfortable for pacifists who sympathize with Ukrainians’ suffering, but don’t understand the popular depth of Ukraine’s resistance, to plead for “peace negotiations” that would amount to Ukraine’s territorial amputation. They also seem blind to the reality that such a “peace” would lead to massive re-arming on all sides for a next, bloodier round.

The issue here isn’t what terms the Ukrainian people might decide to negotiate—which is their right, and theirs alone—but the political and moral bankruptcy of “peace” advocates lecturing them about the need to surrender.

Whether or not western imperialist powers, which we know are infinitely

treacherous, will ultimately move to impose some “solution” in the name of “realism,” remains an open question. For the left, that shouldn’t affect a principled defense of Ukrainians’ right to determine their own future.

That’s a vital parallel between the Ukrainian and Palestinian struggles—the denial of Ukrainian nationhood by Vladimir Putin, calling it an artificial creation of the godless Bolsheviks, and the denial of Palestinian nationhood by all the Israeli and Zionist movement ideologues who maintain “there was no such thing as Palestinians” (Golda Meir) and “there was never a Palestinian state.”

The main differences

The parallel denials of Palestinian and Ukrainian nationhood and rights to self-determination don’t mean that these struggles themselves are identical. Obviously, Ukraine is not Palestine—and much less is it Israel, as Ukraine’s president Zelensky claimed when he was hoping to get more support from that quarter:

“In 2020, Zelensky took Ukraine out of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and, in a speech to the Knesset, he linked the existential right of the Ukrainian nation to that of the Israeli nation, both fighting an enemy bent on the ‘total destruction of the people, state, culture.’ In a passionate response, the Palestinian university of Haifa professor Asad Ghanem accused Zelensky of reversing the role of occupier and occupied.

While expressing Palestinian support for the Ukrainian people’s resistance to the brutal Russian invasion, he said that Zelensky’s words were a ‘disgrace when it comes to global struggles for freedom and liberation.’” (Liz Fekete, “Civilizational racism, ethnonationalism and the clash of imperialisms in Ukraine,” *Race and Class*.)

Geopolitical pundits can explain all the differences between the war in Ukraine and the so-called Palestine-Israeli “conflict.” At their core, however, the differences between these modern states and nations are clear enough. Please note we say “modern” states and nations, because we are not speaking here of wars of European kingdoms and state borders from past centuries, let alone the medieval Kievan Rus [Kievan Rus was a state and later an amalgam of principalities in Eastern and Northern Europe from the late ninth to the mid-13th century] or the myth-encrusted Biblical history of ancient Israel. All these are of interest but belong to separate discussions.

The main difference between Ukraine and Israel is that the modern Ukrainian state was not founded on the dispossession and the land of another people, whom it expelled *en masse* and proceeded to impose a brutal occupation regime with colonial and apartheid-like features.

On the other hand, the big difference between Ukraine and Palestine is that Ukraine is a nation-state with a well-demonstrated capacity to defend its territory against an imperial invader. Being in the middle of Europe has also enabled it to get necessary military assistance, although its continuation is now in question. Palestinians do not have state institutions, or an army, or any strategic military option to win their freedom.

More than that, Palestinians have no great-power friends, and U.S. policy, in particular, is entirely indifferent to their fate as long as things stay relatively

“quiet” (*i.e.*, invisible.) Just ten days before October 7, State Department officials were complacently pronouncing that the Middle East was satisfactorily “stable” with Israeli-Saudi Arabian “normalized relations” on the front burner.

The Palestinian people attract a great deal of important global popular solidarity, but no support from “geopolitical” actors in the region or anywhere else. They are an essentially unarmed population confronting, on their own, the enormous power of the Israeli colonial state.

For its own reasons, of course, U.S. policy assists Ukraine’s war while simultaneously enabling Israel’s crushing of Palestine. That’s an illustration of cynical great-power policy, but no reason for the left to simply turn that policy inside out. The widely acclaimed heroism of the Ukrainian people, and the generally unrecognized heroism of the Palestinian people, are equally deserving of solidarity from those of us who oppose all imperialism and colonialism. That’s all the more important now.

Reactionary feedback

A further parallel is that the invasion of Ukraine and the disaster in Palestine cannot be separated from the internal political crises in Russia and Israel respectively. In each case, the regimes’ efforts to crush another nation feed directly back into their own societies.

Too many liberal “friends of Israel” can’t grasp the reality that the Jewish-supremacist amalgam of rightwing nationalism and religious extremism in the new Israeli governing coalition represents the authentic destination toward which political Zionism has been heading for a very long time. One can have a long and complex discussion over whether a different destination was possible—if the post-1967 Occupation had been quickly ended—but that possibility is long dead, along with the zombie “two-state solution.”

While Israeli military and settler murders are a daily reality in the Occupied

Palestinian Territories, an unprecedented confrontation before October 7 had exploded in Israeli politics over the government’s peremptory move to seize control over the nomination and powers of the country’s judiciary.

Israeli state president Isaac Herzog’s warning of “civil war” showed the extent of the crisis. After fading in the wake of October 7, the crisis has re-emerged over the Netanyahu government’s incredible “intelligence” failures, corruption, and cynical indifference to the fate of the hostages held in Gaza.

The widely acclaimed heroism of the Ukrainian people, and the generally unrecognized heroism of the Palestinian people, are equally deserving of solidarity from those of us who oppose all imperialism and colonialism.

Protesters also see the fight as a life-and-death struggle to save Israel’s democracy. With capital fleeing the country, Amjad Iraqi of the Israeli online +972 magazine calls the spreading revolt, ironically, “one of the most impressive BDS campaigns ever witnessed.”

Democracy does exist, for Israel’s Jewish citizens; to a much more limited degree for the country’s Arab citizens; and not at all for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories who live under military-apartheid conditions. A movement for Israeli democracy is inevitably strangled so long as the denial of Palestinian nationhood remains in place either openly or by default.

Palestinian and progressive critics have accurately pointed out that the fight to “save Israel’s democracy” is

essentially over maintaining a *status quo* that’s already lethally anti-democratic for Palestinians.

For many years now, most of the Israeli-Jewish public has been conditioned to ignore the facts of the Occupation, even when they’re freely available. Meanwhile in Russia, state media and police repression keep the war’s brutality hidden. The degree of freedom inside Israel makes possible a civic arousal, while inside Russia the invasion of Ukraine has been accompanied by the disappearance of the remaining vestiges of democracy.

The Putin regime for its part is now the global mothership of white Christian Nationalism, for which it is so admired by much of the MAGA faction of the U.S. Republican Party. As is widely discussed, Russia is moving increasingly toward some form of fascism, a trend which is only likely to accelerate unless its invasion is defeated. (See the discussion of this trend in Zakhar Popovych’s recent article “Russia’s Road Toward Fascism?”¹)

As for the impasse of Russian society itself, it’s deepened by the catastrophe of Putin’s war of choice. As sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky wrote last year:

“The year that has passed since the beginning of the war has clearly shown that the political system needs a radical change. An alternative to reforms can only be the growing disintegration of state institutions and the degradation of an already sick economy, which does not suit anyone. But the only way to change course is to remove Vladimir Putin from power.” (On the First Anniversary of the War.)

Prospects

Indeed, any prospects of a democratic future for Russia are inseparably connected to the outcome of the war—in particular, they depend on the defeat of its imperialist, annexationist ambitions in Ukraine. Ukrainian democracy is equally dependent on the war’s

results—but in its case, on the victory of its resistance to the invasion. And the outcomes of these events will have ripple effects for all of us.

While Ukrainian labor and left forces are fully engaged in the war, they are also forced to resist the Zelensky government's anti-worker policies. A Ukrainian victory would open the possibility (there are no guarantees) of permanently overcoming the cycle of oligarchic factional politics that dominated the country following its 1991 post-Soviet independence. On the other hand, a tragic defeat or amputation of Ukraine is more likely to shatter its emergent national unity—and bring on a resurgence of far-right forces.

For Israel, as under any other ethno-religious regime, Jewish supremacy and democracy will not peacefully coexist. The violent settlers who carried out pogroms in Huwara and other Palestinian West Bank towns, demand the settler-recolonization of Gaza, and commit daily atrocities that rarely make U.S. headlines, understand this

perfectly as they rush to join the “national guard” that Netanyahu has gifted to the extreme racist cabinet member Itamar Bem-Gvir.

A movement for Israeli democracy is inevitably strangled so long as the denial of Palestinian nationhood remains in place either openly or by default.

The question for Israeli society is whether it can confront the consequences of the Zionist movement's denial, from its very inception, of the Palestinian nation. That struggle requires assistance from the outside, through the BDS (Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions) and above all the demand for immediate permanent ceasefire in Gaza. At the same time, Russian denialism of Ukrainian

nationhood can only be defeated on the battlefield, and that requires international solidarity, including weapons, with Ukraine's war for survival.

Contrary to Biden's shambling rhetoric, the issues in this war aren't about global states standing for “democracy versus authoritarianism.” That's a struggle that exists within every society, including (especially) our own. Let alone is it about the pious fraud of a “rules-based international order,” where the United States makes the rules and gives the orders.

The left must not be diverted: First and foremost, in Ukraine and Palestine, the struggle is about the rights of peoples and nations, and the poisonous consequences when those rights are denied.

—CounterPunch, February 9, 2024

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2024/02/09/from-ukraine-to-palestine-poisons-of-denialism/>

¹ <https://againstthecurrent.org/atc222/russias-road-toward-fascism/>

INCARCERATION NATION

White Man's Justice is Black People's Grief

BY KEVIN COOPER

“It's not whether you win or lose that counts, but how you play the game that matters.” That's what my people are often told. But we are not told that this so-called game is rigged, and it's rigged against us even before we are born.

This “game” is life in the divided states of America. This is especially true in the system of criminal justice, a system that has been rigged against Black people since its inception. There is no better example than this country's morbid use and fascination with the cold-blooded and premeditated imposition of the death penalty against poor people and its disproportionate use on Black people.

Black history has a companion that has walked hand in hand and side by side throughout the tortured history of Black people in America. This companion is what white Americans have used nonstop against us in this land from 1619 to 2024. This companion—capital punishment—has never left us. Never. Why? Because this is a very real part of white man's justice, and history has proven that whenever there is white man's justice, there is Black people's grief—and death.

I may not know all the answers to many questions as to why this is, besides the obvious ones such as racism and classism. But I would like an

answer to this question if anyone can give it to me: Has there ever been a period of time in the history of this country when human beings who were first Africans, then niggers, then colored, then contraband, then Negroes, then African Americans, then Black have not lived under the constant threat of death in the U.S., whether it be from legal homicide as in the death penalty or being murdered by the police, or being lynched, or being murdered just because of the color of our skin, which happens in this country on a regular basis?

Whether by rope, beatings, shootings, electric chair, gas chamber, lethal

injection or whatever the case may be, these legal and illegal murders in this country have become so commonplace that few people even know when they happen or pay any attention to them. This is especially true in ex-slave states where they use the battle cry of state's rights to continue this historic and horrific crime against humanity on its poor and minority peoples. Back in the day when they were "uncivilized," they used to lynch us from trees and bridges, burn us alive, whip us to death and all types of sick things in the name of white man's justice.

Then they became "civilized." They started not only to hang us indoors instead of outside like in their uncivilized days, they started to strap people down to chairs and shoot bullets into their bodies, unlike before when they stood them up to shoot bullets into their bodies. Then they strapped people into chairs using electricity to kill them, then strapped people down to force poisonous gas into the lungs, and strapped others down to gurneys to inject torturous lethal drugs into their veins, all while being a civilized people and doing it in the name of white man's justice.

They legally kill people to get some kind of justice, even when they know

that the executed person will be tortured by excruciating pain. History has shown pre-arrest executions by police who kill us by chokehold or a knee on our neck until we cannot breathe, and we die.

"Legal" homicide

On February 10, 2004, at one minute after midnight, the state of California had planned to murder me legally by what was said to be the most humane way to execute a human being, which is an oxymoron because there is no such thing as a humane way to commit homicide and that is what executions are—homicides. This was to be done to me during Black History Month by white people who wanted their sick version of justice or revenge or retribution for a crime I did not commit.

We, as a civilized people, must stop doing uncivilized things. We all must join a growing number of death penalty abolitionists asking why a supposed humane and civilized society, as we claim to be, continues to impose an inhumane legalized method of torturous homicide to execute people—too many of whom are innocent—who could remain locked up for the rest of their lives?

For all people of color who are part of this country—from the people of different Indigenous nations, to the descendants of Africa, to Latinos, some of whose land in California and Texas was taken by the U.S., to Asians and others who immigrated to this country—the death penalty is a very real part of their and our experience and existence throughout our collective histories. We demand that it stop.

Certain death penalty supporters, including politicians, say that the death penalty is a deterrent. We as Black people know this is used as an excuse to keep murdering us, and to cover up the truth on what is a racist policy. This must be viewed not just through the lens of today, but through the lens of time, wherein untold numbers of poor and Black people lost their lives due to white man's justice.

The late author and activist Ida B. Wells stated that Black people have been more sinned against, than sinning. The sinned against had to do with white men murdering Black people during her time walking this Earth. During her lifetime, and as a founder of the NAACP, no matter what she did and how hard she tried, she could not get an anti-lynching bill passed into law, even with the backing of other influential people, both Black and white.

In fact, it wasn't until 2022 that President Biden finally signed into law an anti-lynching bill named after 14-year-old Emmett Till, who suffered white man's justice by being abducted, tortured, and lynched in Mississippi in 1955 after being accused of offending a white woman in her family's grocery store. It took over a century to do this. Ida B. Wells and others tried to get it signed into law in the early 1900s.

To many of us, especially those who are still oppressed and feel the effects of this oppression no matter where we are, Dred Scott hasn't gone anywhere. It's like we honestly have no rights that white men are bound to respect, especially those certain white men within the government and the criminal justice system.

For those of you who do not want to believe this or even acknowledge it, you must understand that racism is alive and well within this country, and damn near all of its institutions, including the criminal justice system.

All life is worthy

We are at a crossroads here in California and America as a whole. We stand up and fight for human rights for some who are deemed to be worthy or acceptable, while ignoring the human rights of others because they, and I am one of them, are deemed unworthy and unacceptable. This double standard, this hypocrisy, must come to an end. All life is worthy, all life is acceptable, even those who have been sentenced to death. Some, like me, are in fact innocent of the murders for which we were convicted.

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Artwork by Kevin "Rashid" Johnson.

Keep Fighting!

Message to supporters on 48 years since arrest

BY LEONARD PELTIER

February 6, 2024—My life was taken 48 years ago, at 11:00 A.M. The sweater that my adoptive mother Ethel and her daughter Donna placed on my shoulders as I was taken in the bitter cold of Canada was a kindness that I still remember.

I could not foresee that 48 years later I would be entombed in a lockdown nightmare. I live in lockdown, for no reason other than that they can get away with it.

If I had been tried with the others, I would be a free man. They were rightly found not guilty by reason of self-defense. We were under attack. We were facing the extermination of our people.

Justice never came for those they killed. I was chosen to be the sacrifice to cover up the crimes committed on that reservation. I am not here because I committed a crime. I am here because I stood in the way of their greed and corruption.

James Reynolds, the State Attorney who supervised my prosecution, has admitted that they could not prove I committed any crime. He stated, “We were not able to prove that Mr. Peltier himself committed any offense on the Pine Ridge Reservation.”

Time has become so twisted with these lockdowns that night blurs into day, a miasma of time that has no sense to it. All hours are the small hours of the night. Life itself is suspended. We wait for a brief glimpse of what life looks like. We exist in cold, filthy cells, and we wait. The voices of those murdered on Pine Ridge Reservation are a constant echo in my mind.

Time has become a weapon they use to try and annihilate the essence of who I am. They have done their best to break me. They started by holding me in a lightless cell block in Canada, tell-

ing me that I was awaiting my execution, to try and force a confession.

But no one can break the spirit of a Sundancer.

I have fought for my freedom every single day of these past 48 years.

You, my people, my supporters, my family in a very real way, lift my spirit and enable me to hold fast to the beliefs they want me to denounce. You get me through these hours that last for days or years.

Keep fighting. Fight the parasitical influence of colonialism. Fight the lies, the greed, the corruption of the oppressor. Fight for the survival of our people.

The greed and corruption of the colonizers is infectious. My own Committee, which has stood behind me and been a training ground for activists for over four decades, was lost to the parasite of greed and corruption the colonizers infected us with.

The very greed and corruption that imprisons me will be the undoing of those who take too much. Power arises from truth, from the willingness to give voice to that truth, from lifting the

voices of your brothers and sisters when they speak their truth. Truth is power. That is why they try to silence us, you know. You also know they are losing their ability to silence us.

Take care, my relations. Ask the Creator to set your path before you. Live in ceremony. When I choose my actions, I watch carefully to make sure those actions come from spirit, not ego. Sometimes the greatest enemy we will face comes from within. At times I want to lose myself to rage. The rage of being unlawfully imprisoned, the rage that drifts through the air here, a haze you can almost see, that arises from men caged in conditions that would be illegal for dogs.

If I allow that rage to take me, I may never come back. That is not who I am. I know who I am. That is why I am still here—I will not lie, I will not grovel, I will not beg. I will not denounce my beliefs. I will not betray myself.

I know you are out there, my relations, my friends, my supporters. You know the meaning of *Mitakuye Oyasin*. You give me the courage to stay strong and face these eternal twilight hours of lockdown. I know you are fighting for



Leonard Peltier wearing the sweater given to him by his adoptive mother, Ethel, and her daughter, Donna, as he was being arrested 48 years ago.

me, fighting with me, fighting for an end to the oppression and tyranny that take so many of us, in so many ways.

I have heard of a new cry going out. NOT ONE MORE YEAR. It has been said that I am a common man who stood up to an uncommon enemy.

People think of me as a symbol. I suppose I am, but I am a man. A man who wants to go home to his family.

Let this be the year that common sense prevails. Let this be the year that “liberty and justice for all” are not words that ring hollow. Let this be the year that America learns to live up to its own principles.

We will prevail. Our children will know who they are and know they are cherished. All of them, not just a privi-

leged few, while the rest go hungry and lose their connection to Mother Earth. That connection is everything.

Never, ever forget who you are. Mother Earth births us. She fires the blood that runs through our veins. She takes us back to her womb when our journey ends.

We will prevail. I can see a world that is not powered by lies, manipulation, greed. This will not happen by magic. We must come together, my brothers and sisters in solidarity, and let our truth illuminate the dark recesses of society.

It is time.
In the Spirit of Crazy Horse.
Doksha,
Leonard Peltier

Take action to support the release of Leonard Peltier:

- Call: @whitehouse at (202) 456-1111 and request the release of Leonard Peltier
- Email: @whitehouse at whitehouse.gov/contact and request the release of Leonard Peltier
- Find and write your local representative at ndnco.cc/findyourrep
- Read Leonard’s Letter to supporters: ndnco.cc/lpls

—NDN Collective, ndncollective.org

Write to:

Leonard Peltier 89637-132

USP Coleman 1

P.O. Box 1033

Coleman, FL 33521

Note: Letters, address and return address must be in writing—no stickers—and on plain white paper.

Virginia Prisons Defy Law Against Solitary Confinement

By KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

There was much fanfare about a new Virginia law that went into effect on March 23, 2023 that set specific limits on the use of solitary confinement in Virginia prisons.¹ Long before this law was enacted Virginia prison officials and politicians had been lying to the public claiming solitary confinement no longer existed in their prisons.

These lies came in response to public protests of the long-standing use and abuse of solitary in the state’s prisons², which followed on the heels of the 2011 declaration by the United Nations that solitary confinement constitutes torture and its use should not exceed two weeks.

In February 2012, I was transferred out of state after spending 18 years in solitary in Virginia’s prisons myself—14 years of which I’d spent in the state’s notoriously abusive and racist supermaxes Red Onion State Prison (ROSP) and Wallens Ridge State Prison (WRSP). Only months later in September 2012, Virginia created the “segregation reduction step-down program” at the very same prisons.

The lie was put to Virginia’s claims of not practicing solitary confinement by a federal class action lawsuit brought by 12 Virginia prisoners challenging the step-down program.³ In its 2020 and 2021

...the conditions of the program amounted to unconstitutional cruel and unusual punishment...

rulings the federal court explicitly found that the program constituted solitary confinement and went on in its rulings to find that the conditions of the program amounted to unconstitutional cruel and unusual punishment and violated the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and Constitutional due process.⁴ The prison official defendants appealed and the federal appeals court upheld the lower court’s decision.⁵ The case is still pending.

But here’s the clincher: The new Virginia law passed earlier this year totally invalidates the authority for and existence of the so-called step-down program, which exists solely at ROSP and WRSP under a secret, local policy called the “Restorative Housing Reduction Step-Down Program,”⁶ created in these prisons and not by the director of the Virginia Department of Corrections (VDOC). Under the new Virginia law, all policies governing “Restorative Housing” (the euphemism Virginia officials use for segregation and solitary confinement) are to be created by the VDOC director and he shall incorporate the law into these policies.⁷

In violation of this new state law, the director hasn’t approved or signed any policies on the state’s restorative housing, and the ROSP/WRSP step-down program facially violates the law, not only because the law doesn’t allow for any so-called step down program at all, but it requires the facility warden to transition prisoners from regular restor-

ative housing directly back to the general population of the facility “as soon as safely possible” consistent with policies created by the director. Also, the fake 30-day hearing processes by a “dual treatment team” in the step down procedure violates the law which requires weekly restorative housing reviews and the warden to oversee the transition directly back to general population.⁸

In fact, the director specifically defied the new law by refusing to himself create a new statewide restorative housing unit policy, and allowed his colleagues to avoid applying this new law at all to the updated statewide “Restorative Housing Unit” policy which they signed and went into effect July 1, 2023—almost four months after enactment of the new restorative housing law.⁹

Layers of lawlessness

And there’s yet another layer to this lawlessness. In 1985 the VDOC entered into a settlement agreement with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Virginia prisoners in connection with a class action lawsuit brought against a similar solitary confinement system then at Mecklenburg Correctional Center (MCC).¹⁰ That settlement agreement constituted a contract independent of the lawsuit itself in which the VDOC agreed to never create another solitary confinement phase program. This agreement was violated in the creation of the ROSP/WRSP step-down program which duplicates the old MCC phase program.

In fact, after officials violated their own policies in emergency transferring me to ROSP on October 3, 2023 without a hearing, I was recommended on November 20, 2023 for placement in the illegal ROSP/WRSP long term solitary confinement step-down program, and it’s clear this program has nothing to do with maintaining a safe prison environment, and is applied arbitrarily and abusively. The Chief of Housing Amy Duncan demonstrated this.

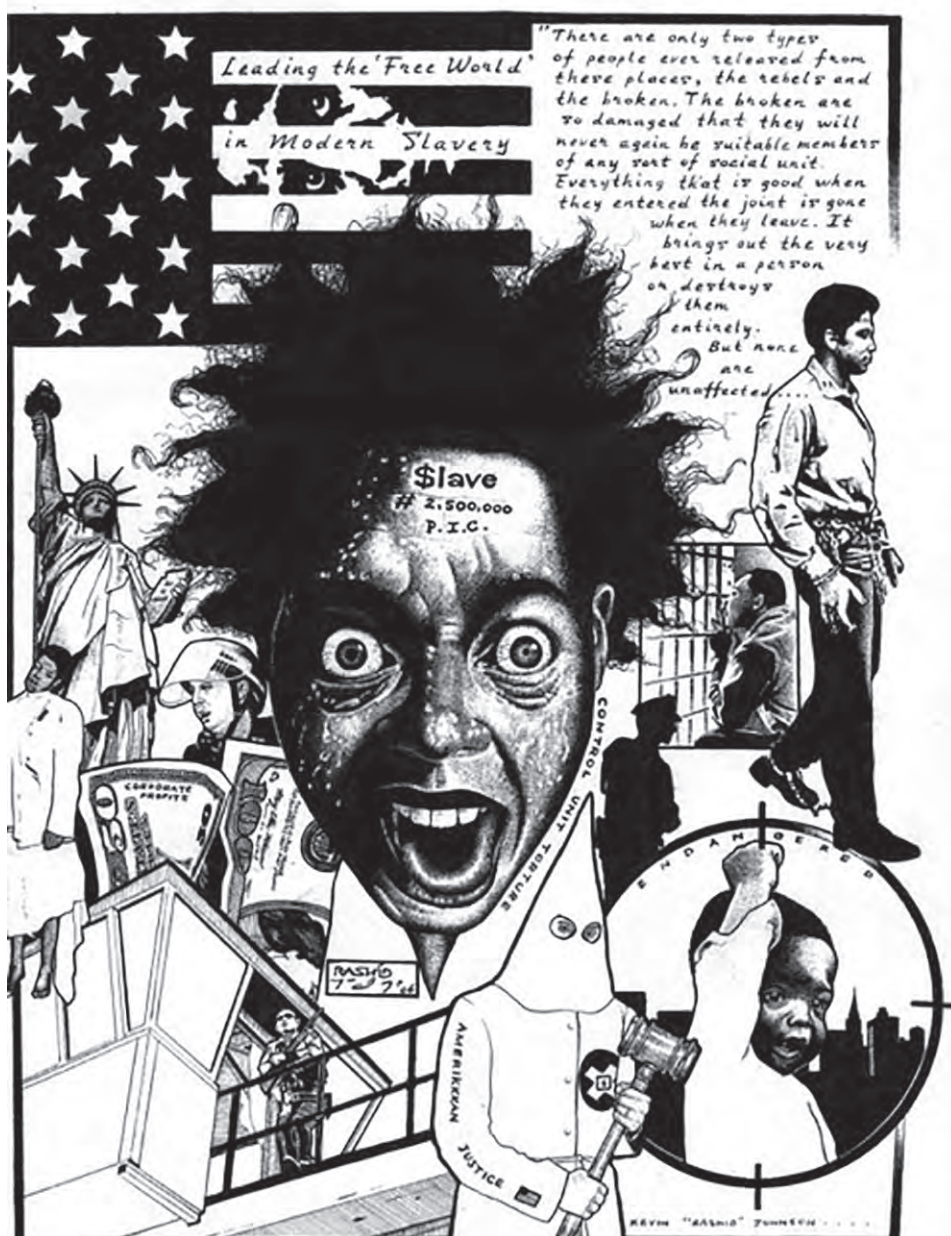
On October 5, 2023, she had a prisoner, Vernon Jackson #1450266, who

had distinguished himself for challenging abuses at the prison, removed from his general population cell and put in restorative housing for no reason. He received no disciplinary infractions, nothing. Yet, on October 19, 2023, Duncan put him in for placement in the ROSP/WRSP step-down program.

Another example is Leon Johnson #1192355. Leon had been placed in the step-down program in 2021. After a year-and-a-half in the program they and several other prisoners at ROSP were called out for interviews with law-

yers and journalists interested in reporting on and litigating against the abuses of solitary at the prison. The very next week Leon and several others were suddenly released from the program without having completed it. Suddenly, with these prisoners, there was no concern about security and safety, they mechanically recited justification for the claimed need of the illegal step-down program.

ROSP and WRSP have been operating in the far southwestern region of Virginia since the late 1990s, free of



oversight of VDOC central headquarters administrators. They were constructed at extensive taxpayer expense to prop up the sagging economy in the region of the state where coal mining jobs were lost to strip mining and mountain topping. There has never been a legitimate security need for these prisons, so every few years VDOC officials invent new justifications for them despite their design as solitary confinement prisons, because just as often the previous claimed need for these prisons is exposed to be a lie.

So, once again these remote supermaxes are operating lawlessly outside the orbit of public scrutiny. They should have been closed down long ago.

Write to Kevin “Rashid” Johnson:
Kevin “Rashid” Johnson #1007485
Powhatan Correctional Center
3600 Woods Way
State Farm, VA 23160

Visit Rashid’s website at:
www.rashidmod.com

1 See, Code of Virginia, section 53.1-39.2 (Restorative Housing, restrictions on use.) Rolyann Wilson, “Solitary Confinement Law Change Promises Better Conditions for Prisoners in Virginia” (WRIC—TV/Richmond, Virginia, June 5, 2023/5:34pm EDT)

2 See report “Activists Campaign to end Solitary Confinement in Virginia,” which aired several times on PBS.

<https://vpm.org/news/articles/30403/activists-campaigns-to-end-solitary-confinement-in-virginia>

3 See, *Thorpe v. Virginia Department of Corrections*, Case #2:20-cv-00007 (U.S. District Court Western District of Virginia, Big Stone Gap Division)

4 *Thorpe v. Virginia Department of Corrections*, 2021 U.S. District LEXIS 112284 (June 15, 2021).

5 *Thorpe v. Carter*, 2022 U.S. App. LEXIS 16351 (4th, Cir. Virginia, June 14, 2022)

6 Red Onion State Prison, Local Operating Procedure 830.A (Restorative Housing Reduction Step-Down Program, Updated Oct.

1, 2021) (not available to public.)

7 Virginia Code Section 531—39.2 (D) and (F)

8 Virginia Code Section 53.1—39.2 (C)

9 VDOC Operating Procedure 841.1 (Restorative Housing Units, updated July 1, 2023)

10 *Brown v. Landon*, Case #81-0853-R (E.D. Virginia)

**...these remote
supermaxes are
operating lawlessly
outside the orbit of
public scrutiny.
They should have
been closed down
long ago...**

Kevin “Rashid” Johnson vs. the Virginia Department of Corrections



Kevin “Rashid” Johnson self portrait.

Introduction

Readers of Socialist Viewpoint are familiar with the writings of Kevin “Rashid” Johnson. His exposés of brutal prison conditions in the many states to which he has been transferred have brought him cruel and torturous condi-

tions. On February 5, 2024, working with the organization Rights Behind Bars¹, he filed a Complaint in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Richmond Division, demanding a jury trial. The plaintiffs are the Director of the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC), Chadwick S. Dotson, and 12 other officials, officers, wardens, and guards, all in their official capacities. Below, we are printing the first section of the Complaint, which serves as a summary of the reasons for it. —Carole Seligman

“[Rashid] is experiencing brutal conditions not in spite of his talents as a journalist and his bravery as an activist, but specifically because of them.” [p. 3, the Complaint]

“Kevin Johnson is an incarcerated activist who believes in speaking out

against injustices. He is acclaimed for his journalism, having published pieces with *The Guardian*, PBS, and other global publications, as well as producing two books. He has taken on the important role of publicizing inhumane conditions and brutal conduct of guards and certain prison officials, including in the Virginia Department of Corrections.

“Unfortunately, this critical First Amendment service has landed a target on Mr. Johnson’s back, and he is often the subject of unconstitutional retaliation by guards and officials.

“Most recently, Mr. Johnson was transferred away from critical medical providers—Mr. Johnson suffers from prostate cancer, chronic high blood pressure, hyperlipidemia, chronic edema, and other symptoms related to

heart issues—to a supermax prison entirely across the state as retaliation for his Constitutionally protected conduct. This transfer came just days after Mr. Johnson published an article about misconduct at Sussex I State Prison, where he had been housed. The article specifically mentioned Defendants Chadwick Dotson and Beth Cabell as individuals to whom members of the public should express concern about Mr. Johnson’s treatment. The Defendants received numerous calls.

“Defendants transferred Mr. Johnson to Red Onion State Prison (“Red Onion”) across the state, not only violating their own transfer policies in the process but also brutalizing him with pepper spray without provocation at the beginning of his transfer. Upon arriving at Red Onion, Defendants cut Mr. Johnson off from all avenues of communication and any ability to report out about the system’s abuses. They also placed him in solitary confinement without the hearings dictated by their own policies and told him that they would move him to general population if he would agree to curtail his First Amendment-protected activities at Red Onion. Mr. Johnson refused, and he remained in solitary confinement.

“Mr. Johnson and over a dozen other individuals detained in solitary confinement began a hunger strike in late December 2023 to protest Red Onion’s punitive use of solitary confinement. Defendants quickly became retributive and torturous in an attempt to “break” the prisoners off their hunger strike.

“Defendants, who were entrusted with Mr. Johnson’s health and safety, denied him access to running or bottled water; housed him in an excessively cold cell without any means of keeping warm (sheets or extra clothing); deprived him of his hygiene supplies, prescription medications, and writing supplies; and prevented him from having showers or access to outdoor recreation and mobility.

“When Mr. Johnson needed water, he was forced to lap water out of his uncleaned toilet in his cell like a dog.

“Mr. Johnson has suffered severe dehydration that has required three emergency hospitalizations in the last month simply to keep him alive. But even that serious and expensive step did not quell Defendants’ campaign.

“Defendants instead sought a court order to force-feed Mr. Johnson on grounds that he was mentally incompetent rather than simply providing him his constitutionally protected rights. But the Wise County General District Court rejected this effort, noting that Mr. Johnson was cogent and competent, even after a month without food.

“Now, Defendants have hidden Mr. Johnson away in a largely shuttered prison facility and removed his prisoner ID number from their system, in a further attempt to avoid transparency, compromise, and to block Mr. Johnson’s ability to speak out against these life-threatening abuses.

“Mr. Johnson’s fact pattern is extreme, but the events that precipitated his hunger strike—the retaliatory transfer and placement in solitary confinement without means of communication—are not unique. Instead, this is a well-worn retributive technique that VADOC officials use to hide the truth of their unconstitutional and harmful behavior towards the individuals entrusted to their care. He is experiencing brutal conditions not in spite of his talents as a journalist and his bravery as an activist, but specifically because of them. This Court should intervene and conclude that the measures to which Mr. Johnson has been subject are not constitutional, legal, or humane.

“Kevin Johnson, the plaintiff, is a 52-year-old Black man who is currently imprisoned at the Powhatan Medical Unit in Virginia, a Virginia Department of Corrections facility. He has been detained at Powhatan Medical Unit

since on or around January 27, 2024. Before that point, he was incarcerated at Red Onion from approximately October 30, 2023, through January 26, 2024, and Sussex I State Prison to approximately October 30, 2023.”

1 *rightsbehindbars.org*

Case # 3:24 — CV — 00080

Continued from page 58

With all the deception that is ongoing in the institutions that run and control this country, how can anyone actually have faith and confidence in the capital punishment system that hasn’t really changed since it first started centuries ago? The same people who do the executing, for the most part the white man, and the same people who always have been the executed—Black and other minority people—are still in those roles. When are Americans, as a whole, going to wake up and see that all of our professed humanity is at stake in this?

If it’s true that the state of California leads, and the rest of the country follows, then this state needs to put aside the moratorium on executions and follow other states in unequivocally ending this system of manmade death—and do it soon.

—*Sheerpost*, February 4, 2024

<https://scheerpost.com/2024/02/04/white-mans-justice-is-black-peoples-grief-a-black-history-month-truth/>

Kevin Cooper is an innocent man on San Quentin’s Death Row in California. He continues to struggle for exoneration and to abolish the death penalty in the whole U.S. Learn more about his case at: www.kevincooper.org

Write to:

Kevin Cooper #C-65304 4-EB-82

San Quentin State Prison

San Quentin, CA 94974

Prisoner Found Dead in Solitary, Another Hospitalized

BY JASON RENARD WALKER

One Texas Powledge unit prisoner was found dead in his solitary confinement cell on New Year's Day, and another had to be hospitalized, following a near death heart attack.

The deceased, who was identified by staff as Garrett, was previously housed in the unit's 14 dorm before being placed on medical isolation, where he was ultimately found unresponsive a week or so later. Garrett is the second such person to be found dead in a Powledge unit restricted housing cell (RHU) in less than a year.

Earlier this year prisoners stated that another was stiff as a board when he was removed from his cell, suggesting he'd perished days before being found. The other prisoner, Roderick Johnson, was discovered on the morning of December 30, 2023, writhing in pain in a cell above Garrett's, from a heart attack he had the previous day.

As I'm writing this, Johnson returned and said he had two stents placed in his heart. Johnson is a prisoner who I previously wrote an article about, concerning his filing a law suit, alleging to be the victim of a prison sex slave ring. I believe Garrett was placed on medical isolation after contracting the flu or COVID virus. This belief stems from

the fact that I, and several other prisoners in RHU, were all placed on medical isolation after testing positive for the flu and or COVID, with this restriction still being intact three weeks later.

Medical isolation requires that staff wear N95 masks and PPE gear while approaching our cells or removing us for showers. A big notice is posted on the RHU entrance door. Not only has this rule been ignored entirely, obviously sick, and runny nosed medical staff provide assistance to prisoners throughout the unit, most administering care with gloveless hands.

Powledge Unit is a minimum-security facility that mostly houses elderly prisoners, amputees, those requiring 24 hour medical assistance, high profile prisoners in protective safe keeping and trusty camp workers that perform various duties to keep the prison operating, but are housed in a satellite building.

The poor feeding habits and the kitchen major, Ms. Tanner's, refusal to provide medically prescribed diets to those requiring them, is a big contributing factor to Johnson's heart attack. The average meal is saturated in salt and fat.

Those requiring no salt and low sodium Diet For Health (DFH) meals rarely get them. And I've constantly experienced

my medically prescribed diets substituted for items I'm medically restricted from consuming, to the extent I've gone days at a time, living on items purchased from the commis-

sary. I've also witnessed staff and inmate workers regularly tell Johnson that his DFH meals weren't available because all meals for that period were the same throughout the unit, despite these meals being egregiously high in sodium, and harmful to diabetics and those with high blood pressure, forcing them to consume slimy BBQ beef, chili and greasy meals that contradict what they were prescribed to get.

Situations like these run rampant throughout Texas Department of Criminal Justice and unfortunately there is no remedy or relief for this in the courts. One example is in federal civil case, *Whitlock v. Merchant* 5:14cv119.

This prisoner's complaint of being denied his medically prescribed DFH meals was denied because the defendants showed that a statewide menu existed, listing the items served to him on a daily basis. Though such a menu does exist and is available for inspection at the law library, these items are hardly served, and the menu is never followed because most of the items are consumed by staff and are used for things unrelated to DFH meals.

As a consequence, prisoners at the Powledge Unit who require special diets and care, are at risk of being the next Johnson or Garrett.

—Jason's Prison Journal, January 10, 2024

<https://jasonsprisonjournal.com/powledge-unit-prisoner-found-dead-in-solitary-confinement-cell-another-hospitalized-after-heart-attack/>

Write to:

Jason Renard Walker 1532092
Powledge Unit
PO Box 660400
Dallas, Tx 75266-0400



(Shutterstock)

Sekou Odinga, Soldier for Black Freedom Transitions

June 17, 1944—January 12, 2024

By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL



Sekou Odinga

His name was Sekou Odinga, a lifelong soldier for Black liberation. When there arose a Black freedom movement he never hesitated to join in and add his life's energy to the struggle. In the 2020 book, *Black Power Afterlives*, Sekou and his partner, dequi kioni-sadiki, wrote a moving self-history that gives us insights into these lives and freedom struggles. Sekou Odinga wrote,

"I was a member of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, a Black Liberation Army soldier, and for 33 years, a U.S.-held political prisoner of war. Most of my adult life has been spent in the struggle for Black self-determination, Black revolutionary politics, and Black liberation. As such, my life speaks to the oft heard expression: Oppression breeds resistance and resistance breeds repression.

"My political consciousness began when I was a youthful offender, at Comstock Correctional Facility in upstate New York, with a good friend, and close comrade, Lumumba Shakur. Lumumba's father, Hajj Salahdeen Shakur would send his son reading material on Malcolm X, his teachings, nationalist politics, the struggle for land and independence. And most pointedly, the human rights Black people must exercise to arm and defend themselves against violence, state, or personal. Lumumba would share these materials with me. And

after serving a three-year sentence, I was back on the street and seeking the Malcolm that had inspired me in prison." —The words of Sekou Odinga from the book, *Black Power Afterlives* published by Haymarket.

Odinga would join the Organization of Afro-American Unity, or the OAAU, led by Malcolm, but shortly thereafter, Malcolm would be assassinated. Odinga would leave the OAAU. In 1968 a delegation from Oakland, California, called the Black Panther Party would be sent to New York to seek recruits. Odinga and Lumumba Shakur joined immediately. The rest was history.

In November 2014, Odinga made parole and he and dequi fought for Black freedom for a decade. Sekou Odinga, 79, returns to the ancestors.

—PrisonRadio, January 22, 2024

<https://www.prisonradio.org/commentary/sekou-odinga-soldier-for-black-freedom-transitions/>

For Bob Wells ¡Presente!

By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

For Bob Wells, a life lived long was a life lived well, for he wore many hats,

organizer, anti-racist activist, supporter and worker with the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee in Chicago, teacher, investigative reporter, magazine editor, seaman,

hotel and restaurant cook, and banquet chef. He was a key activist in anti-prison and abolitionist work with the Labor Action Committee¹ in San Francisco. And finally, a self-defense instructor.

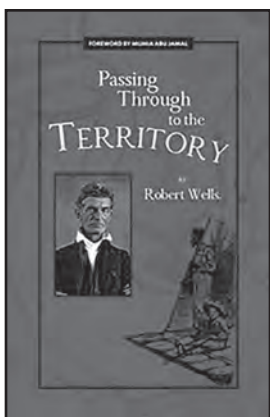
But if you really wanted to know Bob Wells, all you had to do was read him. Inspired by the classic work of Mark Twain, Bob Wells wrote of Huckleberry Finn and fugitive slave, Jim, who both met up with John Brown and his fellow abolitionist fighters before the coming of the U.S. Civil War. If you haven't already done so, I urge you all to read the book entitled, *Passing Through to the Territory*, by Robert Wells. His book is a wonderful piece of

work, a novel of historical fiction, of what might have been. On every page is Bob's fine and rich, anti-racist imagination.

Three years ago, unfortunately, Bob had a stroke. And today, he is no longer with us. He is with his ancestors. But we remember him through his work, his wisdom, and his fight for labor and the oppressed.

—Prison Radio, January 12, 2024

<https://www.prisonradio.org/commentary/for-bob-wells-presente/>



Preface by Mumia Abu-Jamal
Published October 15, 2019

¹ Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

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Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, racism, sexism and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

Occupation's Wake

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL



palestineportal.org

As we examine, study, and analyze the events in Gaza and Israel today, we learn of the lengths taken by the occupation as it dominates the land space of Gaza in the Palestinian territories. Occupation is a polite way of speaking of what is, in fact, the seizure and taking of another people's land by military means.

Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe, in his remarkable book, *Necro-Politics*, writes keenly and deeply of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and provides dazzling insights into the origins and drives operating beneath the roof of consciousness. First and foremost, as Mbembe explains, we find separation. This is followed by the creation of an enclave, or separate space, and next, the destruction of those deemed enemies of the state. This separation instinct, Mbembe tells us, is a master's desire to dominate another who then faces subjugation, which leads further to a desire to destroy. Mbembe writes, tellingly, that, and this is a quote, "Occupation is in every respect, hand to hand combat and a tunnel."

Please note that his book was published initially in French in 2016. Mbembe writes:

"The colonial enterprise was driven by a mixture of sadism and masochism, applied gropingly and in response to largely unexpected events. It was inclined to smash all forces standing in the way of its drives. To

inhibit their course toward all sorts of perverse pleasures."

"The limits to what it considered normal were constantly shifting. And few desires were subject to straightforward repression. Let alone embarrassment or disgust, the colonial world's capacity to cope with the distraction of its objects, natives

included, was astonishing." —Mbembe, pages 45-46.

Achille Mbembe, like many African scholars, activists, and thinkers, looked at the settler colonial setup in Palestine, and they see apartheid. But if so, it's apartheid with a difference. In South Africa the system needed African labor to build its wealth. Israel doesn't need Palestinian labor. It seeks their land, making the people superfluous, and therefore, in a worse and weaker position.

Join the Fight for Mumia's Life

Since September, Mumia Abu-Jamal's health has been declining at a concerning rate. He has lost weight, is anemic, has high blood pressure and an extreme flair up of his psoriasis, and his hair has fallen out. In April 2021 Mumia underwent open heart surgery. Since then, he has been denied cardiac rehabilitation care including a healthy diet and exercise.

Donate to Mumia Abu-Jamal's Emergency Legal and Medical Defense Fund, Official 2024

Mumia has instructed *Prison Radio*¹ to set up this fund. Gifts donated here are designated for the Mumia Abu-Jamal Medical and Legal Defense Fund. If you are writing a check or making a donation in another way, note this in the memo line.

Send to:

Mumia Medical and Legal Fund
c/o *Prison Radio*
P.O. Box 411074
San Francisco, CA 94103

—*Prison Radio*, January 29, 2024

<https://www.prisonradio.org/commentary/occupations-wake/>

¹ *Prison Radio* is a project of the Redwood Justice Fund (RJF), which is a California 501c3 (Tax ID no. 680334309) not-for-profit foundation dedicated to the defense of the environment and of civil and human rights secured by law. *Prison Radio*/Redwood Justice Fund P.O. Box 411074, San Francisco, CA 94141

Write to Mumia at:

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Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-8335
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now. We, as Arab unionists, in turn, commit to helping to transform the UAW into a truly democratic and more powerful union that can fight the fascist turn in this country, and improve the conditions of all workers in the U.S. and everywhere.

In solidarity,

Mary Jirmanus Saba, UAW Local 2865; Alia ElKattan, UAW Local 2110; Shahinaz Geneid, GENU-UAW and HAW-UAW; Ignacia Lolas, UAW Local 2325; Mafaz Al-Suaidan, HGSU-UAW Local 5118

On behalf of the UAW Arab Caucus

—*Mondoweiss*, February 14, 2024

<https://mondoweiss.net/2024/02/uaw-arab-caucus-uaw-must-move-from-ceasefire-declaration-to-stopping-weapons-for-israel/>



Leviathan offshore gas field in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Israel.
Read *Gas, Gaza, and Western Imperialism* on page 49.



Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu shows a graphic illustrating his “New Middle East.” Read *Netanyahu’s War on Truth* on page 24 and *Occupations Wake* on page 67.

On the Front Cover: More than 700 people turned out for an emergency “Rage Over Attack on Rafa” demonstration, February 13, 2024, at the San Francisco Federal Building. Photo by Leon Kunstenaar.
Read *Which Side Are You On?* on page 4.



Mnar Adley, founder, CEO and editor in chief of MintPress News.
Read *How Corporate Media Whitewash Israeli Crimes: A Personal Narrative* on page 40.



Attention Prison Mail Room:



Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the *Turner v. Safley* ruling. [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of *Police Department Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that “[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content.”