

MARXIST

Theoretical Quarterly of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

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Editor's Note	3
ILAN PAPPE	
Palestine: Endless Occupation, Permanent Crisis	10
JOHN CHERIAN	
Gaza and the Palestine Conflict	33
SAYANTANI MUKHERJEE AND SHATAM RAY	
Imperialist Attempts To Control Protest Narratives	48
DOCUMENTS	
1. Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa in the International Court of Justice seeking institution of proceedings against Israel under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide	71
2. The Ideological Underpinnings of Zionist Terror	120

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Theoretical Quarterly of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

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Editor's Note

This double issue of the **Marxist** is dedicated as an expression of our unequivocal solidarity and support to the Palestinians who are currently facing the most barbaric and inhuman genocidal assault in Gaza by Israel. For nearly five months now, the merciless bombing and destruction of Gaza continues with nearly 30,000 innocent Palestinians being killed, two-thirds of whom are women and children. More than one lakh Palestinians are reportedly missing or under the rubble of the merciless bombing. The death toll is bound to rise to grotesque levels.

Palestine was part of the Ottoman territories. As the World War I was ending with the Ottoman empire disintegrating, the British and the French sat together to divide the Arab Levant by drawing a line on the map! (British colonialism is notorious for drawing such lines on a map which have generated tensions, wars and human dislocations, that continue till date – partition of the Indian subcontinent, McMahon line demarcating India-China borders and many more – in various regions of its erstwhile Empire). In 1916, the Britain – France Axis negotiated a treaty known as the Sykes-Picot agreement. Palestinian territory became part of the British controlled areas. In 1917, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration committing the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in historic Palestine.

As a result of such a gigantic imperialist conspiracy and fraud, the Palestinians are continuously denied their right to their homeland. The most rightwing Netanyahu government in Israel has, in recent months, intensified the illegal occupation of

MARXIST

Palestinian lands, patronized the creation of private armies by the illegal Jewish settlers in the West Bank and now launched a war of extermination.

World imperialism led by the USA has pronounced unabashed support to Israel in this enterprise, under the pretext of 'right to self-defence' following the October 7 Hamas attack in South Israel. Biden, Rishi Sunak, Macron and the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Israel to personally express solidarity with Netanyahu. The USA has established, over the decades, Israel as its outpost in West Asia and has been funding it to the tune of more than \$4 billion a year apart from providing it with the most advanced military technologies and armaments.

The Israeli genocidal carnage against the Palestinians is threatening to shape into a regional conflict. The Yemen based Houthi militia has been attacking merchant vessels disrupting the global oil trade in the Red Sea. US and UK have stepped up military strikes against Yemen targeting the Houthi operational bases. Apart from Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq have also been drawn in these exchanges of military strikes. The Hezbollah operating from Lebanon has been mounting rocket attacks on Israel.

USA carried out air strikes against alleged Iranian facilities in Syria, allegedly for supporting the Houthis. Iran has conducted military strikes in Iraq and Syria. Iran also launched missile and drone attacks inside Pakistan. Pakistan retaliated.

A drone attack killed 3 US soldiers and wounded at least 34 more at bases in Jordan. Blaming the Iran-backed militias for the first US military casualties since Israel's genocidal assault on Palestinians, President Biden vowed to respond, increasing apprehensions of enlarging the conflict in West Asia.

Gigantic global protests are taking place demanding an immediate declaration of ceasefire, on all the six continents of the world with major cities seeing massive protest demonstrations every weekend. Contemptuously dismissing this global opinion, USA has consistently vetoed out all UN Security Council resolu-

tions calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Marxist is privileged to have the opportunity for reproducing verbatim a talk followed by Q&A by professor **Ilan Pappé**, delivered at the Asian College of Journalism colloquium on January 15, 2024. Ilan Pappé is an Israeli intellectual with a global reputation reflected in his numerous books and contributions in support of the Palestinian cause. Even before the current Israeli genocidal assault on the Palestinians in Gaza, Pappé spoke of Israel's objective being the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. As Israel, backed fully by US led imperialism, will never permit the UN mandated 'two-state solution', he advocates a one-state solution as the only way to not obliterate the legal right for a State of Palestine.

John Cherian traces the historical background of this Israeli project of ethnic cleansing. He notes that between 11th and 15th centuries, the European powers were trying to establish their presence and control over the West Asian region. The Crusaders launched a war at the behest of the then Pope to establish control over the 'Holy Land' calling it "Latin Empire of Jerusalem". He notes that the Balfour Declaration, the first notable success of political Zionism, led to the creation of a Jewish state willfully ignoring the rights of the Palestinians, around 8 lakhs, who were in possession of these lands in 1917, while there were only a few thousand Jews. Subsequently, as a 'British mandated territory' Jewish immigration was encouraged allowing Zionists to organize paramilitary groups. Since then, till the current genocidal assault, it is a history of illegal occupation of the Palestinian lands, merciless repression and terror.

Sayantani Mukherjee and **Shatam Ray** discuss the current imperialist efforts to control anti-Israel protest narrative in the context of the changed quotidian reality of the world since the audacious Hamas military action on October 7. Traditional US media establishments are being abandoned by sections of traditional followers. There is the emergence of new sites of solidarity. Similar tendencies are occurring amongst the workers' unions and the

Universities where the authors conclude that “a new generation of committed anti-Zionists and anti-Imperialists has taken root.”

Discussing changing protest forms and the role of social media, they highlight the specific case of Elbit Systems, Israel’s largest arms company which supplies 85 per cent of drones and land based equipments including surveillance monitors capable of identifying, tracking and killing Palestinians at border points across the apartheid wall. Elbit factories have been special targets of protest actions across its facilities in Europe leading to permanent closure of its London headquarter and blockades in USA and Japan.

The discourse has not simply shifted on Palestine, “what we are witnessing is a deep rejection of imperialist capitalism and all its apparatus”. The enlargement of conflicts in Middle East and North Africa, the diplomatic efforts engineered by USA to enhance Israel’s legitimacy amongst the Arab countries are also part of this larger imperialist efforts to ensure smooth global flows of capital and labour to serve imperialist designs for strengthening global hegemony.

As a document, we are carrying extracts from the application filed by South Africa in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for violation of the ‘Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.’

Nelson Mandela, at the time of South Africa’s historic liberation from the Apartheid regime, had famously declared that South Africa’s freedom is not complete until the Palestinians acquired their freedom. Following this spirit, the government of South Africa moved the International Court of Justice (ICJ), for a ruling that Israel is guilty of committing genocide against Palestinians.

Invoking the precedent of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearing an appeal of Gambia against Myanmar, invoking the *erga omnes partes* (standing based on obligations to everyone), South Africa filed a case against Israel for violating its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the

Crime of Genocide. It sought a series of provisional measures.

Ironically, the killing of six million Jews in the Holocaust, the basis for enacting this treaty on the crimes of genocide, is the one that Israel is now accused of violating in the ICJ.

In an unprecedented historic move, the ICJ decided in favour of issuing provisional measures as requested by South Africa. Though it stops short of calling for a ceasefire ending military operations in and against Gaza as requested by South Africa, it nevertheless put forward six provisional measures for Israel to implement: (a) Israel must take all measures to prevent acts of genocide, (b) Israel must prevent and punish incitement to genocide including by government and military officials, (c) Ensure that Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) do not indulge in acts of genocide, (d) Enable basic services and humanitarian aid to Gaza, (e) Israel must preserve evidence related to violation of the Genocide Convention and (f) Israel must submit a report in one month to the ICJ on the measures it has taken to implement the above.

If Israel has to comply with these provisional measures, then it means that it has to effectively halt its military operations in Gaza. Netanyahu predictably has rejected the ICJ verdict.

The ICJ, in this situation, referred the matter to the UN Security Council for a resolution to ensure that Israel complies with implementing the provisional measures. With Netanyahu's contemptuous rejection of the ICJ verdict, the USA predictably exercised its veto power for the third time to not permit a ceasefire. However, if South Africa's case in the ICJ proceeds to the next level – the merit stage – it can have implications for those countries actively supporting and aiding Israel. As a party to the Genocide Convention, the United States has an obligation to take affirmative action to prevent genocide. This can well prohibit the ongoing financial and military assistance to Israel. The Leahy law in the USA prohibits military assistance to foreign security forces where there is credible information of gross violations of human rights being committed. This US law makes genocide as well as

incitement to genocide a criminal offence.

Also, as a document, we carry an extract from ‘Zionism’ which deals with the ideological underpinnings of Zionist terrorism.

The ideological justification for the establishment of Israel with Jerusalem as its capital lies in the Zionist campaign which exploits the thin line between mythology and history to claim that David’s city and Temple are located at Jerusalem.

In this context, pre-eminent historian of the 20th Century, Eric Hobsbawm says: “The only history that Israel can use to justify itself as history is at least two thousand years old. Everything else that has happened in the meantime is glossed over, as it does not justify the foundation of Israel and the wars which that state has fought. The fact that the Temple has been located in Jerusalem was transformed into a modern political fact, in order to argue that Jerusalem had always been the center of the Jewish religion, and therefore the capital of the Jewish people (besides, it makes little sense to talk about capitals in a period previous to the Roman Empire, but that is another question). In any case, it has been used by the Jews to justify not only the foundation of their state, but the establishment of Jerusalem as their capital”. (The New Century, Eric Hobsbawm, Little, Brown and Company, 1999). On the widely held belief that myths constitute the collective historical memory of a people, Hobsbawm says: “But here again, it is not a question of the people constantly remembering: they remember because someone is constantly reminding them”. The crucial point is that people are constantly reminded in order to rouse their passions to serve a political end.

The World Zionist Organisation (WZO) was founded in 1897 with Theodor Herzl as its president. The Zionists advanced the slogan “Give land without people to the people without land.”

The ideological platform of International Zionism proclaimed the right of the ‘chosen people’. Thus, when the State of Israel was established and since it was not a land without people,

the original inhabitants of the land for the centuries, Palestinians, had to be either expelled or exterminated. This led to the *Nakba* (catastrophe) in 1948 when nearly 7 lakh Palestinians were either expelled or pushed into settlements on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The current horrendous genocidal assault and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians is aimed at ensuring that even these two small areas – West Bank and Gaza Strip – are reduced to rubble to force the Palestinians out of these lands and occupy the whole of Palestinian territories and define it as ‘land without people’ that Israel can occupy.

This issue of the Marxist is a humble contribution to strengthen the Palestinian struggle for their homeland. We join the global protests and solidarity with the Palestinians and their just struggles for homeland that is being criminally denied by a gigantic imperialist fraud.

PROF. ILAN PAPPE

Palestine: Endless Occupation, Permanent Crisis

I was asked to talk about the historical perspective of Palestine. Catching up with the last discussion and exchange I understand that some of the major facts were already raised and debated. I do apologize if some of what I'm going to say was already covered here and there. But, I hope to provide a more structural presentation.

It is important to begin with Palestine before the arrival of Zionism, in order to have a good perspective - a historical perspective – can even explain better what is going on today. Before the arrival of Zionism, Palestine, as you know, was part of the Ottoman Empire. And like many parts in the Eastern - what you would call Western Asia, and people from Europe would call the Eastern Mediterranean - like in many other parts of that part of the world, in the mid-19th century the society went through a process of modernization, the beginning of assuming national aspirations. And all know, about half a million to 600,000 people lived in what became Israel and the occupied territories later on, spoke Arabic, and had some characteristics that differentiated them from people in other neighbouring countries. It was mostly pastoral, rural society. But, it had a vibrant urban elite. And, it was on the way to develop like Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, into a modern state. It is important to say this because if you look at the website of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, for instance, they would tell you that Palestine was an empty land, before the

Zionists arrived in Palestine. And, that's a fabrication. That's a lie. Which unfortunately was repeated recently by the President of the EU, who said that 'Zionism bloomed the desert'. Palestine was never a desert. It has a small desert in the south of the country, but it was a fertile, prospering, and thriving, both country and society.

Then, in order to understand what Zionism is doing in Palestine, we have to move geographically from Palestine to the Central and Eastern Europe, where Zionism appears as a movement that is motivated by two impulses. One is a response for rising of anti-semitism, the hatred against Jews because of their religion. And, also, the new ideal nationalism that catches up a lot of people in Central-Eastern Europe. And that leads to these intellectuals to decide that maybe they should redefine Judaism not as a religion but as nationalism. To this I would just add very briefly that most people don't know that Zionism actually did not start as a Jewish project. Namely, the idea of having a Jewish state in Palestine or instead of Palestine, was not something that was brought up for the first time by the Zionists or the early Zionists in Central-Eastern Europe, who were looking at this idea as a solution for anti-Semitism and as a springboard for the creation of a Jewish nation state. This was earlier already propagated by Evangelical Christians who believed that, many millions of them still believe in this today, that the return of the Jews to Palestine is going to precipitate the second coming of the Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, the beginning of the end of time. And this was an idea that American Presidents, important policymakers in Britain, subscribed to. And it influenced also the Jewish intellectuals in the late 19th century that formed the Jewish Zionist movement.

For a while the Zionist movement was not entirely clear whether geographically it wants to build a modern, secular, Jewish nation-state necessarily in Palestine. As some of you may know, other options were seriously considered, like Uganda in Africa, the tip of South America, Azerbaijan in East Russia, and even some territories were looked at in North America. But eventually,

MARXIST

around 1904-1905, the Zionist movement homed on Palestine as the only place where Jewish nationalism can re-emerge as they saw it. They looked at Palestine as a land that belonged to the Jewish people and therefore talked about redemption of the land. And, totally ignored the fact that someone else lived there for thousand years. It didn't bother them at all, which is quite surprising. Because they knew that there was another population there. They somehow still thought, and maybe they were right in their perspective at that time, that the idea of settling in a non-European land by force, or through colonization was still possible in the late 19th century as far as international public opinion was concerned, as long as you had an Empire on your side that would enable you to begin the colonization. And one of the main efforts of the Zionist leaders, before and during the WWI, was to persuade Britain that, first of all taking over Palestine from the Ottoman Empire is a British strategic interest, and that having in Palestine a Jewish State under British protection is also a British interest.

And it took some pressure on the British government and quite a lot of intensive lobbying that eventually in 1917, even before the WWI ended and even before Britain occupied Palestine, Britain promised to make Palestine a Jewish state. At that period between 1905 and 1917, Zionism transformed from a national movement, if you want, or a cultural movement, into a settler colonial movement. Settler colonial movements appeared elsewhere in the world - in North America, in South America, in Australia, in New Zealand. It is a similar story of European refugees who seek to rebuild Europe somewhere else, and their main problem is the presence of an indigenous population. And as the late great scholar of settler colonialism, Patrick Wolfe said, 'when settler colonial movements meet the indigenous people, they work according to the logic of the elimination of the native'. And, in North America elimination meant proper genocide. In Palestine, elimination meant the ethnic cleansing of the local Palestinians. Or, if you want, Zionism was and is a project of displacement

of Palestinians and replacing them with the Jewish people or as many people from the Jewish people as possible.

Now, the idea of replacing an indigenous people with a group of settlers and immigrants needs capacity, needs alliances in the world, needs regional alliances, and so on. And the history of Israel when it comes into being and before that the Zionist Community, before 1948, is focused on these kind of alliances. And, as you probably know, the most important alliance was not with Britain, but eventually and still is today with the United States. Now, in order to implement this idea, in order to create a Jewish state you need as much of the new land, Palestine namely, as possible with as few people of the indigenous population in it as possible, namely the Palestinians, in order to implement a vision of a Palestine without Palestinians. You need also the right historical moment for trying and implementing such a vision. And that moment appeared in 1948. Why 1948? Because that is the year that Britain had enough of Palestine. It's also connected to India... the idea to leave India made few countries in West Asia less important strategically... And, Britain, let's face it, after the World War II ceased to be a real Empire anymore. And, Palestine had very little strategic value for Britain even as a weakened Empire. So the British decide to leave Palestine. And that creates a vacuum. And before the United Nation that replaces Britain, suggests a solution to partition Palestine into two states, there is a vacuum. There is a transition period.

And, one has to say, that the Palestinians, although they were the majority in 1948 – two-third of the population - and they had the support of the neighboring Arab states, were not fully prepared for that moment. Both because of dissent in the leadership, and also because Britain in the 1930s destroyed the Palestinian military and political leadership during a famous revolt that raged between 1936 and 1939. And more important than anything else, what the Palestinians could not confront properly was the fact that Europe and the United States decided three years after the

MARXIST

Holocaust that the best compensation for the Jewish people was to allow the Zionist movement to colonize Palestine. And against such an alliance, against such an idea, the Palestinians who were a pastoral society, still with a traditional leadership, could not really constitute a real challenge to the idea of ethnically cleansing them and replacing them with a Jewish State.

Once Britain officially announced in February 1947 that it was about to leave Palestine, the preparation on the Zionist side to fully ethnically cleanse the Palestinians, to expel them massively from Palestine began seriously. The first act of ethnic cleansing began a year later, in February 1948, under the eyes of the British. Just a chronological moment here - Britain was still in Palestine responsible for Law and Order until May 1948. But the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, the first phase, began between February and May, under the noses and eyes of the British, but they did not interfere. But they were fully aware that Palestinians were massively expelled by the Zionist forces. It began in February, 1948 reached a certain peak in April, May, when most of the Palestinian towns had been de-Arabized, depopulated, from their indigenous population, according to a master plan of ethnic cleansing called Plan D or Plan Dalet. And on the 15th of May, 1948 Britain left Palestine altogether. Under pressure, the Arab governments decided to send some troops into Palestine on the 15th of May, because massive numbers of refugees had already arrived in Arab capitals. And quite reluctantly, the Arab states sent too little forces and too late... forces to try and stop the next phases of the ethnic cleansing. To a certain extent their effort was successful because half of the Palestinians still remained in Palestine at the end of 1948. But one has to say, half of Palestine's population became refugees. In the end of 1948, half of the Palestinian villages, 500 in number, were totally demolished. And on their ruins Israel built settlements and planted recreational forests. And most of the Palestinian towns had been de-Arabized, depopulated. All of this was within nine months. And the world

was watching. The world knew exactly what was going on. But the idea in the West, in particular, was that this is a small injustice to compensate for the big injustice – namely, the Palestinians have to pay for centuries of European anti-Semitism, and in particular for the Holocaust.

But half of the Palestinians remained in Palestine. And outside of Palestine, in the refugee camps, the Palestinian national movement reawakened and created the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the struggle continued. We have another kind of turning point in 1967, when Israel occupies those parts of Palestine that it did not occupy in 1948 - namely the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. And, maybe a word on the Gaza Strip here, because it's very much, and unfortunately for the wrong reasons, in the news nowadays. There was no Gaza Strip before 1948. There was also no West Bank before 1948. How did these two areas become a geopolitical reality? Well, Gaza was created... the Gaza Strip... was created by Israel during the 1948 ethnic cleansing as a big refugee camp and a receptor for the hundreds of thousands of refugees that Israel pushed from the Central and South of Palestine, and decided to leave Gaza not under Israeli control but as a huge refugee camp. The West Bank was created as part of an agreement between Israel and Jordan, in return for very limited Jordanian participation in the all-Arab attempt to stop the ethnic cleansing. Jordan was given by Israel the West Bank... they took it without a shot. Why Israel was willing to give up the West bank in 1948? Because, there were hardly any Jews there. But in 1967, under the circumstances of that war, Israel reoccupied, or occupied for the first time both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. And like every settler colonial state you have this balance between geography and demography, or if you want space and population. If you take more space of the indigenous country then you get more indigenous people.

But, Israel did not repeat the ethnic cleansing with 1967. Although, one should say Israel expelled almost 350,000 Palestinians

MARXIST

during the 1967 war, from both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. But most of the people in the West Bank or the Gaza strip were, as you know, were not expelled. Instead, Israel created what I called in my book 'The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of Gaza and the Occupied Territories'... a big prison... I mean open prison... in the West Bank and the Gaza strip. It's still the idea to my mind of the elimination of the native, because if you cannot expel millions of people, you can enclave them, you can imprison them. Millions of Palestinians have no civil rights and human rights. They cannot vote, they cannot be elected, they have no say in their future. And Israel has been policing them and controlling them from 1967 until today. And basically I argue in my book, 'The Biggest Prison on Earth', that Israel used two models of prison. One was an open prison. If the Palestinians behaved well, so to speak, they can have autonomy, they can even work in Israel. Of course, they have no right to participate in Israeli politics or decide about the future of the economy or security or sovereignty, but they have some autonomy in domestic issues. And that's the 'open prison' model. In many ways I think the Oslo Accords was trying to make official the open prison as a peace process. And that's why it totally failed, because it was not a peace process. And then there is the maximum security model - a punishing prison model that the Palestinians are getting whenever they try to uprise, to revolt, as they did in 1987, in 2000. And then we come, and with this I really want to leave time for your comments and questions, we come to Gaza.

In 2005, when the Hamas won the elections in both Gaza and in the West Bank in the democratic elections, Israel reacted by imposing a siege on Gaza. And this siege has been going on for 17 years. It was a punishment for the decision of the people of Gaza to elect a political leadership that Israel didn't like. Now this political leadership, the Hamas movement, reacted with its own guerilla warfare that included launching missiles into Israeli civilian population. You probably are familiar with these missiles;

they were called the Qassam missiles. And, Israel reacted, always retaliated. And four times the people of Gaza, since the beginning of the siege, four times, they were bombarded heavily from the air, the land, and sea. I don't know how many of you have experienced being in a house bombarded by an F16 or F35. It traumatizes you for life, even if you are not wounded or anyone you know has been killed by such an attack. And these people were exposed to such attacks four times. Why do I say this? Because, I think we need some historical context to what happened on the 7th of October.

There are two contexts here, which are important. And with this, I will end and open it up to you. One is a longer historical context and I already hinted to this when I said that there was no Gaza Strip before 1948. So, half of the people in Gaza are a third generation of the people who became refugees in 1948. Many of them are also refugees from the Palestinian villages that were destroyed near Gaza and (on) whose ruins the Jewish settlements at the Hamas attack on the 7th of October were built. So, they have kind of a more intimate connection with the places that the Hamas attacked on the 7th of October. I'm not justifying it, of course...not everything that was done there, but I'm just giving the explanation what was the importance of these particular places that were attacked on the 7th of October.

And, more importantly, I think, in many ways is the fact that the population of Gaza is very young, which means that most of the people who live in Gaza only know the experience of 17 years of siege. And these are the kind of people who were part of the operation that attacked those Jewish settlements and military bases on the 7th of October. Again, this does not justify everything was done. But it explains the motivation, it explains the conflict. It also explains that as long as ethnic cleansing is an ideology of a state, then it's likely to continue. Because I mentioned... with this I would end... I mentioned already the late scholar Patrick Wolfe, unfortunately who's not with us... He said few interesting things

MARXIST

about settler colonial projects like Zionism in Israel. He said the elimination of the Native, or settler colonialism in this respect is not an event, it's a structure. It's an ideological structure.

And, as an Israeli Jew, unfortunately, I say that my society, its political elite, its academic leadership, its cultural leadership are still persuaded that they have the moral right, the power and the ability to complete the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and turn an Arab country, mostly a Muslim country, in the midst of the Arab world, in the midst of the Muslim world, into a European Jewish state. I warn my compatriots in Israel - not only this is not going to work, it's not going to succeed. Zionism is not going to succeed. Zionism is going to fail. But the question is how it's going to fail? Will it fail through more bloodshed, more violence, which is terrible for everyone. Or, and there's still time for this despite everything that happened, we will start a new future, a new road towards creating a one democratic state for all between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean. A democratic state in Western Asia that I think will have a positive influence on the countries around it, and would have a positive influence on the world at large, as a model for coexistence and a different kind of normal life that was denied from the Palestinians, and in many ways from the Jews in Israel as well for more than a century. Thank you!

Q & A

Q: Thank you very much for a fascinating expose. I have two questions. You made a very interesting comment, Professor, when you said that Oslo was an attempt to formalize these Palestinian enclaves or 'open air prisons' - the phrase that you have rendered, you know people unforgettable as it were. And, you said that it was not a peace process and that is why it was bound to fail. Now, does that mean that the people who were, I mean the liberal Israelis, as distinct from the current regime - ideologically speaking - they were also committed to this notion of Palestinian enclaves.

So, is there by that token no democratic liberal Israeli? And if that be so, then how do you visualize a one democratic state? I'm practically speaking.

A: Thank you. A very good question. First of all, yes. I think you understood me very well. I thought that the Oslo Accords was an attempt to create this 'open prison' model as a final settlement calling it a state. But if you look at the Oslo agreement, it is not a state. The economy is in the hands of Israel, security is in the hands of Israel. If you remember Oslo B, which is more important than Oslo A, Oslo 2, that the real Oslo agreement divided the West Bank into areas A, B, and C. So in essence, 16% of the West Bank, which is nothing, were to be under the direct control of the Palestinian Authority. But even that 16% were open to Israeli security intervention whenever Israel deemed it necessary. So, this is not sovereignty, this is not a state, this is not self-determination, this is not a solution at all. Now, yes. I have to admit that your conclusion from that is one... the conclusion you suggest... I don't know if it's your right view... but you rightly suggest a logical conclusion out of that is that what we call the liberal left or the Zionist left or call it... I think we know what we're talking about. What people used to call the peace camp in Israel. I think that it's not a genuine peace camp. It never was. I think it was... a liberal Zionism is an attempt to square the circle between continuing to create...to maintain a racist Jewish state with occupation; while at the same time remain a democracy. This is impossible.

Put differently, sir, I would say it's impossible to be a liberal occupier. It's impossible to be a progressive ethnic cleanser. It's impossible to be a leftist genocider. It's impossible. And, therefore I think all these attempts, which were by the way genuine attempts to say, 'Yes, we have to oppress the Palestinians but we are also liberal people', it doesn't work. It doesn't work. You lie to yourself. You lie to the world. I don't think therefore... By the way, this is the reason that there is no Left left in Israel. You know. If you know of anyone who's a leftist Zionist, keep an eye on them.

MARXIST

Because, they are distinct creatures. They don't exist anymore. The whole Israeli system moved to the right in 2000. Because, rightly the electorate said either we are an ethnic, racist, Jewish state or we are a democratic non-Jewish state. There's nothing in between. Unfortunately for them. But it doesn't. You either have to be that or that.

Now, the last piece of your question is important. How do you create one state solution if the majority of the settler communities are against it? Well, we had some cases like this in the past. The majority of the whites in South Africa wanted to maintain apartheid. And, nonetheless, the apartheid fell. In other words, it's an important moment of sobriety, to say, the change in Palestine would not come from within the Israeli Jewish society. You have to realize that. But that doesn't mean that there are no other models of changing the reality. Among them sanctions, pressure... you know, making sure that either the region or the world sends this tough message to Israel that this cannot continue. And when this happens, I think, you can hope for a change within the dominant settler society. But I don't think that the fact that the vast majority of Israelis reject any kind of genuine reconciliation with the Palestinians, would mean that those of us who believe that reconciliation is the right way forward, and those of us who believe that the oppression of the Palestinian should stop should not continue their efforts. Both to persuade the people from within, which I'm trying to do, and build a strong pressure very much on the model that eventually helped to bring down the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Q: Thank you, sir, for your insightful historical perspective. I have two quick questions. The first question is - do you find any similarity between the Zionist movement and the Hindu nationalist movement that is the Hindutva movement in India. Of course, I think both of them didn't have any connection to the British political strategy as you have mentioned. My second question is - is there an exemplary model in history where Jews and Muslims

and even Christians lived peacefully. So, to be more specific, was the Ottoman Caliphate an exemplary model? And even before that there were many Jewish historians who have commented on this. So I would love to hear your comments as well.

A: You know I have enough enemies in Israel. You want me to open a front with the Indian government. Yes. But I have to admit. I think that there are similarities. I do think so that Hindutva or the whole idea that Hinduism is nationalism and not a faith, not a religion, and one that defines a community not only in a positive way but also in a negative way - namely you don't know only who you are, you know who isn't you, who doesn't belong to you. And in this case someone who is not part of your faith, mostly Muslims, are not part of the collective, you know, the collective good as we would call it in Republican terms. And what happens is, and I think Kashmir is a good example, is that the moment you think that you want to create, or at least to narrow the gap between who you think is the right collective nation - in this case based on religion, not on nationalism - you are bound to be using unsavory methods to purify the nation, so to speak. I think it's very dangerous. Although in the case of India, of course, this is not settlers and native population. Although, I think in Kashmir there's something that is, and I have few students working on this... I think there is a settler colonial model in Kashmir itself. But I think that in India as a whole it's a bit different because we're not talking about you know Hindu settlers coming to settle in a Muslim country. But there are similarities and it's not surprising that the BJP is very pro-Israeli and the Israelis are very pro-BJP. I hope for the sake of both Zionism and this kind and the BJP that the idea of human rights and civil rights would trumpet the ideas of collective rights that are achieved in such a way.

Now, for the second question. Yes. It's important to remember that both in the Muslim world under the Ottoman rule, and in Palestine in particular, there was a genuine coexistence between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. There is one interesting indication

MARXIST

for this. People lived – Christians, Muslims, and Jews - lived in the same villages and in the same towns until 1948. After 1948, in a ‘divide and rule’ kind of strategy they are now living in different communities. But they used to be, you know, celebrating each other’s festivities, mourning each other’s moment of catastrophes, and so on. So, I think there is a model there. Is it the Caliphate? I’m not sure. Because I think there were a lot of negative things about the Ottoman Empire. But we should take from the Ottoman legacy the good things. And two things have to be said about it. One - most of the efforts to, even the genuine efforts to, bring peace between Israel and Palestine were all built on European models, European political models. I think the future relies actually in studying the Ottoman past, the West Asian past, not the European past. Like, if you want to have a solution that is fitting the region, the history, the culture, the civilization you’re in, you go to the history of that civilization. You’re not looking to it in the supermarket in the West. And the second thing is that you can find there. And that was very unique to the Ottomans. The Ottomans really respected the notion of ‘Live and Let Live’. And that is what... not only Palestine, look at Syria, look at Lebanon... look what happened in Syria. Syria is a disintegrated state. Look at Iraq. The Iraqis can hardly, you know, keep the state together. Lebanon is on the danger of being disintegrated. Because the very basic idea of the Ottomans that people are entitled to have collective identities, but the collective identities should not be the state identities. The state should have the space for people, respect their collective identities, serve the people rather than serve one collective identity at the expense of other collective identities. And I believe this is the model for the future. And that is something that would be important not only for Palestine, but for the whole *mashra*, as they call it in Arabic which is the Eastern Mediterranean or from your perspective West Asia.

Q: I have a couple of questions. The first is the use of the word anti-Semitism. Now, when the Arabs are equally Semite, and so

when a Palestinian is called anti-Semitic is that just an imposition of self-loathing? My second question deals with the original land of Israel, which again involved, apparently under divine mandate, the displacement of people that lived there in the first place - the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Hittites and the like. Now, you talk about, I mean the previous session before yours dealt with the theopolitics of the region, this comes in there... I'm curious because again we talk about the children of Abraham, but frankly at that point in time it is Jacob and his children, Esau who is the direct lineal descendant of Abraham, is out as Edom and not part of that particular legacy. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, or half of it anyway, that are on the other side Jordan. So, if there were in many ways settler colonists in the first place then shouldn't that also be brought into the discussion as well?

A: First of all, you know, anti-Semitism became a common phrase, even if you are absolutely right that it's a very distorted idea. Because the Arab are also Semites and nobody... when one talks about anti-Semitism, one doesn't think about racism towards Arab, but only towards Jews, who are actually, most of them, are probably not Semites - Europeans and Americans and so on. So, yes. It's academically, scholarly-wise, it's a very distorted frame. However, it became such common usage that I don't think we have much chance of dealing with it properly, apart from a far more important, I think, mission that we have and to make sure that the attempt to weaponize anti-Semitism in order to silence criticism on Israel, and in order to suppress the Palestinians is not going to be successful - namely, the equation of anti-Semitism with criticism on Israel is something we should challenge. And, it's not easy to challenge because many people still believe, especially in the global North, that if you criticize Israel it means that you show hatred to Jews wherever they are. Which, of course, is totally nonsense. But that's how people understand it and that's why Israel weaponizes it. Because, it's quite easy to intimidate people by accusing them of being anti-Semites. And they

MARXIST

need to be true to themselves to know that they are not racist and not be intimidated by such accusation. But as we know sometimes it works. Well, it brought down the leader of the Labor party in Britain, Jeremy Corbin, so we should not underestimate the power of such slander and accusation.

The second point that you make, you know, but that's my own problem probably. I don't deal too much and I must admit I don't know that much about things that happened 2,000 or 3,000 years ago. So, I would say two things about it. One, I never thought that there was much validity to the Zionist claim that they have a right to the land because they used to live there 2,000 years ago. I mean I always say to my Israeli friends, 'Can you imagine someone knocking on your door and says, 'Excuse me, sir. I used to live in your house 2,000 years ago. You should at least give me half of the house.'" I think what you will do you will call the police and say, 'You know, there's a nut case here who wants my house and he claims that he lived here 2,000 years ago'. And to your great surprise, the police would come back and say the man has a case and you should give him half of the house. And that's what happened in Palestine. I think that what is important is academically we should, and I think you're right... By the way, I agree with what you say and there's a great work by someone called Thomas L. Thompson on this (*The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel*). There's a whole school of thought in biblical studies called the 'minimal biblical', centered in the Department of Theology in the University of Copenhagen. And they're doing an excellent job and some of what you say is substantiated by their archaeological work. But I think what is important is to me in the case of an ongoing conflict, is not the validity of a narrative, which is for academics to look at, but what you do in the name of the narrative. I mean I don't care if people would say, you know, my great great grandparents were the people who lived here 2,000 years ago. Okay. You can say that. Maybe you're right, maybe you're not. That doesn't matter. But if in the

name of that narrative you dispossess, you displace, you expel, then there is a problem with the narrative. Far more important than the validity or invalidity. And, therefore I think this whole discussion is important, but I think it's far more important to ask what is being done in the name of narratives, rather than then whether these narratives are valid or not.

Q: I have two questions. One is, I believe you're a veteran of the 1973 war as well. So, in my interactions with lots of Israeli military, as well as the average people in the 90s and early 2000s... I thought the majority were moderate and looked at peace as a future. But looking at what's happening now and particularly the governments having radicalized to the Right so much, and Netanyahu is a bad example of that, some of the actions that the Israeli military does now... Has the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) been radicalized completely and is that a big danger for Israel as a state in its viability in the future? That is one question. The second one is - you did make a mention on the Ottoman Empire - while many things may have been bad we should take the good things. And I think that's absolutely right. So, these are multinational empires - Ottoman Empire, the Hapsburg Empire - and they had multiple ethnic communities living together. There was a lot more cohesion and I sincerely believe the concept of the Westphalian nation state is anachronistic to Asian and Eastern civilizations particularly, and they are the cause of much of conflict over the last 300 years. And they continue to remain the conflict for many areas of the world. And the West promotes this continuously because they believe in that idea. So, we are trapped because that has been set to the norm in the 1945, when two-thirds of the world were being decolonized but they were actually being imposed with Westphalian ideas of territoriality and a certain idea of Eurocentric nation state system. And that's incongruous in civilizational states like India and China as well. Conflict is continuing to abound as well. So, where's the solution? Palestine is a clear example of that as well.

MARXIST

A: First of all, about the IDF - I'm afraid you're right. In one of the articles I wrote recently I said that the state of Israel is being taken by the state of Judea. What did I mean by that? I meant that in the settlements that Israel built in the occupied West Bank, a new kind of Zionism emerged - a Messianic one. What you would rightly call an extreme right-wing version of Zionism that believes that Israel anyway should be a Jewish theocracy, believes in far more brutal and ruthless policies towards the Palestinians. And, when you were there in the 1970s or 1980s, indeed people like that used to be thought as being on the ideological margins of the political system. But they have moved to the center, they are now an important part of the government - meaning they are an important part of the policy makers. And yes, they have made the way up through the various echelons to the top of the Israeli Army, the top two of the Israeli Security Service, and they are beginning to have an impact on the policy. What is interesting is that there are not very capable military men. One of the reasons that the 7th of October was such a great surprise is exactly the presence of these people in positions that before were manned by people who came from the more Socialist side of Zionism - you know, the *kibbutzim* and so on. So, they're not very competent, militarily-wise, and we have seen it in the 7th of October. And, imagine what would have happened if at the same time that the Hamas attacked South of Israel, Hezbollah in the North would have attacked the North of Israel. How would Israel have dealt with that when it hardly was able to deal with an attack of a small guerilla army in the South? Israelis have to ask themselves very important questions - both about what you're saying here - the radicalization of the IDF leadership but also about the incompetence of the IDF. Is really the IDF something, an organization that will be able to maintain the occupation and defend the state at the same time? I don't think people are asking these questions in Israel. But I do hope that maybe in the later stage they will ask it and that could also be a positive outcome of a very unfortunate chapter, a very

tragic chapter and catastrophic chapter in the history of Palestine.

As for your second comment – I fully agree with you and I hope you and I are not the only ones. I totally agree. I think the whole model of the Westphalian state from the 17th century that was imposed on the Eastern Mediterranean, after the WWI through the Sykes-Picot agreements and so on, is inept. It does not fit the realities, the civilizations, the legacies, the aspirations of the people. And, as long as this is the political model it will perpetuate conflict rather than help to solve them. I have to tell you that we are not actually alone. I know because I communicate daily with a lot of Palestinians and Arab intellectuals. Most of my books have been translated to Arabic. I've published 23 books to date and most of them were translated to Arabic. So, I'm within... we have this intellectual network in the Arab world. Also in North Africa, by the way, we do think that also North Africa does not benefit, as we can see in the case of Libya, from the Westphalian model of state. I'm very impressed by the younger generation of people, both in Palestine and the rest of the Arab world, who are thinking, I think, in a similar way and trying to translate fluid ideas into more strategic political programs. It's not easy because as you can imagine, the regime themselves, and that includes Israel, want to keep the Westphalian model because it keeps them in power. So, they're doing everything possible not to allow even for these discussions to develop. But I think they will and it will be very interesting to see whether these, what I and you probably would think are better models for the future would emerge as proper political programs with a push forward by proper political movements.

Q: In your many sided, profound critique, you also offer the critique of the peace movement. But in equating the peace movement as an apology of Zionist occupation, are you being fair to the many dedications and sacrifice of the peace movement, both from Israel and Palestine. Particularly people like David Schulman, who is also a scholar of Tamil - you might know him and

MARXIST

his own personal story and many Holocaust victims going and resisting. But, also the peace movement from Palestine. The other thing is that there are also groups like Neve Shalom, and I had met people constituting a very interesting group called 'Roots' which brings Palestinians and Jews together. If you are proposing for a one-state kind of frame, it requires movements like this. This is my first query. Second quick query is that to do this work in the contemporary, it requires many-sided historical work. Think of the way during the Vietnam war many academics took part in 'teach in' programs. So, similarly there should be 'teach in' programs both for the Palestinians and the Israelis. And that requires a certain atmosphere. In current Israel, is there a space for dissent? There is increasing securitization, especially after October 7. So, is there a threat for scholars like you, to be arrested? So, what is the space for freedom in current Israel?

A: Yes, of course there are individuals and as you say there are even communities here and there, and also organizations in the civil society on the Israeli side that believe in reconciliation. I don't think that they don't exist. I just don't think that they have the power to impact the reality, unfortunately. And, many of the leading figures who were, let's call them, dissenting voices, unfortunately, have left the country despairing about the future. There's always hope and as I said, despite my sober analysis that there is very little chance for a change from within the Israeli Jewish society, I continue my own work to try and persuade the Israeli Jews that there is another way forward from the one that their government and most of their compatriots are choosing. So, yes. There is a group to work with. I just think that in order to enhance the influence of that group you need to have a different international and regional reaction to the state of Israel. I think more pressure from the outside actually would enhance the groups that are unhappy with the state's ideology, its policies, and its strategies. So that's what I meant. And, of course, the people you mentioned, David Schulman, the places you mention like Neve Shalom are

worth mentioning and commending. I don't think there is much need to talk about a Palestinian peace camp. I don't think that in a situation of a colonizer and a colonized, you're looking for the peace camp of the colonized. I think that's the wrong framework to my mind. What you are looking is - and Nelson Mandela was very good in pointing out to this - what you are looking in the community of the colonized, of the oppressed, is not for a peace camp. You are looking for an ideology of restorative justice rather than retribution. The difference between, in many ways, between what happened in Zimbabwe and South Africa, after the end of apartheid in both countries, you know. Not looking for retribution. You hope that the main impulse within the colonized people, if you want to talk about the decolonized future, is restorative justice and not retributive justice. And I think most Palestinians are still very much loyal to restorative justice, namely they want normal, natural life rather than seeking retribution or revenge.

As for your second one, it's very interesting what you say. First, before I would comment whether there is a space now, let me say two interesting anecdotes that goes along with this. I was part of a group of 10 Palestinian historians and 10 Israeli historians that worked on bridging the historical narrative. Trying to create a narrative both sides could agree on. And I published it as a book with my dear Palestinian friend Jamil Hilal. It's called 'Across the Wall: Narratives of Israeli-Palestinian History'. It's a very interesting exercise on how history books would look like, if there is reconciliation. So I think the historians are involved in this. The second anecdote is, I don't know if you aware of this, but in 2006 I was forced to leave Israeli academia. I was actually expelled because of my views, because of my books, because of my courses. I was forced to leave my University - the University of Haifa. And I had to go to exile in Britain, where I'm now, teaching. So, you pay a price if you challenge the Zionist narrative in Israel. You pay the price when I challenged it in the early 21st century. I think the price you pay now is even higher. So, not

only is there no space, there is even less space for dissent after the 7th of October. It created a very unified kind of revengeful, racist approach to Palestinians, wherever they are. It's the first reaction, it's the immediate reaction to 7th of October. Some would even say understandable on a certain level. I hope that the more distant reaction would be a bit more realistic, a bit more conciliatory. But for the time being it's very difficult to voice any dissent in Israel. I mean it depends who you are. If you are a Jewish dissenter, you won't be sent to prison, although we have few cases of that as well. But if you are a Palestinian citizen of Israel, and you know 20% of the Israelis are Palestinian citizens. And if they voice a dissent they find themselves immediately in prison. You know we have...I am now trying to defend a case where a Palestinian student... all she said in the WhatsApp was, 'I don't fully agree to everything the spokesperson of the Israeli IDF is saying'. That was enough to send her to jail. So, that's the atmosphere now in Israel. It's important to understand that. So, people are very careful. I'm 70 years old, so I stopped being careful. But people who are younger than 70 years are a bit more careful and rightly so.

Q: My question is a little different from the previous ones. What's your impression of Western media coverage of what's going on in Gaza? And I want to just add that some experimenters going to ChatGPT-4 and so on have found that if the prompt is in English, you get one kind of narrative. If it's in Arabic, it's quite different. I don't know about Hebrew. Any comments on that? But basically what you read in the Western press and watch on television.

A: It's a very good question. I think that we have to distinguish between the mainstream media and the alternative media. The mainstream media in the West is very much loyal to the line taken by the governments of the West. And the governments of the West, by and large, I'm generalizing, but by and large take the American lead on the situation now in Gaza. Namely, they want to give Israel more time to so-called complete its military

objectives. While quite a lot of readers, listeners, and viewers of that media would probably think that this is not a license to complete a military operation but it's rather a license to continue a genocidal policy on the ground. I do think that listening to the major television satellite channels of the West in Arabic like Sky News in Arabic, BBC in Arabic, the Arabic speaking satellite networks that are being funded by the Americans in the Middle East, in the West Asia... I think you're right. They are trying to bring more voices of dissent, at least challenge some of these policies. But in the local languages in the Western countries, the message that the mainstream media gives is that Israel is doing an action of self-defense. Yes, it should be more careful of, you know, of the way that it operates, but all in all it is justified in what it is doing. However, if you go to the global South, if you go to the alternative media, you can see a clear understanding and what goes on. Sheer horror at the Israeli brutality and ruthlessness on the ground. Total disbelief in the way that Western governments are not, at least, demanding a ceasefire. A lot of respect to South Africa for going to the International Court of Justice in the act to try to bring... And, remember what the South Africans want is to stop the genocide. They're not saying, you know, Israel should not exist. They're not saying, let's have one Democratic state. All they're saying is, because the Western governments are not doing it - 'Stop The Killing'. 'Stop the carnage. It's 100 days... Today (14 January, 2024), by the way, is the 100th day of the carnage. More than three months and 10 days of genocide. 23,000 dead. Which is just the number we know. We don't know how many people are still buried under the ruins of the 70% of the houses that were demolished by Israel. More TNT has been dropped on Gaza Strip in the last three months than they were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. I mean this is something that is unbelievable that the Western media follows so faithfully, supposedly democratic societies - the line of the governments. But the alternative media is there, it's not easy to control it. It brings the real facts, the truth,

MARXIST

and I think a lot of people have today alternative ways of getting the news and do not have to rely only on mainstream media. And the result is the hundreds and thousands and millions of people demonstrating on the streets. I would put it this way, with this I would end. There is a huge gap between what most people, and that includes the West, and by the way that includes even the Jewish community in the United States... There's a huge gap between what these societies think should be the government's policies towards Palestine and Israel, and the policies themselves. There's a huge gap. If there were a genuine democratic vote among people in the United States, in Britain, in France, even in Germany, on what should be the policy towards Israel and Palestine, it would be a demand for a very different policy from the one the governments are pursuing at this very moment. Definitely there would be a demand from the government to demand right now a cease-fire before everything else. To stop the killing. So, it's quite incredible that when it comes to Palestine, a liberal open-minded press behaves in a very different way. We used to call it people who are PEOPs - they are Progressive Except On Palestine. And this lack of progressiveness on Palestine is one of the reasons Israel still has the international immunity for its impunity on the ground. But I'm an optimist. And I do believe that these things will change in the future, hopefully. Thank you very much. It was a great pleasure to spend the afternoon with you. Thank you.

(Verbatim transcript of lecture delivered at the Asian College of Journalism Colloquium on January 15, 2024 in the session 'Israel-Palestine: A Historical Perspective').

JOHN CHERIAN

Gaza and the Palestine Conflict

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Israel a colonial settler outpost implanted in the heart of West Asia, has now acquired the contours of an ethno-nationalistic state. After failing to subjugate the native Palestinians completely, the state of Israel is now intent on the task of ethnic cleansing on a scale not witnessed after the second world war. The ongoing onslaught on Gaza, in which maximum military power is being used on an unarmed civilian population, is part of the process. Concurrently violent Jewish settler activity and military raids have increased in the occupied West Bank to put pressure on the local populace there. All this is being done under the benign watch of Israel's benefactor and protector ---the United States of America.

From the time of the Crusades, between 1096 and 1492 Europeans have been trying to establish a permanent presence in the West Asian region. The war on the region in the 12th century started after a speech by Pope Urban calling on Christian to take up arms against Muslims and liberate the holy land. The Crusaders, a European Christian movement had established control over historical Palestine and the surrounding region during that period. Jerusalem had fallen to the Crusaders in 1099. It was called the "Latin Empire of Jerusalem". In 1948, the state of Israel was formally established under the leadership of the Zionists, a "European Jewish movement". It was imperial Britain, aided and abetted by other colonial powers which helped lay the foundation for the state of Israel.

The colonial settler project had started in the last fading days

of the Ottoman empire. Jewish immigration to Palestine had accelerated after the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement that divided the Arab Levant between Britain and France. Palestine became part of the British controlled area. In 1917, the British issued the Balfour Declaration. The Declaration committed the British colonial administration to establish “a national home for the Jewish people” in historic Palestine. After emerging victorious in the first world war, the British viewed the creation of a Jewish state as a strategic goal to maintain hegemony over the region that lies between Egypt and India. Egypt too was under British control in those days.

The Balfour Declaration was the first notable success for political Zionism. For the first time, an extremist ideological movement had received the backing of a leading world power. The Declaration while green lighting the creation of a Jewish state willfully ignored the rights of the sons of the soil—the native Palestinians. There were only a few thousand Jews who were resident in Palestine in 1917 as compared to the native Palestinian population of around 800,000. In 1922, Palestine was formally designated as a “British mandated territory” by the League of Nations. The British mandate administration while encouraging Jewish emigration into Palestine also allowed the Zionists to organize paramilitary groups. The newly arrived Jewish settlers were allowed to buy land, both for commercial purposes and agriculture.

At the same time, the native population was suppressed even as their land was being usurped. The Palestinian demand for self-determination was given short shrift by the colonial administration. Anger against British rule manifested itself in what was called the “The Great Arab Revolt” (1936-39). Following the revolt, the British were forced to make concessions. A “White Paper” issued by the British government in 1939 restricted the purchase of land by Jewish settlers and put more stringent curbs on Jewish immigration. More importantly, the British government promised independence for Palestinians within a ten-year time frame.

Zionist groups reacted violently to the announcement by

resorting to terrorism. Britain, preoccupied by the second world war was not able to reign in the Zionist groups which had gained strength under their patronage. Unwilling to fully crack the whip against the Zionist groups the British handed over the Palestine issue to the newly created United Nations after the end of the second world war. The holocaust against the Jews in Europe had triggered a sympathy wave for the community internationally. So, when the UN proposed a Partition Plan for Palestine, it immediately found acceptance among the international community.

The Soviet Union was the first of the big powers to recognize the newly formed state of Israel, despite the raw deal given the Palestinians. The United States was only the second country to do so. Moscow had misread the true character of the Jewish state during its formative stage. Many of its leaders, including its first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, claimed to be influenced by socialism. They had sworn by the “kibbutz” (collective settlements) usually agriculture and also industrial, in which all wealth was held in common. Many of the Israeli leaders were Russian speaking Jews who had emigrated. The USSR had hoped to wield influence in the region through Israel and all the countries at the time were under pro-western monarchies. Within a few years after its establishment, Israel showed its true colors.

The new state of Israel created by the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 181 on November 1947 was awarded 53 per cent of historical Palestine though the Jews constituted only one-third of the population. The Palestinians had immediately rejected the partition plan for their homeland, arguing that the Palestinian majority was being deprived of their territory and that the Jewish settlers now had exclusive use of land that was historically theirs. The territory allotted to the Zionist state in 1947 had a significant percentage of Palestinians residing on it. There were 498,000 Jews and 438,000 Palestinians living there at the time. This demographic fact was unacceptable to the Zionist leadership which quickly started a campaign of brutal ethnic cleansing. The

MARXIST

Palestinian resistance armed with rudimentary weapons was no match for the Zionist terror groups like the Irgun.

The ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in the years 1947-49 was clinically organized and executed. It has gone down in collective Palestinian memory as the “Naqba” (catastrophe). The Zionist terror campaign led to the violent dispersal of over 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland. After the departure of British troops on 14 May, 1948, four Arab countries declared war on Israel on behalf of the Palestinians. Their defeat on the battlefield resulted in the occupation of 77 per cent of historical Palestine by the Zionists. The Palestinians woke up to the sad reality that their homeland was under the control of settler-colonialists. Once in control of most of historical Palestine, the Zionist went about further consolidating the Jewish character of the state of Israel.

The Zionist government quickly passed laws aimed at legally dispossessing Palestinians. They included laws “to seize, retain, expropriate, reallocate and reclassify the Arab lands appropriated by the state”. The hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were forced to flee from their lands were refused the right of return. Their lands and properties were expropriated. Within a short time, the Jewish state was in possession of more than 90 per cent of Palestinian land. The remaining Palestinians were relegated to the status of second-class citizens through policies such as administrative detentions, curfews, military trial and banning of political activity.

After the first victory over the Arabs, the Israeli army soon established itself as the most powerful in the region. Military conscription was made compulsory for all Jewish citizens from the age of 18. Men had to serve for 36 months and females for 24 months. Till the age of 40, every Israeli citizen has to remain in a reserve unit and spend one month in a year with the unit. Israel from the beginning was a highly militarized and regimented society and boasts of having the strongest army in the region. Most Israeli Prime Ministers have come from within the ranks of the army.

But Arab armies and even armed militias have shown that that the Israeli army is not an invincible force. The first serious setback the Israeli army experienced was during the 1973 “Yom Kippur” war. The Egyptian army in a surprise attack caught the Israelis by surprise in the Sinai Peninsula. A comprehensive Israeli military defeat was averted with help from the United States. However, Israel had to let the Sinai Peninsula revert back to Egyptian sovereignty after the Yom Kippur war. In 2006 after Israel launched yet another invasion of Lebanon, the Hezbollah militia confronted the Israeli forces. After more than 40 days of fighting, Israeli troops had to withdraw after suffering heavy losses of men and material.

Since then, the Hezbollah movement has become an important political and military player in the region. It has been active in the current conflict also. Hezbollah has kept large numbers of Israeli forces confined to its northern border with Lebanon, by targeting Israeli military positions. Israel’s threats to launch another full-scale invasion into Lebanon and destroy it like Gaza, have not deterred Hezbollah. Israel had invaded and occupied Lebanon twice in the 1980’s.

THE WAR ON GAZA

The Hamas movement showed its military capabilities by breaching the allegedly “impenetrable” defenses the Israelis had built around the Gaza Strip. Israeli commentators and military experts have described the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas as the biggest military reverse suffered by Israel since the 1973 Yom Kippur war. In fact, the attack by Hamas and its military ally the Islamic Jihad, had taken place on the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur war. The Hamas attack on Israel through the land, sea and air took place as the country was celebrating sabbath and a religious holiday. The Hamas attack’s success was also facilitated by the fact the Israeli authorities had diverted many of their soldiers

MARXIST

to the West Bank to assist the Jewish settlers there to ethnically cleanse the area. Israel initially claimed that the Hamas fighters had killed babies and young children in cold blood. That claim has since been rebutted. The Hamas leadership has stated that main purpose of the October 7 attack was to secure the release of over 9000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, many of them children and women. Even as the fighting was raging, Hamas had said that it was ready to release all the Israeli hostages it had taken if Israel freed all the Palestinian political prisoners it has in its custody.

While demonizing Hamas, Israeli propagandists continue to insist that their army is the most “moral” in the world despite all evidence in the last seventy years proving otherwise. The latest damning incident was the shooting of three Israeli citizens who were taken as hostages by Hamas. The three were shot in cold blood by Israeli soldiers though one of them was carrying a white flag and all of them were shouting in Hebrew that they were Israeli citizens. The Israeli army was quick to apologize for the killings. Palestinians say that the news of the killing only came out because Israeli citizens were involved. Palestinian civilians in Gaza are being killed with impunity. A day after the incident, Israeli snipers shot a woman and her child who had sought refuge in the only Catholic church in Gaza.

Israel from the beginning of its existence sought to ensure that it remains the sole pre-eminent power in the region. This goal has the backing of the West. When Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser started stoking Arab nationalism, Israel viewed him as a threat. The “Suez Crisis” of 1956 saw the Israeli army waging a short-lived war in alliance with the British and the French against Egypt. The French and the British, angry with the nationalization of the Suez Canal, prodded the Israeli government to join the military campaign. The campaign failed mainly due to the reluctance of Washington at the time to militarily back its allies. It was the only time that the Americans refused to help Israel. President Dwight

Eisenhower was upset that his French, British and Israeli allies had gone ahead with their military adventure without fully consulting Washington.

Zionist ideologues have never stopped talking about the need to expand the borders of the Jewish state. “Greater Israel”, with its borders ranging from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea was the goal. The 1967 war which Israel initiated with the Arab coalition led by Egypt helped realize the Zionist settler colonialist dream of capturing more Arab land. Besides capturing the West Bank, populated by Palestinians, the Israeli army overran the Sinai Peninsula belonging to Egypt. The Gaza Strip which was administered by Egypt after the British left in 1948, also fell into the hands of Israel in 1967. Another notable conquest was the capture of the Golan Heights from Syria. Israel built a few settlements in the crowded Gaza Strip also but found the radicalized area too tough to control.

In 2005, Israel withdrew from the Strip but sealed its borders converting it to “a large open-air prison”, blockaded from the ground, the air and the sea. The Zionists had hoped that Palestinians living on the captured territories will flee to neighboring countries like it happened in the late 1940’s. Most Palestinians decided to stay and live on their land despite Israel becoming the occupying power. Israel however did not give up its dream of solving the demographic challenge posed by Palestinians living in the occupied territories. The Zionists started implementing their policies aimed at economically, militarily and legally pressuring the Palestinians to either leave their homes or agreeing to become second class citizens.

Settlement activity on Palestinian land was one of the preferred ways for the Israeli government to steadily encroach on Palestinian land. By the time the Oslo accords were signed in 1993, 250,000 Jews had already settled on the West Bank. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) under the leadership of the Fatah leader, Yasser Arafat, had agreed to the deal fully aware that the

MARXIST

West Bank was already pock marked with Israeli settlements. The Oslo peace accord was hailed by most members of the international community as a landmark agreement that would lead to a two-state solution. But settlement activity only accelerated after the signing of the Oslo accords.

Many influential Palestinian groups, including the left-wing Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Hamas an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Islamic Resistance Movement), which was formed in 1987, rejected the Oslo accord. The PFLP, under the leadership of the radical George Habash, was the second biggest group within the umbrella Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PFLP was critical in getting the support of the socialist bloc for the Palestinian cause. The PFLP and Hamas were among the many Palestinian political parties which had refused to recognize the state of Israel after the signing of the Oslo accords.

The PFLP however decided to change course after a few years and accept the “realities created by the Oslo accords”. It reluctantly accepted the “two state solution” envisaged in the Oslo accords with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state. In recent years it has further modified its position by calling for a “one state” solution in which Jewish and Palestinian citizens have equal rights. The PFLP’s view is that continuing “negotiations” with Israel was only a ploy for Israel to “continue with its occupation”. A “one state” solution will never be accepted by the Zionists because in such a scenario the Jewish population will only be slightly bigger than that of the Palestinians.

Hamas, which is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) took its time to adjust to the reality of the Jewish state on Arab land. As it emerged as a political force, the Americans quickly designated the party as a “terrorist” outfit. The founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a Palestinian cleric was assassinated by the Israelis in 2004. Several other top leaders of the grouping have also been eliminated by the Israelis. Hamas had contested in

the first and so far, the only free and open elections conducted in the occupied territories in 2006. The party won the majority of seats in the Palestinian parliament.

The Palestinian public had become deeply resentful of the Oslo accords and the seeming acquiescence of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to the creeping annexation of the Palestinian lands by the Zionist state. They were also upset by the growing nepotism and corruption in the Fatah dominated PA. But the Israeli government did not allow Hamas to take over the PA on the pretext that it was a “terrorist” organization. Major sections of the PLO led by the Fatah tacitly agree with the move. An attempt was made that year to dislodge the Hamas forcibly from Gaza. A brief internecine war broke out between Hamas and the Fatah fighters in Gaza. Hamas emerged victorious and Gaza has been under their control since 2006.

The American and the Israeli government had wanted the Fatah dominated PA to take over the administration of Gaza, despite the fact that the Palestinian electorate had rejected the Fatah and its allies. Israel took more punitive measures against the enclave hoping that the populace would rise up against the Hamas which has been administering the enclave. Egypt too followed suit imposing tighter restrictions on the movement of people and goods through the Rafah crossing---the only post on the border with Egypt through which Gazans could exit and enter.

The beleaguered people of Gaza did find some respite when the Muslim Brotherhood government led by Mohammed Morsi briefly held power in Egypt from 2013-14. Besides allowing a freer flow of people from Gaza to the outside world, the Egyptian government turned a blind eye to the smuggling of essentials, medicines and weapons through a network of tunnels that Hamas had built along its borders. But after the Morsi government was overthrown, the military backed government of Gen. Muhammad Fatah al Sisi, reimposed the blockade on Gaza and sealed the tunnels used by Hamas to smuggle in essentials and weapons. Hamas

MARXIST

was viewed with deep suspicion by the military regime in Cairo, given its close links with the Muslim Brotherhood, the biggest and most organized political party in the Arab world.

Not satisfied with the collective punishment it had inflicted on the people of Gaza, Israel started its series of full-scale military assaults on Gaza. The first full scale attack code named “Operation Cast Lead” started on the last week of December, 2008. It lasted for 72 days. 1400 Palestinians were killed. More than 300 were children. This was followed by “Operation Protective Edge” in 2014. The people of Gaza were subjected to butchery on a bigger scale. In fifty days of sustained bombing and artillery attacks, 2,251 Gazans including 551 children lost their lives. Periodically, like clockwork, Israel subjects the people of Gaza to the most horrendous kind of warfare. 15,000 housing units in the enclave were destroyed in the 10-day war of 2019.

The Israeli security establishment has described the regular display of overwhelming military strength in Gaza as akin to “mowing the grass” in its backyard. Mowing the grass at regular intervals also helps the Israeli army test its new weaponry, especially the efficacy of its drone and missile technology, in which it has emerged as a competitor to the bigger arms exporting countries. In the latest war on Gaza, Israel is showing off its prowess in artificial intelligence (AI). Arms export deals represent a substantial portion of the country’s GDP. The international arms bazaar likes nothing better than weapons that have proved their worth in actual combat. There has been extensive use of drones to bomb civilian targets and carry out assassinations of Hamas military and political leaders.

Almost two thirds of the population in Gaza are registered as “refugees”. 600,000 still continue to live in refugee camps. Around half the population of Gaza comprises of children. The unemployment rate in Gaza is over 50 per cent, the highest in the world. Half the population there depends on food aid from outside. Most of the problems ordinary Gazans face is due to the blockade Israel

has imposed turning Gaza into a virtual open-air prison for the people trapped there.

In 2017, Hamas released a political document which accepted the idea of the creation of a Palestinian state in the areas occupied by Israel after the 1967 war. The document states that the Islamist movement is not at war with the Jewish people but only with the ideology of Zionism which propagates the continuing occupation of Palestinian territory. “Hamas advocates the liberation of all of Palestine but is ready to support the state on 1967 borders without recognizing Israel or ceding any rights”, the head of the movement’s political bureau had stated then. At the same time the document had stressed that “armed resistance is considered as the strategic choice for protecting the principles and rights of the Palestinian people”.

That imperialism was critical to the creation of the state of Israel is obvious from the words of the most important leader of the Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl. He had stated that a future state of Israel “should be a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism”. As the current genocidal war on Gaza dragged on, only the United States remained fully committed to Israel. Even the United Kingdom and Germany started calling for a “humanitarian cease fire” in Gaza after the Palestinian casualty figures crossed twenty thousand. The United States was the only country which has been vetoing UN Security Council resolutions calling for a “humanitarian ceasefire” in Gaza.

The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly voted for an immediate cease fire in Gaza in early December. Only the Americans stood with Israel along with a handful of small countries. President Joseph Biden, a self-professed “Zionist” said in the third week of December that he wants Israel to “end the indiscriminate killing of civilians” in Gaza. This was after more than 17,000 Gazans were killed. At the same time, the Biden administration has not stopped replenishing the Israeli army with arms. The

MARXIST

United States has itself not bothered about civilian casualties in all the wars it has conducted. The people of Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries can testify to this fact. Millions of civilians were killed in the wars the Americans waged in Asia in the last seventy years.

Gaza may have been reduced to rubble but the Palestinian cause has been reinvigorated once again. Palestinians have refused to acquiesce to the dictates of Israel and its western backers and be condemned to live the life of second-class citizens in their own homeland. The entire world has been witness to the brutalities inflicted on the hapless people of Gaza and the rest of the occupied territories thanks to the courageous reporting of journalists from ground zero in Gaza. To dissuade the first-hand coverage of the massacre, Israel has been targeting media professionals and their workplaces in the Gaza Strip.

In the 2019 war on Gaza, Israel had indicated that they consider independent reportage as a crime. The building where the offices of the al Jazeera network and the Associated Press were located was among the buildings demolished by Israeli strikes. In the current blitzkrieg on Gaza, more than 90 journalists have been killed. One journalist has been killed almost every day by the occupation forces, making 2023 the most horrific year for reporters. Palestinian journalists accounted for 72 per cent of all the media deaths reported worldwide in 2023.

Israel has also been deliberately targeting Palestinian academics and intellectuals. In the second week of December, the prominent Palestinian academic and writer, Refaat al Ar'eer, was assassinated along with his close family members. His residence in was surgically targeted by the Israeli army. Refaat was a professor at the Islamic University of Gaza. Known among Arabs as the “voice of Gaza, one of Refaat’s last messages was a post condemning the role of the Biden administration and the Democratic Party in the ongoing massacre of Palestinians.

Universities along with schools and hospitals were among

the first to be targeted by the American supported Israeli army. The Islamic University was among those institutions of higher learning destroyed by the Israelis. The head of the institution, Professor Sufian Tayeh, a renowned mathematician along with his close family members, were targeted and killed by the occupation forces.

The collective West under American leadership has seen to it that the inhuman bombing of Gaza has gone on without any meaningful respite. Israel has been using the most modern American weapons available in its onslaught on the hapless people of Gaza. These also include satellite assisted bunker busting bombs and laser guided missiles. The Israeli army has had no compunctions on the dropping 2000-pound bombs on heavily populated areas of Gaza. The American army in its assault on the Iraqi city of Mosul had only used 500-pound bombs. More than a hundred thousand houses in Gaza have been flattened.

The damage inflicted on Gaza just in the first month by Israel was equivalent to the dropping of two nuclear bombs, according to human rights groups. By the first week of November, it was estimated that Israeli forces had used approximately 10 kg of explosives per resident. More than two million people live in the Gaza Strip, the majority of them being women and children. Israel has also been using banned cluster and phosphorus bombs on Gaza. Israel's Health Minister, Amihai Eliyahu, had in fact openly called for the dropping of a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip. Israel is the only country in the region which possesses nuclear weapons. The minister later claimed that he was only speaking "metamorphically".

All the same, according to many military historians, the scale of bombing in Gaza is comparable to the bombing of cities like Dresden, Hamburg and Cologne during World War II. Gaza has gone down in history as a place that has witnessed the heaviest conventional bombing in history so far. The fascist Israeli government claims that its goal is to eradicate Hamas. In actual practice,

MARXIST

it is trying to force the people of Gaza from their land and become refugees again. The overwhelming number of Gazans are descendants of refugees uprooted from their homes during the creation of Israel. The Zionists plan to make them refugees again.

The first thing Israel did in response to the Hamas led attack of October 6 was to cut off almost all essential supplies, including electricity and potable water to the Strip. Top Israeli officials had made it clear from the outset that all Palestinians, including civilians were targets. The Israeli President, Isaac Herzog said that all Palestinians, not just Hamas, should be punished. Israel had initially focused its attacks on northern Gaza, forcing the most of the population there to move to the southern part of the Strip. After destroying the North and making it unlivable, the Israeli forces moved their attention to the South. With the north of the Gaza Strip made out of bounds, the unarmed people of Gaza have no other alternative but to face the incessant Israeli bombing.

“What the Israeli state is doing in Gaza to the Palestinian civilian population—with the support of the Biden administration—is a crime against humanity that serves no meaningful military purpose”, according to the University of Chicago Professor John J. Mearsheimer, an expert on the region and the author of the book “The Zionist Lobby”. He said that Israel “is purposely massacring huge numbers of civilians, roughly 70 per cent of whom are women and children”.

With the attention of the international community rivetted to Gaza, the Israeli army in cahoots with the settlers have also been on a rampage on the West Bank. The Jewish settlers have been attacking Palestinian homes and businesses to further their ethnic cleansing efforts. The Israeli security forces have been actively aiding and abetting their activities. Meanwhile, the Israeli armed forces have been raiding cities like Jenin and Nablus, which have become strongholds of the Palestinian resistance.

Since the extreme right-wing government came to power earlier in the year, the number of Palestinians being killed every

day by the Israeli security forces on the occupied West Bank is increasing. It is obvious that the Zionist state's attempts at ethnic cleansing now extends to all of the occupied territories. The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has once again rejected the idea of a two-state solution despite the international community, including the United States calling for the two-state solution to be implemented to bring about a lasting peace.

Netanyahu continues to be defiant knowing that the powerful Zionist lobby in the United States will prevent any meaningful reaction from the Biden administration. He has said that he would ensure that a two-state solution will never happen. The Trump administration had recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the Golan Heights as part of Israel. The Biden administration has not reversed these decisions. East Jerusalem is the designated capital of a Palestinian state and the Golan is internationally recognized as an integral part of Syria.

The slogan "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be Free" now reverberates from all parts of the world. Huge pro-Palestinian demonstrations were staged in major cities of the world. A recent opinion showed that a majority of Americans want an immediate cease fire in Gaza. A poll published by the Centre for American Political Studies at Harvard University found that American voters aged between 18 to 24 support Hamas than Israel on the subject of Gaza war. But the American political establishment is unmoved and continues to turn a blind eye to the genocide being perpetuated.

SAYANTANI MUKHERJEE AND SHATAM RAY

Imperialist Attempts To Control Protest Narratives

INTRODUCTION

On December 7, 2023, the online edition of *The New York Times* - the much venerated, “paper of record” for American liberals - carried an essay in its Opinion pages titled, “What is Happening at the Columbia School of Social Work?”. The fact that a news platform with mass readership would focus on a School of Social Work’s internal churning seemed rather puzzling, at first. Upon a cursory reading of the essay, though it becomes clear what the intent was; it was to situate Columbia’s Social Work program as a radicalised outlier to a broader American rationality. What was the School’s mistake? In the weeks since Israel’s genocidal war on ordinary Palestinians, the Columbia SSW had taken an ideological stand against Israeli oppression, and worse still for *NYT*, seen the struggle in a larger continuum of oppression of First Nations, Indigenous People, Latino and Black people in America and institutional commitment to “Diversity, Equity, Inclusiveness”.

Despite its clickbait nature, the title of the essay does betray a novel anxiety that has confronted liberal media since October 2023. *What is indeed happening in the US?* How is it that despite decades of laboured complicity, the “Israel Consensus” built by legacy news outlets seems to be crumbling. *NYT* is hardly alone in feeling marooned by its readers; *The Atlantic*, *CNN*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and many other news outlets who had

only recently endeared themselves to a younger audience through some milk-in-water Trump-bashing suddenly had become an object of derision and condemnation for their editorial servility to Israel's goals.¹ Regardless of intent, Hamas has indeed changed the quotidian realities of the world since its audacious military action on October 7, 2023.

The failure of Western media to responsibly report the truth about the genocide has placed a heavy burden on the survivors of this unrelenting slaughter. Palestinians cannot even be given a modicum of pause, privacy, or dignity in their grief and battle for survival, rather, they have had to document, report, and analyse every aspect of the war as they scramble to simply stay alive. Practising journalists like Bisan Owda, Plestia Alaqad, Motaz Azaiza and many others have risen to a charge that should never have been laid on them to begin with. Wael Al-Dahdouh and other journalists have watched their entire families, friends, and communities murdered before their very eyes and continued to set professional standards in the field that the CNN or BBC will never achieve. It is precisely because traditional media (with the exception of Al-Jazeera perhaps) has failed its brief so spectacularly, that social media has now emerged as an important space in first-person reportage and analysis, not just in Palestine, but all over the world where solidarity is shown with Palestinians. While Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are all platforms that are involved in the shaping of this discourse, it is notable that TikTok is at the forefront of running pro-Palestine content. This is striking since among the most widely-used platforms, TikTok is the only one banned in India, and it is therefore pertinent to question whether this app has been somewhat insulated from the particular kinds of disinformation campaigns that have gained traction on other apps. Further, TikTok has also remained largely free of algorithm manipulation in contrast to many other platforms, such as Meta (which includes Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) which has actively attempted to screen and suppress pro-Pales-

tinian content. Online activists have also dedicated their time to finding ways to circumvent the arbitrary “community standards” imposed by these apps, leading to the prevalence of “watermelon content”. Like a delightful Hydra, the black white and green of the Palestinian flag proliferates and dominates social media, taunting the herculean efforts of those scrambling to silence it. “Journalists” in the so-called Global North have begun to sprout spines and consciences, where staff members at outlets like the BBC, CNN, and NYT have been steadily resigning in protest of their employers’ mockery of the field. Social media-driven amplifications of the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement have also translated into targeted economic boycotts that have inflicted measurable damage: Disney and McDonalds, two companies vocal in their support for the Zionist entity, have reported that their stocks are down and sales have slowed. Starbucks, which attempted to sue its pro-Palestinian workers union in the US over a solidarity tweet, has similarly reported that its business has been hurt by boycotts.

This article is about these realignments in which our world seems to exist today. The opening gambit regarding American media establishments is emblematic of a larger crisis where traditional estates of representation find themselves abandoned by their constituents, where old discourses and consensus have collapsed and new sites of solidarity and shared sorrow are emerging.

SECTION I: PROTESTING WAR

The degree to which the popular discourse has shifted in favour of Palestine, the sheer scale and spirit of this enormous solidarity, is deliberately obscured and dismissed by those same media houses desperate to uphold a white supremacist colonial world order. However, the US, the UK, Western Europe and Australia have been witnessing astonishing disruptions to everyday civic life. Ordinary people have declared that there will be no business as usual

while the genocide and the illegal occupation continues. At the time of writing this article, the US has voted a *third* time to veto a resolution for a ceasefire at the United Nations Security Council, while the UK has continued to abstain. Meanwhile, since October 7, the city streets of both these countries have been flooded nearly every single day in singular opposition to the Zionist entity. US Congressional staff are openly protesting their own government or handing in their resignations.

1. Peculiar Battlegrounds

We in India know all too well the great threat that fascist states feel when confronted by stone-throwers. Since 2008, the Zionist entity has been using Skunk² water to target and disperse Palestinian protests everywhere in the Occupied Territories. Described as a “malodorant, non-lethal weapon” by the Israeli Occupying Forces and as the ground-up smell of a “rotting corpse from a stagnant sewer” by witnessing journalists,³ Skunk recently travelled abroad for the first time in January to New York City, when ex-Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) agents infiltrated a massive rally on the Columbia university campus to attack students peacefully protesting genocide.⁴

When did North American college campuses become such activated sites? Since October 7, universities in the USA in particular have witnessed an outpouring of internationalist solidarity not seen since the Vietnam War. Student groups at Columbia and Harvard universities have successfully shut down their respective campuses in waves after waves of pro-Palestine demonstrations, gatherings, and mass actions. At Brown university, students went on a week-long hunger strike to demand that the university divest from pro-Israel companies. At the University of California, Davis, the student government on February 16 successfully passed a measure that would prevent any of the ASUDC’s twenty million budget from being spent on the companies named in the BDS list. Resolutions like these come off the back of years of meticulous

MARXIST

pro-Palestine organising in the US by student groups such as the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and the Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). University administrations across the country have attempted nearly everything to dispel the momentum of the current protests—from sanctimoniously chastising anti-genocide and anti-occupation positions to suspending pro-Palestine student groups (at Rutgers, Columbia, Brandeis, and George Washington Universities), to arbitrarily changing university doctrines on free speech and expression (that dearly treasured American thing), to establishing specified “Demonstration Areas and Times”, to inviting local police to brutally assault and arrest students on their own campuses.

It is important to note that these university protests are not isolated incidents. Rather, in cities such as New York, activists have been relentless in voicing their opposition to the Zionist entity’s assaults, successfully coordinating major disruptions as they call for an immediate ceasefire. On January 9 2024, pro-Palestinian demonstrators blocked all entrances to the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Williamsburg bridges across the East River access into the city, as well as the Holland Tunnel connecting the city with New Jersey across the Hudson River. The momentum refuses to dissipate in the wake of violent reprisals by the city police and government. Building on daily rallies, strategic actions, shutdowns, and other disruptions, two “Global Days of Action for Gaza (and Rafah)” have sought to maximise public participation. On January 13 and February 17, thousands took to the streets again in over a hundred cities in more than forty-five countries across the world, prominent among them London, Washington, Berlin, and Paris. All through the old colonial heartland, people are showing that they do not stand with their cowardly governments. They will not wait for the quibbling language of international law to condemn genocide and illegal occupation. A new generation of committed anti-Zionists and anti-imperialists has taken root in the colonial West, a fact that is not lost on Israeli propagandists.

2. The Labour Movement in the US and International Worker Solidarity

Organised labour in the United States is frequently characterised by its extensive diversity both in rank-and-file membership as well union leadership. Today the labour movement has come to embrace and to a degree even champion racial and gender equality. Nevertheless, labour unions in the United States have historically had a complicated relationship with non-white and non-US workers, the dynamics of which continue to reveal the gap between words and actions with regard to committed internationalist solidarity. Since its organised beginnings, labour has frequently aligned with the foreign military policy objectives of the American government. One of the oldest and largest unions in the US, the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers, vehemently endorsed “no strike” pledges throughout the length of the Second World War to ensure that the American war effort would not be affected.⁵ Discriminatory white union shops, particularly in the American Federation of Labour (AFL), dominated the organised labour landscape. As late as the 1940s, the African-American historian and activist Rayford Logan affirmed that “the ‘solidarity of labour is another myth as far as the history of American labour is concerned.’”⁶ The majority of unions voted in favour of segregationist policies and organised to immobilise African-American workers in specific sectors of the labour market well into the 1950s and 60s, even as the leadership of the national unions pledged support to the Civil Rights movement. And even though the 1964 Civil Rights Act, particularly its Title VII, finally outlawed discrimination in American workplaces and union ranks, union leadership appeared far from motivated to enforce the spirit or letter of that law in workplaces for fear of losing their popular bases.

Similarly, the anti-war mobilisations in the 1960s and 70s against the American invasion of Vietnam saw a split between labour organisers and union leadership, where anti-war union

MARXIST

organisers were ruthlessly silenced by national representatives such as the dedicated anti-communist George Meaney who headed the then recently-merged AFL-CIO (today another one of the largest unions in the country). It was only as late as 1968-1970 that unions broke with the AFL-CIO to oppose the Vietnam war⁷. Nevertheless, the President of the UAW Leonard Woodcock in 1971 while calling for an end to the war, would declare that it was a “romantic illusion” to expect American workers to strike against their own Government, in response to the daylong work stoppages by British trade unions protesting the UK government’s role in Vietnam.

Local unions once again proved they were ahead of the national leadership in the 1970s and 80s, when workers organised a series of actions in solidarity with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, while the AFL-CIO and the UAW dithered and vacillated. In 1984, port workers in San Francisco boycotted loading goods onto South African ships, while AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland worried about the optics of supporting a boycott and divestment campaign against South Africa, fearing that the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela were “too far left.”⁸ During the American invasion of Iraq, union organisers were once again flooding the streets even as the silence from leadership was deafening.

As a graduate student organiser in Columbia between 2014-2021, one could barely get a discussion started about the possibility of our local union adopting a BDS resolution. Instead, we were told it would actively hamper labour organising efforts by “alienating” fellow student-workers. From loudly ignoring the repeated calls to demonstrate solidarity with workers living under colonial occupation in Palestine, the re-emergent labour movement in the USA today has finally seen fit to throw its weight behind the bare minimum of humanitarian action. On December 1, the UAW (our parent union), released a historic ceasefire resolution, followed by other labour unions such as the United Electrical Work-

ers, the American Postal Workers Unions, the Service Employees International Union, and in early February, the AFL-CIO. However, those statements have yet to result in coordinated action by these national organisations. It is deeply frustrating that media alienation, internal divisions, and frequent institutional meddling have thwarted concerted anti-war mobilisation such as work stoppages and strikes despite the stated opposition to the war.

It bears note that while organisations such as the UAW appear to remain conflicted about further demonstrable acts of solidarity so as to put “America(n workers) First”, many other labour organisers and activists in both the US and Canada have put their livelihoods at stake to prevent weapons-carrying shipments bound for the Zionist entity, from leaving the docks. In this heroic determination to disrupt genocidal supply chains everywhere in the world, they have been joined by the Water Transport Workers Federation of India, which has declared that it will not handle weapons shipments to the Zionist entity.

3. The Success of #Shutelbitdown

When has a #hashtag truly changed history? While the authors are loath to enter the murky waters of debating the impact of social (media) movements, this particular one has inspired truly spectacular consequences. Elbit Systems happens to be the Zionist entity’s largest arms company, supplying as it does the occupying military forces with eight-five percent of their drones and eighty-five percent of their land-based equipment.⁹ Elbit’s surveillance equipment monitors Palestinians through drone operations, at border points, and across the apartheid wall. Elbit’s small calibre munitions are used by the IOF to attack, maim, and kill Palestinians, which the company successfully also imports to other countries to consolidate imperialist terror-states elsewhere. The drones have been deployed by British military and border operations, and are the pride of the European Union’s militarised border agency, Frontex. The same technologies outfitting the apartheid

wall are deployed along the US' border wall with Mexico, where they are used to monitor indigenous lands and the movement of people. Jeff Halper's *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians, and Global Pacification* lays out in terrifying detail the enmeshed network of cost-effective militarised technology and weapons exchanges between the Zionist entity, and the US, India, China, Poland, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, and Sudan, among many others.

Activists with Palestine Action's UK chapter first led the charge in September 2020, when protestors occupied an Elbit factory in Shenstone. Since then, activists have relentlessly targeted Elbit factories across the UK and its headquarters in London, disrupting business by blockading, occupying, and defacing these properties. The unyielding pressure of these disruptive actions has recently led to the permanent closure of the London HQ as well as iO Associates (Elbit's sole recruiters in the UK) cutting ties with that company in December 2023. Following PalAction UK's lead, since October the US chapter has also staged blockades at Elbit's "Innovation Centre" in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Elbit Systems has also been dropped by Japan's Itochu Corp. as of February 2024. PalAction UK has meanwhile trained its sights on Barclays bank as its next target.

The authors note with curiosity and some amusement that had this vehement political roiling occurred anywhere in the so-called Global South—where people flood the city streets every day decrying and protesting their own governments, where citizens mobilise by pledging not to vote for any of the major national parties in the elections—had this churning inflamed the national landscape of anywhere that is not the so-called West, the US allied with the UK would have already announced their intention to stabilise the region via a military occupation. One wonders if any kind of true revolutionary change is possible in North America, or even the Global North more broadly. Perhaps the political terrain is too fragmented, perhaps white supremacy is insurmountable,

Imperialist Attempts To Control Protest Narratives

perhaps social media activism is too prevalent, perhaps the logic of settler colonisation will always co-opt agitation to domesticate and tame insurgent protest so that the state and its institutions are ultimately preserved, Notwithstanding, it remains the case that the discourse has not simply shifted on Palestine, what we are witnessing is a deep rejection of imperial capitalism and all its apparatus.

SECTION II: WAR AS PROTEST

While the range of protests being coordinated across the United States and Western Europe is significant, attention must also be paid to the corresponding and distinct movements emerging within the geopolitical context of the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries. On the face of it, MENA countries are often seen as *innately* anti-Israel out of a presumed belonging to a historically unified, Islamic *ummah*. It is an implicit argument you will find in much of the western coverage of the protests that not only diminishes the significance of protest gatherings in the MENA but simultaneously, reserves the western-located protests as remarkable for what they may represent about universal values of liberalism and human rights that specifically seek their origins in Anglo-Saxon democracies. There is much to unpack there but for our immediate purposes, we will focus on the following three aspects of protests.

1. Houthis of Yemen and Scales of Warfare

The Houthis, or *Ansar Allah*, are mostly familiar to us as an “Iranian proxy militia”, based in Yemen. The Houthis are, in fact, the *de facto* governing political class of much of Yemen, with their stronghold in the North and close strategic ties with Iran. That said, the Houthis maintain an independent political profile and agenda. The series of military attacks within Yemen, carried out by US and the United Kingdom [the official language insists on

calling it a US-UK led *alliance*] since the beginning of 2024 hence ought to be first seen as a punitive military invasion against a sovereign government for having an independent foreign policy, divergent from US interests and detrimental to global capital flows.

Since the beginning of Israel's *latest* war on Gaza in October 2023, the Houthis have been unambiguous in their condemnation of Israel. Much like the BDS movements, Yemen has targeted the economic networks that sustain Israel's military hegemony by specifically disrupting commercial traffic across the Red Sea. The bulk of the trade across this route, that connects Northern Europe to the Indian Ocean, is carried out by private shipping companies, notably *Maersk* and *Mediterranean Shipping Company* – both European transportation conglomerates. Another company that has been adversely affected by Yemen's actions is the formerly colonial Anglo-Iranian Oil Company or *British Petroleum*, of today. Houthi military spokesperson, Yahya Saree, has gone on record saying that the purpose of carrying out drone and missile attacks against foreign owned vessels through the Strait of Bab al-Mandab is to singularly debilitate commercial movement to Israeli-held ports. The US and UK government's military retaliation, deemed "barbaric" by the Houthis, is ostensibly to protect "innocent lives" and limit disruptions to global commodity networks.¹⁰

The US and UK deem their actions necessary, citing the need to secure safe passage for consumer goods, though as a recent *S&P Global Market Intelligence Research* pointed out, Houthi actions have been carried out in what is considered to be an "off season" for consumer goods cargo. What is, of course, more alarming is the potential and precedent of threat that the Houthis pose, rather than an *actual* impact on consumer prices.¹¹ It is also important to remind readers that an alternate route, besides the Red Sea route, does exist, if the US-NATO allies were serious about avoiding a larger regional conflict. The alternate route to Suez Canal passage runs through the southern tip of Africa – Cape of Good Hope – and is a route that adds nearly 6,000 km (or 3,400 nautical miles)

in distance and takes nearly 10 days more to complete the journey. As trite as it may seem, the US-UK military retaliations do seem preemptive but are solely in the interests of ensuring that oil prices remain stable. A Europe already reeling from its embargo on Russian crude and refined oil can ill-afford any further vulnerability against oil and liquified natural gas (LNG) prices and the waterways under consideration makes up about 22% of refined oil imported by Europe and North Africa. What adds to the barbarism of US and UK's retaliatory actions is that it is being carried out against a country that the World Food Program considers to be arguably the most "food insecure" nation in the world.

Additionally, while information is scarce about the precision of US-UK strikes in Yemen, these strikes ought to be seen on a longer continuum of colonial and neocolonial interventions in the region. The sea route via the Suez Canal has, in fact, been a theatre of colonial intervention since the second half of the nineteenth century. The right of passage across the Red Sea and determining the fair use of Suez Canal was central to the sovereign claims of decolonizing nations taking control of their own resources at the end of the Second World War and readers familiar with this history, may recall the Tripartite Anglo-French-Israel invasion of Egypt when Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in July 1956. It is quite remarkable that for more than a century, the sovereign claims of Afro-Arab people on the Red Sea-Suez Canal passage continue to be seen as a "terror tactic".

2. War in the Age of Capitalism

At the time of writing this essay, the death toll in Gaza alone has surpassed 29,000. While perfunctory words of 'regret' have been doled out by the warmongering US-UK-Israel triad, there is a dire need to also reflect on what has ensured the baffling scale of deaths (in such a short time) as well as demystifying Israel's relentless military campaign, *despite the polite objections* from its

MARXIST

Western allies.¹²

The success of Israeli onslaught in claiming a disproportionate number of lives as well as the Houthi-led government's successes in disrupting business should be seen through an intersection of technology, the legacies of the Cold War and the changing contours of contemporary capitalism. Houthis have deployed anywhere from drones, missiles to well-armed soldiers that have taken over entire vessels. Depending on the volume they are carrying, and the destination they are intended for, giant container ships could be 300 meters long and carry within them up to a million barrels of highly flammable oil. Moreover, Yemeni fighters are targeting the narrower stretches of the Red Sea (the strait of Bab al-Mandab is a little over 30 km wide) which means that even poorer, less-equipped militias can inflict heavy damage without amassing stockpiles of ammunition. Western and other liberal media outlets can't seem to tire themselves of repeating how the Houthis are sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran. There is no denying that the Iranian regime has often emboldened actors such as Hezbollah, Houthis and certain Shia-militias in Iraq to counter the US-Saudi proxy influence in the region. Iran has either transferred technology, or through circuitous landscapes – especially the Omani-Yemeni border zone – exported *Burkan* series ballistic missiles, Quds cruise missiles and the al-Mandab-1 antiship missiles. The fact that the Houthis used Soviet manufactured OTR-21 *Tochka* to inflict casualties on the US-backed Arab coalition during the days of the Civil War, also suggests contacts with the DPRK establishment. Though in truth, Yemen receives a huge cache of its arms from the USA and its primary ally in the region, Saudi Arabia. The latter was supposed to keep the western-aligned, rebel government (headquartered in the southern capital of Sana'a) in place, although since the rebel government has such poor control of its weaponry, the Houthis in the years even prior to the Civil War could organise looting of the munitions and bolster their own stockpile.

Imperialist Attempts To Control Protest Narratives

Since 2009, the United States has delivered over \$444 billion in arms sales to nearly 170 countries. A major consumer of American weapon merchandise has been the Middle East. Despite serious humanitarian, legal and moral concerns, three successive regimes in the US, Barack Obama, Donald J. Trump and now, Joseph Biden have weaponized some of the most brutal, authoritarian regimes in West Asia including Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In the Yemen conflict alone, since 2015, UAE and Saudi regimes have indiscriminately used US-acquired weaponry that has claimed the lives of 377,000 people. It is worth remarking here that the sharp increase in deaths- in times of conflicts and wars in the last couple of decades- is a direct function of the enhanced weapon technologies being manufactured in, and sold by countries such as the US. Similarly US defence also plays an instrumental role in technological infrastructure and transference that is used for sophisticated surveillance technology such as Project Raven and helps repressive regimes such as the Emirati governments to target civil rights activists, journalists and non-governmental officials.

Until the Arms Trade Treaty became international law in December 2014, there were more international laws regulating trade in bananas than the arms trade. In an incredible remark made by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban ki Moon indicated that between 1990 and 2005, “23 African countries lost an estimated \$284 billion as a result of armed conflicts, fueled by transfers of ammunition and arms – 95 per cent of which came from outside Africa.” The US under former President Donald Trump “un-signed” the treaty, though notably President Biden has not rescinded the decision. As the world’s largest exporter of lethal weapons, US initiated arms transfers are responsible for some of the gravest episodes in international conflicts. Second, in his executive capacity, President Biden does not even require Congressional approval [the US Congress, by a slim majority is held by the opposing Republican Party] to re-enter the ATT

MARXIST

agreements. However, since the US itself relies on a range of private manufacturers to meet its own defence needs as well as the military aid it gives out to NATO and non-NATO allies, these American manufacturers cleverly lobby levers of power in Washington DC to earn regulatory oversight in their operations.

Lockheed Martin, RTX Corp, Northrop Grumman, Boeing and General Dynamics – all US based Companies – also happen to be 5 of the world's 6 biggest defence companies by revenue. Interestingly, two European companies that aren't typically associated with defence manufacture- Rolls Royce and Airbus- also get 20% of their revenue from manufacturing defence components and engines for combat naval and aircraft use. In 2019, the Amnesty International found that, over the course of the "Yemen conflict", Boeing, BAE Systems, Raytheon and Lockheed Martin were "supplying, servicing and arming a fleet of combat aircraft that has [sic] repeatedly struck civilian objects, including residential areas, schools, hospitals and marketplaces." This same report continued to argue that while ATT and other domestic legislations called upon states to regulate international arms trade, private companies [in the supply of military goods and services] were often violating these regulations with seeming impunity and state complicity. Lockheed Martin has made a total contribution of \$ 1.67 millions to both the primary parties in the American system including \$ 126,581 to Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in 2022. Similarly, Raytheon Tech had raised over \$ 4.25 millions up until 2019-2020 as contributions to various Political Action Committees [or PACs, which are tax-exempt organisations that pool campaign contributions and donate those funds to campaigns for or against candidates, ballot initiatives, or legislation]. In its own disclosure, Raytheon Tech [publicly traded as RTX Corp] contributed over 1.86 million to federal candidates for the 2020 elections, split 48.2% : 51.5% between Democrats and Republicans respectively. For its part, Boeing Co. has not even made its political contributions public and for this reason,

the *American Democracy Scorecard*, a platform that tracks political spending and corporate values in the US, has rated all three corporations named above an “F” grade.

The point is rather simple, as it is age old. While the Houthis-led Yemen Government’s actions are highly significant, they do not pose a grave threat to international trading networks. There are alternatives that the US and UK can exercise and commission but instead, they have chosen to pound an already battered country with its expensive bombs. Second, the “Axis of Resistance” represented by Iran, Hezbollah, Houthis and some other non-state actors, are often blamed for expanding the war regionally. However, long-standing trends show that there is a direct correlation between arms sale by the US to the region and deepening of conflicts while also leading to increased human loss.

3. Diplomacy and Democracy, or Lack Thereof

The FIFA World Cup in Qatar, 2022 was a spectacle of grandiose scale. And yet, to most western commentators, the event could only be seen from the familiar lens of lacks, absences and of course, orientalism. But far away from the scorn and longing for a pub or a beer to watch the games was an unfolding of Arab public spheres. The surprise run of the Moroccan National Team at the event was the most exhilarating episode from that edition of the tournament, until Lionel Messi claimed for himself the title that had long eluded him. However, the Moroccan Team’s dream run became an unanticipated site of pan-Arab solidarity as well as voicing support for the Palestinian cause. It was reported that the Qatar edition of the tournament saw the highest congregation of Palestinians at any modern World Cup. Unlike the previous edition in Russia, where there were reports of ground security prohibiting any political banners or flags, including the Palestinian cause, so overwhelming was the support for Palestine during the Qatar edition that *+972 Magazine*, a joint Palestinian-Israeli journalistic platform, emotively called it “The first Palestinian

MARXIST

World Cup”. Every successive stage that the Moroccan national team seemed to be clearing would become a reason for an even bigger congregation at the al-Aqsa mosque or just the streets of Gaza, West Bank or East Jerusalem. At each instance of these burgeoning congregations, in an apparent response to the widespread rebuke Israeli sports journalists were receiving in Qatar, Israeli police and armed forces would violently and needlessly disperse the celebrating crowd.

It is no secret that many regimes in West Asia have built their power on extractive capitalism and simultaneous disenfranchisement of its own citizenry as well as exploitation of immigrant labour. At the same time, Israel which has long fashioned itself as a democratic *jazirah* (if you will) in the region has not had any compunctions signing “normalisation” treaties with many such regimes under the Abrahamic Accords.¹³ Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman, Morocco and Sudan have now conferred some form of diplomatic recognition on to Israel while the latter continues to sell some of its most advanced weaponry and agricultural modernization technologies (including artificial fertilisers) to many countries in Africa.¹⁴ However, as polls conducted in many of these countries found out, respondents to surveys enquiring after the approval of the Abrahamic Accords declared a near unanimous rejection of their respective governments initiatives to normalise relations with Israel. Furthermore, in a survey conducted by a Washington DC based Institute, only 16% of Saudi respondents were in favour of Hamas accepting a two-state solution. As Israel’s war has raged on since Hamas’ audacious military actions, cities small and big, across the region have reinvested their common cause with Palestine. Of course, unlike in the West where the growing support for Palestine is truly a novel moment, the common cause with Palestinians amongst MENA people is a long-standing issue. As many commentators have remarked, the numbers of those gathering, sloganeering and marching in many instances is the first instance of large scale

mobilisation since the heady days of the “Arab Spring” (with perhaps the exception of Iran, where recent protests against the Morality Police after the mysterious death of Mahsa Amini in police custody saw huge numbers of anti-government protestors). The mass killing in Gaza has been such an emotive issue that even those regimes in the region which are scarcely tolerant of any mass gathering in their territories have had to capitulate and allowed people to express their opinion on this particular matter; howsoever at variance it may be from the government’s official position. Bahrain, which has banned all forms of public protest gatherings since 2011, was rocked by large pro-Palestinian gatherings, that included images of the Bahrain Monarch shaking hands with Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Since November 2023, Bahrain became the first co-signatory of the Abrahamic Accords to suspend economic ties with Israel while also recalling its Ambassador from Tel Aviv.

Given how the US, Israel and their allies in UK, France and Canada have worked hard in emboldening authoritarian figures such as the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, the October protests at Tahrir Square – the site of Egypt’s 2011 Arab Spring – ought to be seen as being significant. While the protests were largely condoned by the President, the rogue sloganeering of “Bread, Freedom, Justice” (the rallying cry of Arab Spring protests) portends as a gateway for the oppression in Palestine becoming a larger metaphor. In one instance after another, the fate of Gazans is further deepening the protest ethic in many other authoritarian societies and expansion of public spheres under the guise of Palestinian solidarity. This is not the place or the time to forecast a Second Arab Spring. It is quite unlikely any meaningful political transformation is possible just on the question of Palestinian liberation. Instead, it would be more productive to reflect on how, at the very precise moment, when in western democracies the mainstream media is completely out-of-step from its demographically diverse electorate [thereby producing a crisis

of representation], countries across the MENA region are seeing a growing correspondence between people's preferences their government's official positions.¹⁵ In other words, the war in Gaza has produced an unanticipated inflection point for *not just* postcolonial societies but Western democracies, themselves.

So in light of these conversations, a final point needs to be made; why has Israel's response been so indiscriminate? A potential answer requires us to turn to a different location; the vast Sonoran Desert that runs across the US-Mexico Border. The Southern border of the US has always been a lightning rod for politics of a certain kind in American discourse. It would be unfair to call it by a partisan name—Republican—because the Democratic Party too has very strong elements where the 'spectre of immigrants' overwhelming American life has found popular support. Whether it is New York Mayor Eric Adams or even the US President more recently, who is asking the House of Representatives to award him executive powers to "close down" the borders, a xenophobic strand runs across the basic political divide in the US. Aiding US efforts to apprehend "illegal" migrants and using devastating powers of technology to deter them is Israel's Elbit Systems. From the *Hermes* drones (used since 2004, and particularly in the 2008 and 2014 assaults on Gaza) or the \$145 million contract to construct integrated fixed towers system in Nogales, Arizona, Elbit Systems and its American subsidiaries [as well as those of Israel Aerospace Industries] have been in the forefront of US' pervasive anti-immigration war. But defence and building contractors need to have opportunities to exhibit their prowess and efficacy. The "precision" through which Israel gets to raze Gaza to ground provides an excellent opportunity for Israeli firms to show to the world why they are leaders in defence manufacture and contractors. In the same way, the Spanish Civil War became the dress rehearsal for emergent warfare technology of the 1930s, Palestine today is the ground zero for weaponry and surveillance technology. Anthony Lowenstein has written a per-

suasive book, *The Palestine Laboratory*, where he traces the machinations through which Israel exports its terror and in turn, makes democracies and despots complicit in its crime.¹⁶ Gaza, nay Palestinians, are the “perfect laboratory for the Israeli techno-military complex”. The support for Israel in European nations – Germany especially but Italy, Greece et al – is not merely a nation atoning for its history of anti-Jew hate and purges. It is not a strategic investment in keeping the Middle East volatile for its own strategic purposes either. It is also the corpse of Alan Kurdi; the 2-year old Kurdish-Syrian boy whose body washed up on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, after drowning in those treacherous waters. The technology to survey waters and the discretion to deliberately let refugees drown instead of rescuing them is devised in Israel’s war in Palestine.

CONCLUSION

On January 26, 2024 judges of the ICJ gave a provisional verdict on South Africa’s case against Israel’s genocidal intent in Gaza. The interim verdict mattered precious little. People have long known that international law carries tacit impunity for Western Countries and their savagery. Israel cynically decried South Africa’s case as an electoral ploy by the ruling ANC to distract the electorate from its own failings, as a party of proposition. It was a deceitful assessment that Israeli authorities are quite adept at but still, they admitted to a larger truth. The fate of Palestine matters to people around the world. It has the ability to forge real political alliances and consequent electoral fortunes.

The web of entanglements in which the suffering of Gazans today sits is both simultaneously complex and easy to follow. There is nothing more to illustrate than merely to remind that for global flows of capital and labour to serve the interests of Global North is premised on imperialism being co-constitutive of capitalism. The death of a Palestinian in Gaza or West Bank is deeply

MARXIST

linked to the terrifying tribulations of Central Americans trying to cross the Darien Gap, the Syrian boat on the verge of drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, the Thai labourer collapsing under the weight of debts accrued in his labour building apartment complexes in Tel Aviv, the murder of Reuters journalists, or the gradual rise of right-wing authoritarianism creeping up on us. The only difference is that we do not have an SOS signal to send to anyone that can come and rescue us. We have to rise to the occasion.

NOTES

- 1 In its Podcast episode aired on October 11, 2023 the show, *The Daily*, the host of the show, Michael Barbaro sat down with *NYT*'s former Jerusalem bureau chief, Steven Erlanger and the two rehearsed what potential strategies would allow Israel's defence forces to inflict maximum harm on Palestinian territories. The *WSJ* went so far as to declare the City of Dearborn, Michigan to be the "Jihad Capital of America" due to its high concentration of Arab Americans. *NYT*'s star contributor wrote an article in which he compared Iranians, Palestinians and Lebanon Arabs to worms and vermin, without as much as a single moment of hesitation. *The Atlantic* has carried unapologetic pieces using deeply dehumanising and Islamophobic language against people of the region, while also publishing polemical pieces intolerant of any view divergent from what Israeli authorities wish to disseminate.
- 2 Skunk water is a liquid compound with an overpowering odour similar to the smell of sewage mixed with rotting corpses. Used as a crowd control weapon it is named after the cat-sized American mammal of the weasel family, which when threatened squirts a foul-smelling irritant liquid from its anal glands towards its attacker.
- 3 Noah Browning, 'Israeli "skunk" fouls West Bank protests,' Reuters September 3, 2012.
- 4 It bears mentioning that in 2017 the Zionist entity attempted to sell the weapon to the Indian government for use in Kashmir. It was ultimately not approved for use since control tests in Delhi found that the Indian test subjects could tolerate the smell.
- 5 See Arthur Herman *Freedom's Forge: How American Business Produced Victory in World War II* (2012).
- 6 Rayford Logan, "The Negro Wants First-Class Citizenship," in Rayford W. Logan, ed., *What the Negro Wants* (1944).
- 7 See in particular Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers,*

Imperialist Attempts To Control Protest Narratives

George Meany, *Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (1999)

- 8 See Jeff Schuhrke, *Blue Collar Empire: The Untold Story of US Labour's Global Anticommunist Crusade* (2024).
- 9 Elbit systems: company profile, on Corporate Watch.
- 10 Though of their own admission, and from latest reports (as of February 19, 2024) regarding Belize-bound cargo ship *Rubymar* and another vessel contacting for British rescue mission (185 km off Aden), the US-led strikes have done nothing to deter the Yemeni government's resolve to continue their operations. When US President, Joseph Biden was asked on January 18, 2024 (outside the White House) if the strikes against the Yemenis were working, he said "When you say working, are they stopping the Houthis, no. Are they going to continue, yes."
- 11 That said, the Swedish home goods store, *Ikea* and American automobile manufacturer, *Tesla* have both reported that their distribution networks have been affected since the Yemeni action began.
- 12 The most damaging rebuke to have come from the US was on February 8, 2024, when President Biden called "[Israel's]conduct of the response" in Gaza to be "over the top". It is also at this press conference that President Biden claimed that he was [singularly] responsible for "Mexican President Sisi" allowing limited aid to filter through to southern Gaza. President Biden, whose cognitive abilities have been recently called into question, seems to be referring to Abdel Fattah el-Sisi who is the President of Egypt. At the time of writing this article, Gaza did not yet share borders with Mexico.
- 13 To be sure, Israel itself employs nearly 120,000 migrant labourers (predominantly in construction and farm jobs), most of whom come from Thailand, Cambodia, Nepal, Rumania, and Moldova. Since the Second *Intifada*, it has been a deliberate attempt by Israeli authorities and private contractors (with transnational linkages to coercive labour markets in China and elsewhere) to replace their Arab residents and employing foreign workers under conditions, which by a recent Report commissioned by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (UN OCHA), that are akin to modern-day slave labour conditions. There is rampant evidence of holding workers captive by confiscating their passports and a big portion of their wages is handed over to the labour contractors and touts that brought them to Israel, in the first place. It is for this reason that Construction Workers Federation of India (CWFI) decision to oppose conscription of daily wage labourers in the states of Haryana and Uttarakhnad is significant.
- 14 The case of Uganda is a good example. Julia Sebutinde of Uganda, the first African woman to sit on the ICJ, was the only judge to have voted against every single measure brought by the South African legal team

MARXIST

in their case against Israel. While the government of Uganda distanced itself from Sebutinde's judgement, reaffirming its own position through a recently adopted resolution at the Non-Aligned Summit in Kampala, others were curious to look into Uganda-Israel relations. Over the last couple of decades, the strategic and defense relations between the two countries have grown closer, with MoUs on defense and cooperation signed back in 2022. Emblematic of this proximity was, a *New York Times* investigative journalism piece revealed that Israeli-owned company, Cellebrite sold espionage and hacking software to Uganda's police force that was used for purposes of extreme surveillance amid news of human rights abuses, arbitrary detention and torture against opposition and human rights activists.

- 15 Just one example should suffice. Faisal bin Farhan, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, on February 18, 2024 officially said that a Palestinian statehood [through a two-state solution] is a "prerequisite" for any normalisation of relations with Israel; a sharp *volte face* for its previous diplomatic engagements with Israel where no such precondition was asked for.
- 16 Antony Loewenstein, *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World* (2023).

DOCUMENTS

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa in the International Court of Justice seeking institution of proceedings against Israel under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

INTRODUCTION

This Application concerns acts threatened, adopted, condoned, taken and being taken by the Government and military of the State of Israel against the Palestinian people, a distinct national, racial and ethnical group, in the wake of the attacks in Israel on 7 October 2023. South Africa unequivocally condemns all violations of international law by all parties, including the direct targeting of Israeli civilians and other nationals and hostage-taking by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. No armed attack on a State's territory no matter how serious — even an attack involving atrocity crimes — can, however, provide any possible justification for, or defence to, breaches of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide ('Genocide Convention' or 'Convention'),¹ whether as a matter of law or morality. The acts and omissions by Israel complained of by South Africa are genocidal in character because they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group, that being the part of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip ('Palestinians in Gaza'). The acts in question include killing Palestinians in Gaza,

causing them serious bodily and mental harm, and inflicting on them conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction. The acts are all attributable to Israel, which has failed to prevent genocide and is committing genocide in manifest violation of the Genocide Convention, and which has also violated and is continuing to violate its other fundamental obligations under the Genocide Convention, including by failing to prevent or punish the direct and public incitement to genocide by senior Israeli officials and others.

South Africa is acutely aware of the particular weight of responsibility in initiating proceedings against Israel for violations of the Genocide Convention. However, South Africa is also acutely aware of its own obligation — as a State party to the Genocide Convention — to prevent genocide. Israel's acts and omissions in relation to Palestinians violate the Genocide Convention. That is the shared view of numerous other States parties to the Convention, including the State of Palestine itself, which has called on “world leaders” to “take responsibility... to stop the genocide against our people”.² United Nations experts have also repeatedly sounded “the alarm” for over 10 weeks that “[c]onsidering statements made by Israeli political leaders and their allies, accompanied by military action in Gaza and escalation of arrests and killing in the West Bank” there is a “risk of genocide against the Palestinian people”.³ United Nations experts have also expressed their “profound ... concern” about “the failure of the international system to mobilise to prevent genocide” against Palestinians, and have called on the “international community” to “do everything it can to immediately end the risk of genocide against the Palestinian people”.⁴ The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (‘CERD’), acting under its ‘early warning and urgent action procedure’, has also called on “*all State parties*” to the Genocide Convention to “fully respect” their “obligation to prevent... genocide”.⁵ This application by South Africa and its request for the indication of provisional measures

fall to be considered in that context and in the light of those calls. It is made against the background of South Africa's foreign policy objective for the attainment of a durable peace between Israel and the State of Palestine, with two States existing side by side within internationally recognised borders, based on those existing on 4 June 1967, prior to the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, in line with all relevant United Nations resolutions and international law.

Repeated statements by Israeli State representatives, including at the highest levels, by the Israeli President, Prime Minister, and Minister of Defence express genocidal intent. That intent is also properly to be inferred from the nature and conduct of Israel's military operation in Gaza, having regard *inter alia* to Israel's failure to provide or ensure essential food, water, medicine, fuel, shelter and other humanitarian assistance for the besieged and blockaded Palestinian people, which has pushed them to the brink of famine. It is also clear from the nature, scope and extent of Israel's military attacks on Gaza, which have involved the sustained bombardment over more than 11 weeks of one of the most densely populated places in the world, forcing the evacuation of 1.9 million people or 85% of the population of Gaza from their homes and herding them into ever smaller areas, without adequate shelter, in which they continue to be attacked, killed and harmed. Israel has now killed in excess of 21,110 named Palestinians, including over 7,729 children — with over 7,780 others missing, presumed dead under the rubble — and has injured over 55,243 other Palestinians, causing them severe bodily and mental harm. Israel has also laid waste to vast areas of Gaza, including entire neighbourhoods, and has damaged or destroyed in excess of 355,000 Palestinian homes, alongside extensive tracts of agricultural land, bakeries, schools, universities, businesses, places of worship, cemeteries, cultural and archaeological sites, municipal and court buildings, and critical infrastructure, including water and sanitation facilities and electricity networks, while pursuing a relentless assault on

MARXIST

the Palestinian medical and healthcare system. Israel has reduced and is continuing to reduce Gaza to rubble, killing, harming and destroying its people, and creating conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction as a group.

Pursuant to Article 74(4) of the Rules of Court, South Africa requests the President of the Court to protect the Palestinian people in Gaza by calling upon Israel immediately to halt all military attacks that constitute or give rise to violations of the Genocide Convention pending the holding of such hearing, so as to enable any order the Court may make on the request for the indication of provisional measures to have its appropriate effects. To that end, the Court should order Israel to cease killing and causing serious mental and bodily harm to Palestinian people in Gaza, to cease the deliberate infliction of conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction as a group, to prevent and punish direct and public incitement to genocide, and to rescind related policies and practices, including regarding the restriction on aid and the issuing of evacuation directives.

JURISDICTION OF THE COURT

South Africa and Israel are both Members of the United Nations and therefore bound by the Statute of the Court, including Article 36 (1), which provides that the Court's jurisdiction "comprises . . . all matters specially provided for . . . in treaties and conventions in force".

South Africa and Israel are also parties to the Genocide Convention.

Article IX of the Genocide Convention provides:

"Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfilment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article III, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of

any of the parties to the dispute.”

Having regard to the fact that the prohibition of genocide has the character of a peremptory norm and that the obligations under the Convention are owed *erga omnes* and *erga omnes partes*,⁶ Israel has been made fully aware of the grave concerns expressed by the international community, by States Parties to the Genocide Convention, and by South Africa in particular, as to Israel’s failure to cease, prevent and punish the commission of genocide.

THE FACTS

INTRODUCTION

Since 7 October 2023, Israel has engaged in a large-scale military assault by land, air and sea, on the Gaza Strip (‘Gaza’), a narrow strip of land approximately of 365 square kilometres – one of the most densely populated places in the world.⁷ Gaza — home to approximately 2.3 million people, almost half of them children — has been subjected by Israel to what has been described as one of the “heaviest conventional bombing campaigns” in the history of modern warfare.⁸ By 29 October 2023 alone, it was estimated that 6,000 bombs per week had been dropped on the tiny enclave.⁹ In just over two months, Israel’s military attacks had “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.” The destruction wrought by Israel is so extreme that “Gaza is now a different colour from space. It’s a different texture”.

BACKGROUND

The Gaza Strip (‘Gaza’)

Gaza is a narrow strip of land, bordered to the west by the Mediterranean Sea, to the south by Egypt and to the north and east by Israel. Together with the West Bank, including East Jerusalem,

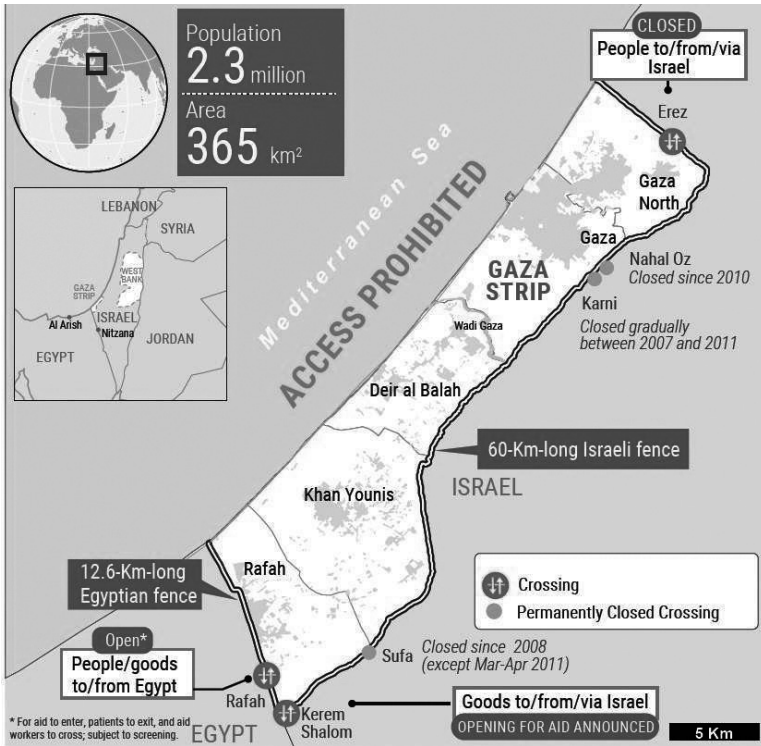
MARXIST

it is one of the two constituent territories of the occupied Palestinian territory ('oPt') — occupied by Israel in 1967 — and of the State of Palestine, recognised by South Africa on 15 February 1995, and accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations on 29 November 2012.¹⁰

The population of Gaza consists of approximately 2.3 million people, over half of whom are children. 80 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza are refugees — and their descendants — from towns and villages in what is now the State of Israel,¹¹ expelled or forced to flee during the mass displacement of over 750,000 Palestinians or 'Nakba' during the establishment of the State of Israel.¹² The Nakba and the mass displacement associated with it therefore features prominently in the history and consciousness of Palestinians in Gaza, as it does for the wider Palestinian people. Palestinians in Gaza form a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group: they are a prominent part of the group, making up the population of one of the two constituent territories of the State of Palestine. They are also a quantitatively substantial part of the Palestinian population of the State of Palestine under occupation, which counts approximately 5.48 million people.¹³

MAP OF THE GAZA STRIP

Until 2005, Gaza — like the West Bank today — was occupied by Israeli military forces on the ground. However, in 2005, Israel unilaterally 'disengaged' from Gaza, dismantling its military bases and relocating Israeli settlers from settlements in Gaza back to Israel and into the occupied West Bank.¹⁴ Notwithstanding its 'disengagement', Israel continues to exercise control over the airspace, territorial waters, land crossings, water, electricity, electromagnetic sphere and civilian infrastructure in Gaza,¹⁵ as well as over key governmental functions, such as the management of the Palestinian population registry for Gaza.¹⁶ Given that continuing effective control by Israel over the territory, Gaza is still con-



sidered by the international community to be under belligerent occupation by Israel.¹⁷

Entry and exit by air and sea to Gaza has been prohibited since the early 1990s, with Israel operating only two crossing points – Erez (pedestrian) and Kerem Shalom (goods) – through which Palestinians in Gaza could access the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, for business, trade, healthcare and social and family functions.¹⁸ However, Israel imposed a stringent blockade of Gaza, following Hamas’ electoral victory in 2006 that was followed by inter-Palestinian violence, declaring the entire territory to be a ‘hostile territory’.¹⁹ Existing restrictions on the movement of persons were significantly tightened, with most Palestinians in Gaza being ineligible for permits to travel, leading to prolonged, indefinite separation for many Palestinian families.²⁰ The few who were eligible to travel did “not necessarily receive permits and

MARXIST

almost always encounter[ed] delays and difficulties in the process”.²¹ Between 2008 and 2021, the World Health Organization (‘WHO’) recorded that 839 Palestinians from Gaza had died while waiting for medical permits to leave Gaza for urgent medical treatment.²² The majority of permits were for day labourers and agricultural traders, primarily to undertake low-skilled work in Israel and on Israeli settlements in the West Bank.²³ Between 2007 and 2010, Israel regulated food imports into Gaza in accordance with calories consumed per person, to limit the transfers of food to a ‘humanitarian minimum’, without causing hunger or malnutrition.²⁴ Israel thereafter applied a ‘dual use’ system to imports into Gaza, severely restricting the entry of goods by prohibiting goods considered to be capable of having a dual civilian/military use.²⁵

Israel’s parallel implementation of a wide buffer zone inside Gaza’s eastern border fence (estimated to restrict access to approximately 24 per cent of Gaza) severely impacts internal food supply, by reducing the main agricultural area for farming.²⁶ Israel also made fishing extremely hazardous for Palestinians, who have not had full access to the fishing zone of 20 nautical miles stipulated in the Oslo Accords — interim agreements concluded between the PLO and Israel in the early 1990s. The naval blockade — policed by Israeli forces through the use of force, arrests and the confiscation of fishing equipment — severely reduced the fishing catchment area for Gaza’s fishermen to polluted waters immediately off the coastline, leading to overfishing impacting sustainability.²⁷ As long ago as 2015, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (‘UNCTAD’) warned that the restrictive measures imposed by Israel risked Gaza becoming uninhabitable by 2020.²⁸ In 2020, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 described the impact of Israel’s blockade on Gaza as having turned Gaza “from a low-income society with modest but growing export ties to the regional and international economy to

an impoverished ghetto with a decimated economy and a collapsing social service system”.²⁹

699 children, were killed, including in those “four highly asymmetrical wars”, as well as other smaller military assaults, with tens of thousands of others injured. A further 214 Palestinians, between Gaza and Israel, in which thousands of Palestinians participated every Friday for over 18 months, demanding that “the blockade imposed on Gaza be lifted and the return of Palestinian refugees” to their homes and villages in Israel.³⁰ On one particularly lethal day alone, Israel killed 60 Palestinian protesters.³¹

The Independent Commission of Inquiry on the protests in the occupied Palestinian territory (‘Commission’) found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that Israeli snipers “intentionally shot” children, knowing them to be children,³² and they also “intentionally shot” health workers and journalists “despite seeing that they were clearly marked as such”.³³ It further found “reasonable grounds to believe” that Israeli snipers shot disabled demonstrators “intentionally, despite seeing that they had visible disabilities” and despite them not presenting an imminent threat.³⁴

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
RESOLUTION S-21/1 (24 JUNE 2015):³⁵

“ . . . the large number of targeted attacks against residential buildings and the fact that such attacks continued throughout the operation, even after the dire impact of these attacks on civilians and civilian objects became apparent, raise concern that the strikes may have constituted military tactics reflective of a broader policy, approved at least tacitly by decision-makers at the highest levels of the Government of Israel . . .

.....the fact that the Israel Defense Forces did not modify the manner in which they conducted their operations after initial episodes of shelling

MARXIST

resulted in a large number of civilian deaths indicates that their policies governing the use of artillery in densely populated areas may not be in conformity with international humanitarian law.

.....destruction by artillery fire, air strikes and bulldozers may have been adopted as a tactic of war. Some destruction may arguably be the result of the legitimate attempts of the Israel Defense Forces to dismantle tunnels and to protect its soldiers. The concentration of destruction in localities close to the Green Line, in some areas amounting to 100 per cent, and the *systematic way in which these areas were flattened one after the other*, however, raise concerns that such extensive destruction was not required by imperative military necessity. If confirmed, this would constitute a grave breach of article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is a war crime. . . . warnings to evacuate were meant to create “sterile combat zones”, and the people remaining in the area would no longer be considered civilians and thus benefit from the protection afforded by their civilian status. For example, the Head of the Doctrine Desk at the Infantry Corps Headquarters, reportedly stated: “... In peacetime security, soldiers stand facing a civilian population, but in wartime, there is no civilian population, just an enemy.” . . .

inferring that anyone remaining in an area that has been the object of a warning is an enemy or a person engaging in “terrorist activity”, or issuing instructions to this effect, contributes to creating an environment conducive to attacks against civilians.

The West Bank (including East Jerusalem).

The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the larger constituent part of the occupied Palestinian territory, comprises 5,655 km², with a population of 2.9 million Palestinians, is geographically separated from Gaza, and fragmented by Israeli settlements.³⁶

The Oslo Accords divided administrative competences over

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

three areas of the West Bank (Areas A, B, and C — not including East Jerusalem) between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, the Occupying Power. Area A, comprising 18 per cent of the West Bank is stated to be under the full administrative control of the Palestinian Authority; Area B, comprising 22 per cent of the West Bank is under the administrative control of the Palestinian Authority and the security control of Israel; and Area C, comprising 60 per cent of the West Bank, is under full Israeli administrative and security control.³⁷ In 1967, Israel purportedly annexed occupied East Jerusalem to its territory, and in 1980, it incorporated a provision into its Basic Law claiming Jerusalem ‘united’ as the capital of Israel, a move censured by the United Nations Security Council as “null and void” and to “be rescinded forthwith”.³⁸ Since 1967, Israel has constructed 279 ‘settlements’ for Israeli civilians across the West Bank — including 14 settlements in East Jerusalem — appropriating 750,000 dunums (185,329 acres) of Palestinian land.³⁹ The United Nations Security Council has repeatedly declared that the establishment of such settlements by Israel has “no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace”.⁴⁰ Regardless, the number of Israeli settlers transferred into the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) has increased dramatically from an estimated 247,000 at the time of the Oslo Accords,⁴¹ to over 700,000 in 2023.⁴² The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (‘ICC’) has determined that there is “a reasonable basis to believe” that “members of the Israeli authorities have committed war crimes... in relation, inter alia, to the transfer of Israeli civilians into the West Bank.”⁴³

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, described the situation in the West Bank as follows:

...There, the Palestinians are subject to a harsh and arbitrary legal

MARXIST

system quite unequal to that enjoyed by the Israeli settlers. Much of the West Bank is off-limits to Palestinians, and they regularly endure significant restrictions on their freedom of movement through closures, roadblocks, and the need for hard-to-obtain travel permits.

Access to the natural resources of the occupied territory, especially to water, is disproportionately allocated to Israel and the settlers. Similarly, the planning system administered by the occupying power for housing and commercial development throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is deeply discriminatory in favour of settlement construction, while imposing significant barriers on Palestinians, including ongoing land confiscation, home demolitions and the denial of building permits. Israel employs practices that in some cases may amount to the forcible transfer of Palestinians, primarily those living in rural areas, as a means of confiscating land for settlements, military weapons training areas and other uses exclusive to the occupying power that have little or nothing to do with its legitimate security requirements.

55. As for East Jerusalem, the occupation has increasingly detached it from its traditional national, economic, cultural and family connections with the West Bank because of the wall, the growing ring of settlements and related checkpoints, and the discriminatory permit regime. It is neglected by the municipality in terms of services and infrastructure, the occupation has depleted its economy and the Palestinians have only a small land area on which to build housing.⁷⁴⁴

The institutionalised regime of discriminatory laws, policies and practices applied by Israel subjects Palestinians to what constitutes an apartheid regime.⁴⁵ Palestinians in the West Bank are contained behind a segregating Wall, subjected to: discriminatory land zoning and planning policies; punitive and administrative house demolitions;⁴⁶ violent Israeli army incursions into Palestinian villages, towns, cities and refugee camps, including in Area

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

A,⁴⁷ routine violent Israeli raids on their homes; arbitrary arrests and indefinitely renewable administrative detention (internment without trial); and a dual legal system pursuant to which Palestinians are tried under Israeli military legislation in Israeli military courts, without basic protections of international humanitarian and human rights law, while Israeli settlers living in the same territory are subject to a different legal regime, and tried in Israeli civilian courts with full due process.⁴⁸

Palestinians in the West Bank are also subjected to routine violence by Israeli soldiers and armed settlers. Prior to 7 October 2023, between 1 January and 6 October 2023, 199 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers in the West Bank and 9,000 more had been injured.⁴⁹ By September 2023, Save the Children had already declared 2023 the deadliest year for Palestinian children in the West Bank since 2005 with at least 38 Palestinian children having been killed.⁵⁰ Since 7 October 2023, a further 295 Palestinians, including 77 children, have been killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers, and a further 3,803, including 576 children, wounded — many seriously.⁵¹ A total of 495 Palestinians have been killed in total in the West Bank, making it “the deadliest year for Palestinians” since 2005.⁵²

GENOCIDAL ACTS COMMITTED AGAINST THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Killing Palestinians in Gaza

Over 21,110 Palestinians are reported to have been killed since Israel began its military assault on Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry, at least 70 per cent of whom are believed to be women and children.⁵³ An additional estimated 7,780 people, including at least 4,700 women and children, are reported missing, presumed dead under the rubble of destroyed buildings — dying slow deaths — or decomposing in the streets where they were killed.⁵⁴ Israel’s blockage of adequate fuel imports, its destruction of infrastructure and the communication blackouts it

imposes severely hamper rescue attempts. As of 8 December 2023, only one rescue vehicle was reportedly operational in the whole of Gaza, with survivors forced to try to dig for survivors with their bare hands.⁵⁵ The level of Israel's killing is so extensive that bodies are being buried in mass graves, often unidentified.⁵⁶

Israel is said to be dropping 'dumb' (*i.e.*, unguided) bombs on Gaza,⁵⁷ as well as heavy bombs weighing up to 2,000 lbs (900 kgs),⁵⁸ which have a predicted lethal radius "of up to 360m", and are "expected to cause severe injury and damage as far as 800 metres from the point of impact".⁵⁹ This weaponry is being deployed in one of the most densely populated areas in the world, where approximately one in every 100 people has now been killed. Some Israeli strikes on Palestinian homes and refugee camps have killed upwards of 110 Palestinians.⁶⁰ An estimated 1,779 Palestinian families in Gaza have lost multiple family members, and hundreds of multigenerational families have been killed in their entirety, with no remaining survivors — mothers, fathers, children, siblings, grandparents, aunts, cousins — often all killed together.⁶¹ By 7 November 2023, 312 Palestinian families in Gaza had lost over 10 members each.⁶² Numerous Palestinian families have lost upwards of 70 members each.⁶³ The level of mortality in Palestinian families is such that medics in Gaza have had to coin a new acronym: 'WCNSF', meaning 'wounded child, no surviving family'.⁶⁴

For Palestinian children, in particular, "[d]eath is everywhere" and "nowhere is safe".⁶⁵ A total of over 7,729 Palestinian children have been killed in Gaza to date — over 115 Palestinian children in Gaza are killed every day.⁶⁶ It is estimated that more Palestinian children were killed in the first three weeks in Gaza alone (a total of 3,195) than the total number of children killed each year across the world's conflict zones since 2019.⁶⁷ The scale of Palestinian child killings in Gaza is such that United Nations chiefs have described it as "a graveyard for children".⁶⁸ Indeed, the unprecedented rate of Palestinian child casualties has prompted UNICEF's spokesperson to call Israel's attacks on Gaza a "war on

children”. He explained:

“Most crises, they impact children terribly because children are the most vulnerable, but most have about a casualty rate of children of around 20 per cent. This is 40. This is twice as lethal to children as many conflicts we’ve seen in the last 15 or 20 years, and unfortunately that is because of the sheer density of population, the indiscriminate nature, and when we see that there’s been not even lip service to safe zones having water and sanitation for children and young girls. That same disregard for children is being shown in the bombardments. That’s why we see 40 per cent of casualties are children. That’s why it’s a war on children.”⁶⁹

Doctors, journalists, teachers, academics and other professionals are also being killed at wholly unprecedented rates. To date, Israel has killed: over 311 doctors, nurses and other health workers, including doctors and ambulance drivers killed on duty;⁷⁰ 103 journalists, amounting to over one per day,⁷¹ and more than 73 per cent of the total number of journalists and media workers killed globally in 2023;⁷² 40 civil defence workers — responsible for helping to dig victims out of the rubble — killed while on duty; and over 209 teachers and educational staff.⁷³ 144 United Nations employees have also been killed, the “highest number of aid workers killed in UN history in such a short time”.⁷⁴ It is estimated that “it will take years to recover the remains of people from beneath the rubble” and that “the costly, technical process will not result in the identification of each body”.⁷⁵

Causing Serious Bodily and Mental Harm to Palestinians in Gaza

Over 55,243 Palestinians have been wounded in Israel’s military attacks on Gaza since 7 October 2023, the majority of them women and children.⁷⁶ Burns and amputations are typical injuries,⁷⁷ with an estimated 1,000 children having lost one or both legs.⁷⁸ There are reports of Israeli forces using white phosphorus in densely populated areas in Gaza: as the World Health Organiza-

tion describes, even small amounts of white phosphorus can cause deep and severe burns, penetrating even through bone, and capable of reigniting after initial treatment.⁷⁹ There are no functioning hospitals in the North of Gaza, in particular, such that injured persons are reduced to “waiting to die”, unable to seek surgery or medical treatment beyond first aid, dying slow, agonising deaths from their injuries or from resultant infections.⁸⁰

The extreme levels of bombardment and lack of any safe areas are also causing severe mental trauma in the Palestinian population in Gaza.⁸¹ Even before the latest onslaught, Palestinians in Gaza suffered severe trauma from prior attacks: 80 per cent of Palestinian children experienced higher levels of emotional distress, demonstrating bedwetting (79 per cent) and reactive mutism (59 per cent), and engaging in self-harm (59 per cent), and suicidal thoughts (55 per cent).⁸² Eleven weeks of relentless bombardment, displacement and loss will necessarily have led to a further increase in those figures, particularly for the estimated tens of thousands of Palestinian children who have lost at least one parent, and those who are the sole surviving members of their families.⁸³ For the families who remain intact or partially intact, “it’s about doing everything you can so your child doesn’t realise that you’ve lost control”.⁸⁴

It is already known that “[r]epeated exposure to conflict and violence, including witnessing and experiencing housing demolition, combined with Israel’s siege of Gaza since 2007” is “associated with high levels of psychological distress among Palestinians”.⁸⁵ Indeed, the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 2712 (2023) expressed its “deep concern that the disruption of access to education has a dramatic impact on children, and that conflict has lifelong effects on their physical and mental health”.⁸⁶ That disruption and its “dramatic impact” on children must be considered, in particular, in the context of the number of Palestinian students and educators who have been killed (4,037 and 209 respectively), and wounded (estimated at 7,259),⁸⁷ and the number

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

of Palestinian schools having been damaged or destroyed (352, or 74 per cent of the schools in the whole of Gaza).⁸⁸ Medical professionals assess that “[t]he health effects on all Palestinian children, women, men, older people, people with disabilities, and people of marginalised identities are immense”.⁸⁹ An Emergency Coordinator for Médecins sans Frontières interviewed on her return from five weeks in Gaza described:

“[I]t’s even worse in reality than it looks. It’s - the amount of suffering is just something... incomparable. It’s really unbearable. I’m speechless when I try and think of the future of this children. It’s generations of children who will be handicapped, who will be traumatized. The very children in our mental health program are telling us that they would rather die than continue living in Gaza now.”⁹⁰

Alongside its military campaign, Israel has engaged in the dehumanisation, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of members Palestinians in Gaza. Large numbers of Palestinian civilians, including children, have reportedly been arrested, blindfolded, forced to undress and remain outside in the cold weather, before being forced on to trucks and taken to unknown locations.⁹¹ Medics and first responders, in particular, have been repeatedly detained by Israeli forces, with many being detained incommunicado at unknown locations.⁹² Videos published by Israeli media on Christmas Day appeared to show hundreds of Palestinians, rounded up inside Al Yarmouk football stadium in Gaza City, “including children, older people and persons with disabilities, being forced to strip to their underwear in degrading conditions”.⁹³ Many Palestinian detainees who have been released report having been subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including the deprivation of food, water, shelter and access to toilets;⁹⁴ the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (‘OCHA’) reports “*video footage showing bruises and burns on the ... bodies*” of detainees.⁹⁵ Images of mutilated and burned

MARXIST

corpses — alongside videos of armed attacks by Israeli soldiers — billed as ‘exclusive content from the Gaza Strip’, are reportedly circulated in Israel via a social media ‘Telegram’ channel called ‘72 Virgins - Uncensored’.⁹⁶

Mass expulsion from homes and displacement of Palestinians in Gaza

It is estimated that over 1.9 million Palestinians out of Gaza’s population of 2.3 million people approximately 85 per cent of the population — have been forced from their homes.⁹⁷ There is nowhere safe for them to flee to, those who cannot leave or refuse to be displaced have been killed or are at extreme risk of being killed in their homes.

Israel is repeatedly issuing ‘evacuation orders’ demanding that Palestinian civilians in certain areas of Gaza leave their homes for other areas. The first such order, issued on 13 October 2023 demanded that the 1.1 million Palestinians living or otherwise present in the North of Gaza, including Gaza City, move to the South of Gaza within a 24-hour window.⁹⁸ The International Committee of the Red Cross warned that the evacuation directive, impacting approximately 36 per cent of Gaza’s territory - combined with the complete siege of Gaza — was not compatible with international humanitarian law.⁹⁹ The World Health Organization warned that it “could be tantamount to a death sentence” for hospital patients.¹⁰⁰ The evacuation was, however, maintained and has been reissued on a number of occasions, including on 28 October 2023,¹⁰¹ ahead of the Israeli announcement of ground operations in northern Gaza, and again thereafter. Israel has also issued more specific evacuation notices, ordering people in certain parts of Gaza City to evacuate to other parts.¹⁰² Many of those who are unwilling or unable to evacuate are then bombed in their homes.¹⁰³

Palestinians are not safe, even in those “small ... slivers”: as United Nations chiefs keep reiterating. “No place is safe”,¹⁰⁴ there

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

is “nowhere safe to go”.¹⁰⁵ The Director of UNRWA Affairs in Gaza has pleaded that “[p]eople in Gaza are people ... they are not pieces on a checkerboard - many have already been displaced several times. The Israeli Army just orders people to move into areas where there are ongoing airstrikes”.¹⁰⁶ This is creating terror.¹⁰⁷ The increased population density as a result of the evacuation ‘orders’ is also rendering Israeli strikes ever more lethal. On Christmas Eve itself, the Israeli army bombed Al Maghazi Refugee Camp in the Middle Area — an area to which tens of thousands of Palestinians had fled from the North — killing an estimated 86 people, including many women and children, and injuring many others.¹⁰⁸ A spokesperson for the OHCHR stated that they were “gravely concerned” that “this latest intense bombardment comes after Israeli forces ordered residents from the south of Wadi Gaza to move to Middle Gaza”.¹⁰⁹

For many Palestinians, the forced evacuation from their homes is necessarily permanent. Israel has now damaged or destroyed an estimated 355,000 Palestinian homes — amounting to 60 per cent of the entire housing stock in Gaza. The extent of the destruction in the North of Gaza, in particular, has rendered it largely unliveable, with the destruction in the South reaching a similar level. As noted by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, “Gaza’s housing and civilian infrastructure have been razed to the ground, frustrating any realistic prospects for displaced Gazans to return home, repeating a long history of mass forced displacement of Palestinians by Israel”.¹¹⁰ The forced displacements in Gaza are genocidal, in that they are taking place in circumstances calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinians in Gaza.¹¹¹

Deprivation of access to adequate food and water to Palestinians in Gaza

On 9 October 2023, Israel declared a “complete siege” on Gaza, allowing no electricity, no food, no water and no fuel to enter the

strip.¹¹² Although the siege has been partially alleviated since then, with some aid trucks being permitted in since 21 October 2023, this remains wholly insufficient, and well below the pre-October 2023 average of approximately 500 trucks per day.¹¹³ Moreover, fuel imports — permitted since 21 November 2023 — are “well below the minimum requirements for essential humanitarian operations”,¹¹⁴ meaning that such limited humanitarian aid as is being allowed in cannot easily be moved around Gaza away from entry points.¹¹⁵

Israel has now pushed the Palestinian population in Gaza to the brink of famine, with international agencies warning that “the risk of famine is real” (World Food Programme or ‘WFP’) and that it is “increasing each day” (IPC).¹¹⁶ Most of the Palestinian people in Gaza are now *starving*, with levels of starvation rising daily.¹¹⁷ The World Health Organization warns that “[h]unger is ravaging Gaza”.¹¹⁸ As the United Nations Secretary-General has stated, “[f]our out of five of the hungriest people anywhere in the world are in Gaza”,¹¹⁹ with Palestinians in Gaza facing the highest levels of acute food insecurity ever classified by the IPC.¹²⁰ UNRWA’s Commissioner-General describes “[d]esperate, hungry and terrified” people, who are now “stopping aid trucks, taking the food, and eating it right away.”¹²¹ The World Health Organization has stated that “[a]n unprecedented 93% of the population in Gaza is facing crisis levels of hunger, with insufficient food and high levels of malnutrition”. They say that “[a]t least 1 in 4 households are facing ‘catastrophic conditions’: experiencing an extreme lack of food and starvation and having resorted to selling off their possessions and other extreme measures to afford a simple meal”.

The conditions created by the siege are exacerbated by Israel’s continuing strikes on Gaza, including on its bakeries, water facilities and last remaining operating mill, and its razing of agricultural lands, crops, orchards and greenhouses.¹²²

Water is also severely depleted. Israel continues to cut off piped water for the North of Gaza,¹²³ and the North’s water de-

salination plant is non-functioning.¹²⁴ From 15 October 2023, Israel began piping a small amount of water to the South, in part to “push the civilian population to the southern [part of the] Strip”.¹²⁵ The damage from Israeli airstrikes and shelling has also rendered most of the water system inoperable.¹²⁶ The World Food Programme has reported that there is only 1.5 to 1.8 litres of clean water available per person per day, for all uses (drinking, washing, food preparation, sanitation and hygiene).¹²⁷ This is far below the ‘emergency threshold’ of 15 litres per day for “war or famine-like conditions”, or the ‘survival threshold’ of 3 litres per day.¹²⁸

Experts are now predicting that more Palestinians in Gaza may die from starvation and disease than airstrikes,¹²⁹ and yet Israel is intensifying its bombing campaign, precluding the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to Palestinians. It is clear that Israel is through its actions and policies in Gaza, deliberately inflicting on Palestinians conditions of life calculated to bring about their destruction.¹³⁰

Deprivation of adequate medical assistance to Palestinians in Gaza

Since early December 2023, Israeli army attacks on Palestinian hospitals have only increased. The Israeli army has continued to attack and besiege hospitals and healthcare centres; to deprive them of electricity and fuel crucial to maintain effective functioning and equipment; to obstruct them from receiving medical supplies, food and water; to force their evacuations and closure; and effectively to destroy them.

There have now been more than 238 attacks on ‘healthcare’ in Gaza, in which over 61 hospitals and other healthcare facilities have been damaged or destroyed.¹³¹ Only 13 out of 36 hospitals and 18 out of 72 healthcare centres are still even functioning — some of them barely — despite the overwhelming number of people injured in Israeli attacks.¹³²

In addition to the war wounded, there are hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza who still need routine medical care

for conditions such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease or diabetes.¹³³ Thousands of Palestinians in Gaza are also in need of urgent care for kidney disease and cancer, and an estimated 130 premature babies are dependent on incubators for survival at any given time.¹³⁴ Many of them are now unable to receive medical assistance. UNICEF warns that “[w]omen, children and newborns in Gaza are disproportionately bearing the burden of the escalation of hostilities in the occupied Palestinian territory, both as casualties and in reduced access to health services”.¹³⁵ Older persons and persons with disabilities lack essential medication, and are at higher risk of communicable diseases, malnutrition and death.¹³⁶ Pregnant women are also particularly vulnerable.

Experts are beginning to warn that the numbers of Palestinians dying as a result of disease and hunger, could *already* be outstripping violent deaths caused by Israeli army assaults.¹³⁷ There have already been over 360,000 documented cases of communicable diseases reported in UNRWA shelters alone, brought on or exacerbated by unsanitary conditions, hunger and lack of clean water, with the actual numbers believed to be considerably higher.¹³⁸

Destruction of Palestinian life in Gaza

Across Gaza, Israel has targeted the infrastructure and foundations of Palestinian life, deliberately creating conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinian people. In addition to the attacks previously cited on homes, neighbourhoods, hospitals, water systems, agricultural lands, bakeries and mills, Israel has also targeted the foundational civil system in Gaza. Israel has targeted the Palace of Justice,¹³⁹ — the main Palestinian court building in Gaza — housing the Palestinian Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, the Court of Appeal, the Court of First Instance, the Administrative Court and the Magistrates’ Court, as well as an archive of court records and other historical files. Israel has also significantly damaged the Palestinian Legislative Council complex.¹⁴⁰ It has targeted Gaza

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

City's Central Archive building, containing thousands of historical documents and national records dating back over 100 years, and forming an essential archive of Palestinian history, as well as more modern records for Gaza City's urban development.¹⁴¹

Israel has damaged and destroyed numerous centres of Palestinian learning and culture, including: the Al Zafar Dmari Mosque and Center for Manuscripts and Ancient Documents;¹⁴² the Orthodox Cultural Centre; the Al Qarara Cultural Museum; the Gaza Centre for Culture and Arts; the Arab Social Cultural Centre; the Hakawi Society for Culture and Arts; and the Rafah Museum — Gaza's newly opened museum of Palestinian heritage, housing hundreds of cultural and archaeological artefacts. Israel's attacks have destroyed Gaza's ancient history: eight sites have been damaged or destroyed, including the ancient port of Gaza (known as 'Anthedon Harbour' or 'Al Balakhiya') — the archaeological site of a 2,000-year-old Roman cemetery listed on both the Islamic Heritage List and the tentative UNESCO World Heritage List.¹⁴³ Israel has also destroyed Gaza City's 'Old City', including its 146-year-old historic houses, mosques, churches, markets and schools. It has also destroyed Gaza's more recent history of more hopeful times, including the Rashad al-Shawa Cultural Center — site of a historic meeting between United States President Bill Clinton and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat 25 years ago — and an important cultural hub for Palestinians in Gaza, with its theatre, library and event space.¹⁴⁴ And Israel is destroying Gaza's future academic and cultural potential: alongside the 352 Palestinian schools it has damaged or destroyed,¹⁴⁵ the 4,037 students and 209 teachers and educational staff it has killed, alongside the other 7,259 students and 619 teachers it has injured.¹⁴⁶

Imposing measures intended to prevent Palestinian births

As set out above, Israel's actions are impacting Palestinian women and children in Gaza especially severely, with 70 per cent of those killed estimated to be women and children. Two mothers

MARXIST

are estimated to be killed every hour in Gaza. Over 7,729 children were estimated to have been killed by 11 December 2023 alone,¹⁴⁷ and at least 4,700 other women and children are reported missing, believed to be buried under the rubble.¹⁴⁸ There are multiple eye-witness accounts of pregnant women being killed by Israeli soldiers, including while trying to access healthcare.¹⁴⁹

An ever-increasing number of Palestinian babies in Gaza are reportedly dying from entirely preventable causes, brought about by Israel's actions: newborns up to three months old are dying of diarrhoea, hypothermia, and other preventable causes. Without essential equipment and medical support, premature and underweight babies have little to no chance of survival.¹⁵⁰ Palestinian newborn babies have died due to the lack of fuel to supply hospital generators;¹⁵¹ others have been found decomposing in their hospital cots, medical staff taking care of them having been forced by Israel to evacuate.

By 22 November 2023 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, has expressly warned that:

“[T]he reproductive violence inflicted by Israel on Palestinian women, newborn babies, infants, and children could be qualified as... *acts of genocide under Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide* ... including “imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group”. She stressed that “States must prevent and punish such acts in accordance with their responsibilities under the Genocide Convention.”¹⁵²

EXPRESSIONS OF GENOCIDAL INTENT AGAINST THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE BY ISRAELI STATE OFFICIALS AND OTHERS

Evidence of Israeli State officials' specific intent (*'dolus specialis'*) to commit and persist in committing genocidal acts or to fail to prevent them has been significant and overt since October

2023. Those statements of intent — when combined with the level of killing, maiming, displacement and destruction on the ground, together with the siege — evidence an unfolding and continuing genocide. They include statements by the following individuals in the positions of the highest responsibility:

Prime Minister of Israel: On 7 October 2023, in a televised address by the Government Press Office, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised to “operate forcefully everywhere”.¹⁵³ On 13 October 2023, he confirmed that “[w]e are striking our enemies with unprecedented might . . .”.¹⁵⁴ On 15 October 2023, when Israeli airstrikes had already killed over 2,670 Palestinians, including 724 children,¹⁵⁵ the Prime Minister stated that Israeli soldiers “understand the scope of the mission” and stand ready “to defeat the bloodthirsty monsters who have risen against [Israel] to destroy us”.¹⁵⁶

President of Israel: On 12 October 2023, President Isaac Herzog made clear that Israel was not distinguishing between militants and civilians in Gaza, stating in a press conference to foreign media — in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, over one million of whom are children: “It’s an entire nation out there that is responsible.”

Israeli Minister of Defence: On 9 October 2023, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in an Israeli Army ‘situation update’ advised that Israel was “imposing a complete siege on Gaza. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly.”¹⁵⁷ He also informed troops on the Gaza border that he had “released all the restraints”,¹⁵⁸ stating in terms that: “Gaza won’t return to what it was before. We will eliminate everything. If it doesn’t take one day, it will take a week. It will take weeks or even months, we will reach all places.”¹⁵⁹ He further announced that Israel was moving to “a full- scale response” and that he had “removed every restriction” on Israeli forces.¹⁶⁰

Israeli Minister for National Security: On 10 November 2023, Itamar Ben-Gvir clarified the government’s position in a televised address, stating: “[t]o be clear, when we say that Hamas should be destroyed, it also means those who celebrate, those who support, and those who hand out candy — they’re all terrorists, and they should also be destroyed.”¹⁶¹

THE CLAIMS OF SOUTH AFRICA

Based on the above, as well as the further evidence to be presented over the course of these proceedings, South Africa considers that the conduct of Israel — through its State organs, State agents, and other persons and entities acting on its instructions or under its direction, control or influence — in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, is in violation of its obligations under the Genocide Convention, including Articles I, III, IV, V and VI, read in conjunction with Article II. Those violations of the Genocide Convention include, but are not limited to:

- (a) failing to prevent genocide in violation of Article I;
- (b) committing genocide in violation of Article III (a);
- (c) conspiring to commit genocide in violation of Article III (b);
- (d) direct and public incitement to commit genocide in violation of Article III (c);
- (e) attempting to commit genocide in violation of Article III (d);
- (f) complicity in genocide in violation of Article III (e);
- (g) failing to punish genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to genocide, attempted genocide and complicity in genocide, in violation of Articles I, III, IV and VI;
- (h) failing to enact the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the Genocide Convention and to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, incitement to genocide, attempted genocide, and complicity in genocide, in violation of Article V; and

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

(i) failing to allow and/or directly or indirectly impeding the investigation by competent international bodies or fact-finding missions of genocidal acts committed against Palestinians in Gaza, including those Palestinians removed by Israeli State agents or forces to Israel, as a necessary and corollary obligation pursuant to Articles I, III, IV, V and VI.

THE RELIEF SOUGHT

111. While reserving the right to revise, supplement or amend this Application, and subject to the presentation to the Court of the relevant evidence and legal arguments, South Africa respectfully requests the Court to adjudge and declare:

(1) that the Republic of South Africa and the State of Israel each have a duty to act in accordance with their obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to the members of the Palestinian group, to take all reasonable measures within their power to prevent genocide; and

(2) that the State of Israel:

(a) has breached and continues to breach its obligations under the Genocide Convention, in particular the obligations provided under Article I, read in conjunction with Article II, and Articles III (a), III (b), III (c), III (d), III (e), IV, V and VI;

(b) must cease forthwith any acts and measures in breach of those obligations, including such acts or measures which would be capable of killing or continuing to kill Palestinians, or causing or continuing to cause serious bodily or mental harm to Palestinians or deliberately inflicting on their group, or continuing to inflict on their group, conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, and fully respect its obligations under the Genocide Convention, in particular the obligations provided under Articles I, III (a), III (b), III (c), III (d), III (e), IV, V and VI;

(c) must ensure that persons committing genocide, conspiring to commit genocide, directly and publicly inciting genocide,

MARXIST

attempting to commit genocide and complicit in genocide contrary to Articles I, III (a), III (b), III (c), III (d) and III (e) are punished by a competent national or international tribunal, as required by Articles I, IV, V and VI;

(d) to that end and in furtherance of those obligations arising under Articles I, IV, V and VI, must collect and conserve evidence and ensure, allow and/or not inhibit directly or indirectly the collection and conservation of evidence of genocidal acts committed against Palestinians in Gaza, including such members of the group displaced from Gaza;

(e) must perform the obligations of reparation in the interest of Palestinian victims, including but not limited to allowing the safe and dignified return of forcibly displaced and/or abducted Palestinians to their homes, respect for their full human rights and protection against further discrimination, persecution, and other related acts, and provide for the reconstruction of what it has destroyed in Gaza, consistent with the obligation to prevent genocide under Article I; and (f) must offer assurances and guarantees of non-repetition of violations of the Genocide Convention, in particular the obligations provided under Articles I, III (a), III (b), III (c), III (d), III (e), IV, V and VI.

REQUEST FOR PROVISIONAL MEASURES

In accordance with Article 41 of the Statute of the Court, and Articles 73, 74 and 75 of the Rules of Court, South Africa requests that the Court indicate provisional measures. In light of the nature of the rights in issue, as well as the ongoing, extreme and irreparable harm being suffered by Palestinians in Gaza, South Africa requests that the Court address this request as a matter of extreme urgency.

This Application describes an exceptionally brutal military campaign by Israel in Gaza, which is extensive and ongoing, and which Israel intends to intensify further still.¹⁶²

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

Israel has engaged in and failed to prevent or to punish acts and measures which are genocidal, constituting flagrant violations of Israel's obligations under Articles I, III (a), III (b), III (c), III (d), III (e), IV, V and VI of the Genocide Convention. As further evidenced in the materials set out in the application, the acts of genocide in question in breach of Articles II (a), II (b), II (c) and II (d), in particular, that collectively target the Palestinians in Gaza include, *inter alia*:

(1) **killing Palestinians in Gaza**, including a large proportion of women and children — estimated to account for around 70 per cent of the more than 21,110 fatalities — some of whom appear to have been summarily executed;

(2) **causing serious mental and bodily harm to Palestinians in Gaza**, including through maiming, psychological trauma, and inhuman and degrading treatment;

causing the forced evacuation and displacement of around 85 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza — including children, the elderly and infirm, and the sick and wounded as well as causing the large scale destruction of Palestinian homes, villages, refugee camps, towns and entire areas in Gaza, precluding the return of a significant proportion of the Palestinian people to their homes;

(3) **causing widespread hunger, dehydration and starvation to besieged Palestinians in Gaza**, through the impeding of sufficient humanitarian assistance, the cutting off of sufficient water, food, fuel and electricity, and the destruction of bakeries, mills, agricultural lands and other methods of production and sustenance;

(4) **failing to provide and restricting the provision of adequate shelter, clothes, hygiene or sanitation to Palestinians in Gaza**, including the 1.9 million internally displaced people, compelled by Israel's actions to live in dangerous situations of squalor, alongside the routine targeting and destruction of places of shelter and the killing and wounding of those sheltering, including women, children, the disabled and the elderly;

(5) **failing to provide for or to ensure the provision for the medical needs of Palestinians in Gaza**, including those medical needs created by other genocidal acts causing serious bodily harm, including through directly attacking Palestinian hospitals, ambulances and other healthcare facilities in Gaza, killing Palestinian doctors, medics and nurses, including the most qualified medics in Gaza, and destroying and disabling Gaza's medical system; and **destroying Palestinian life in Gaza**, through the destruction of Gaza's universities, schools, courts, public buildings, public records, stores, libraries, churches, mosques, roads, infrastructure, utilities and other facilities necessary to the sustained life of Palestinians in Gaza as a group, alongside the killing of entire family groups — erasing entire oral histories in Gaza and the killing of prominent and distinguished members of society.

(6) **Imposing measures intended to prevent Palestinian births in Gaza**, through the reproductive violence inflicted on Palestinian women, newborn babies, infants, and children.

Provisional measures are necessary in this case to protect against further, severe and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people under the Genocide Convention, which continue to be violated with impunity. South Africa requests that the Court indicate provisional measures to protect and preserve those rights as well as its own rights under the Convention, and to prevent any aggravation or extension of the dispute, pending the determination of the merits of the issues raised by the Application.

South Africa notes that there are other related matters that do not directly engage obligations under the Genocide Convention and are therefore not properly within the Court's jurisdiction in this case, including the urgent return of Israeli and other hostages. South Africa considers that the provisional measures requested are nevertheless consistent with and capable of assisting towards the progression and resolution of those matters.

Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

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Extracts from the Application filed by South Africa

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DOCUMENTS

The Ideological Underpinnings of Zionist Terror¹

As an organized political trend Zionism emerged at the end of the 19th century, in 1897, when the World Zionist Organization (WZO) was founded. Its first president and principal theorist, Theodor Herzl, was a Vienna journalist. Herzl played an important role in the elaboration of a program for a bourgeois-nationalist solution of the so-called Jewish question. At the time the Jewish bourgeoisie was looking for new, more effective ways of regaining control over the mass of the Jewry in order to consolidate its economic and political positions in the capitalist world. It was then that Herzl, in his brochure entitled *The Jewish State*, set for his program for a territorial-political solution of the Jewish question, a book still revered as the “Bible of Zionism”.

Herzl and his supporters were concerned mainly with how best to assure the dominance of the Jewish bourgeoisie so that initially they paid relatively little attention to the question of where the “Jewish State” should be located. Herzl had no objections to Palestine but was ready to consider alternative locations – Argentina, Uganda and other parts of the world. The Zionists advanced the slogan “Give land without people to the people without land”.

The slogan drew objections from the adherents of the so-called spiritual Zionism headed by Ahad Ha’am, who as early as 1891 founded the secret Zionist order B’ne Moshe (Sons of Moses) in which many of the future functionaries and leaders of the World Zionist Organization received their training. Being like Herzl a

great admirer of Nietzsche, the German philosopher, Ahad Ha'am took over the "superman" idea, and by linking it with the Judaic dogma on the Jews being the chosen people turned it into the idea of "supernation". For Ahad Ha'am acceptance of the Nietzschean ideal of "superman" by individual Jews was not enough. "If we agree.....that the *Superman* is the goal of all things", he wrote, "we must needs agree also that an essential condition of the attainment of this goal is the *Supernation*: that is to say, there must be a single nation better adapted than other nations by virtue of its inherent characteristics, to moral development, and ordering its whole life in accordance with a moral law which stands higher than the common type."² Ahad Ha'am proclaimed such a nation an "extraterritorial world Jewish spiritual nation".

While accepting the possibility of assimilation of Jews, Ahad Ha'am regarded as a chief weapon for combatting it the creation of a "spiritual centre" of the world Jewish nation in Palestine by establishing Jewish settlements there rather than large-scale Jewish emigration. He wrote: "This Jewish settlement, which will be a gradual growth, will become in course of time the centre of the nation, wherein its spirit will find pure expression and develop in all its aspects to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable. Then, from this center, the spirit of Judaism will radiate to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, to inspire them with new life and to preserve the overall unity of our people. When our national culture in Palestine has attained that level, we may be confident that it will produce men in the Land of Israel itself who will be able, at a favourable moment, to establish a state there – one which will be not merely a State of Jews but a really Jewish State."³

Whereas Herzl was chiefly interested in setting up a strong Jewish state, Ahad Ha'am emphasized the ideological basis of Zionist control over such a state. This was reflected in the WZO program which proclaims the goal of Zionism "...to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine...."⁴ But Palestine was

anything but a “land without people”. Arabs had lived there for centuries, and the Jewish population there at the beginning of this century did not exceed several tens of thousands. How did the Zionists view this fact?

The Zionist philosopher Martin Buber wrote in his memoirs: “When Max Nordau, Herzl’s second in command, first received details on the existence of an Arab population in Palestine, he came shocked to Herzl, exclaiming: ‘I never realized this – we are committing an injustice!’.”⁵ Well, did this make Nordau revise his views, abandon Zionism or oppose the “injustice” being done to the Palestinian people? Nothing of the sort. Nordau rather quickly overcame his qualms on the matter and remained one of the WZO leaders. What is more, his name was given to a plan that called for the immediate settlement in Palestine of hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants. Like other Zionist leaders, Nordau was convinced that the Jew was “more industrious and abler than the average European, not to mention the moribund Asiatic and African.”⁶ Addressing the 1st WZO congress, Nordau praised the Jewish ghetto of the Middle Ages and emphasized: “The opinion of the outside world did not matter, because it was the opinion of ignorant enemies.”⁷

The ideological platform of international Zionism envisaged the right of the “chosen people” to ignore the rights of other peoples and rested on the same racist and chauvinist principles that underlie anti-Semitism. The 17th Congress of the Communist Party of Israel noted in a resolution: “Zionist ideology is a racist ideology, being based on the assumption that under any social system different peoples cannot live in an atmosphere of friendship and brotherhood and that this applies above all to the Jews. Zionism is anti-Semitism in reverse. The Zionist ideologues impute to other people the same characteristics anti-Semites attribute to the Jews. Both theories, Zionism and anti-Semitism, have a common source in racism and their goal is to split working people of different nationalities for the benefit of their class enemy.”⁸

The Zionists made extensive use of the doctrine of Hermann Cohen, the founder of the so-called Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism, for the ideological justification of their expansion. Cohen, while not showing any particular interest in Palestine, sought to prove the existence of a special Jewish community which was, according to him, determined by specific biological characteristics and which was the torch-bearer of a messianic ideal. Besides, Cohen expounded “ethical socialism” which justified the colonial expansion of those peoples who regarded themselves as exponents of a higher ethical ideal. In his *Notebooks on Imperialism* Lenin emphasized that the doctrine of “ethical socialism” “...in point of fact.... ENDOWS ANY NATION WITH THE RIGHT TO SEIZE AND ADMINISTER THE TERRITORY OF ANY OTHER nation on the ground of a self-ascribed superiority and self-imputed qualifications for the work of civilization.”⁹

The Zionists quickly mastered the techniques of imperialist brigandage vis-à-vis the peoples of the colonies. Addressing the 3rd WZO congress in 1899, Theodor Herzl said that the “Asian question” was growing more serious every day, and he feared it would become quite bloody in the future. The civilized peoples, therefore, had a stake in seeing that a cultural way station was set up on the shortest road to Asia which all civilized people could rely on. Palestine could well serve as such a station and the Jews were the *Kulturtrageren* who were willing to give their lives to bring this about.

The emphasis was placed on force as an instrument for achieving the set objectives, and Zionist leaders who have always regarded themselves as the *Kulturtrageren* of the “supreme morality” have never attempted to conceal this. Thus, young David Ben-Gurion who arrived in Palestine early in the century together with a group of Zionist colonists used to say: “The present-day world respects nothing but strength.”¹⁰ Some years later he went further, openly declaring that the Palestinian question would be settled “by force of arms and not through official resolutions.”¹¹

MARXIST

“We were a company of conquistadors,” he recalled likening the Zionist colonists to the Spanish who exterminated millions of Indians in Central and South America. Then in his *Earning a Homeland* written in 1915, Ben-Gurion compared the Zionist settlement to the American settlement in the New World, conjuring up the image of the “fierce fights” the American colonists fought against “wild nature and wilder redskins.”¹² The idea of terror is built into Zionist ideology. Justifying the use of violence Ben-Gurion pointed to the familiar thesis of the “moral superiority” of the Jews: “I believe in our moral and intellectual superiority, in our capacity to serve as a model for the redemption of the human race.”¹³

From its first appearance in Palestine Zionism was the philosophy of colonial aggression aimed at expelling the local population from Palestine and turning this land into the “Land of Israel”. Menachem Begin, in an attempt to justify the “right” of the Zionists to the Arab lands they occupied in 1967 and Tel Aviv’s policy of annexation, declared: “The term the West Bank means nothing. It is Judaea-Samaria. It is Israeli land belonging to the Jewish people.One can only annex foreign lands. This is liberated land.”¹⁴ Thus, using demagogic rhetoric, the former leader of the terrorist Irgun Tz’vai L’umi portrayed Zionism as a “national liberation movement” “liberating” Arab lands from their native population.

Begin and his followers want the world to forget not only the existence of the Palestinian people but also the very word Palestine. Addressing a conference at the Ein Hahoresh kibbutz (a Jewish military-agricultural settlement), Begin harangued his audience: “When you recognize the concept of ‘Palestine’, you demolish your right to live in Ein Hahoresh. If this is Palestine and not the Land of Israel, then you are conquerors and not tillers of the land. You are invaders. If this is Palestine, then it belongs to a people who lived here before you came. Only if it is the Land of Israel do you have a right to live in Ein Hahoresh and in Deganiyah B. If it is not your country, your fatherland, the country of your

ancestors and of your sons, then what are you doing here? You came to another people's homeland, as they claim, you expelled them and you have taken their land."¹⁵

From the very first the racist Zionist leadership quite deliberately pursued a policy aimed at expelling Arabs from Palestine. Herzl made this entry in his diary on June 12, 1895: "We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries while denying it any employment in our own country. ...Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly."¹⁶ A quarter of a century later, when this "process" was underway in Palestine Ahad Ha'am, who had visited Palestine, said: "They treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, deprive them of their rights, offend them without cause, and even boast of these deeds; and nobody among us opposes this despicable and dangerous inclination."¹⁷

The Zionists, in effect, had from the very start been planning genocide against the Arab people of Palestine. Arthur Ruppin, who directed the Zionist colonization of Palestine, thought that Jews would inevitably live in "a state of perpetual war with the Arabs."¹⁸ R. Weitz, a Zionist leader, who for over 40 years headed the WZO colonization department, made the following entry in his diary: "The only solution is a Palestine, at least Western Palestine (west of the Jordan River) without Arabs.....And there is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them: *Not one village, not one tribe, should be left.*"¹⁹

What other Zionist leaders preferred to discuss privately between themselves, the spiritual mentor of Menachem Begin, Z'ev Jabotinsky, who founded a union of "Zionists-Revisionists", preached openly. "The establishment of the Jewish majority in Palestine will have to be achieved against the wish of the country's present Arab majority"²⁰ he declared. As early as 1907, addressing the 7th Congress of the WZO, Jabotinsky set forth the "philosophi-

cal basis” of his policy. He said: “The moral appraisal of the means and methods used by a fighter must be governed exclusively by the measure of real public good or harm they result in.”²¹

Jabotinsky called on the bearers of the “supreme morality” to destroy with an iron fist all those who resisted the Zionists. He said: “Zionist colonization must either be terminated or carried out against the wishes of the native population. This colonization can, therefore, be continued and make progress only under the protection of a power independent of the native population – an iron wall, which will be in a position to resist the pressure of the native population. This is, *in toto*, our policy towards the Arabs...”²² He formulated the “cast-iron law” of Zionist strategy and cynically preached the “morality” of militarism, colonialism and aggression.

This ideological platform is akin to fascism. Analyzing the similarity between Zionism and fascism the Israeli Communists emphasized in the resolution of their 17th Congress that “the reactionary ideology and practice of Zionism provide fertile soil for the emergence and growth of fascist-style Zionist parties and groups which resort to terrorist methods – assassinations and arson – and which form paramilitary organizations for this purpose.”

After the State of Israel was established, power in the newly created state was seized by Zionist circles; they set up a political regime whose aim was to implement Zionist theoretical concepts. Zionist ideology became the dominant ideology in Israel and Zionist dogma formed the basis of Israeli legislation. The hopes of progressive world public that Israel would develop along the path of democracy were dashed when the Zionist leadership converted Israel into a hotbed of racism and aggression in the Middle East and made terror an instrument of government policy. As Naim Ashhab, a prominent leader of the Palestine Communist Party of Jordan, has pointed out: “The class and racist essence of Zionism became only too evident after the Zionist bourgeoisie had

succeeded in converting Israel into its territorial base and begun to use Israel's state machinery and the manpower resources controlled by it for its own selfish ends."²³

Having gained control of the new state, the Zionist leadership proceeded to step up its campaign of aggression and terror. While Israeli diplomats were holding forth about Israel's longing for peace, Israeli government leaders were busy making preparations for new criminal acts. One can get an idea of what went on behind the closed doors of government chambers in Israel from extracts from the diaries of Moshe Sharett (Shertok), which have been published in English translation. Incidentally, there is still no complete translation of the diaries, though normally the memoirs of any Israeli leader of any importance are promptly translated, albeit with some omissions, in the United States. Sharett was head of the Political Department of the WZO Executive, Minister of Foreign Affairs, then Prime Minister of Israel and towards the end of his career, President of WZO. He knew a good deal and, judging by everything, tended to be rather candid in his diaries.

According to Sharett, while there were hysterical cries in Tel Aviv about a "mortal danger" posed by the Arabs, the Israeli Army Chief-of-Staff Moshe Dayan, told the Prime Minister: "In reality we face no danger at all from Arab military force. Even if they receive massive military aid from the West, we shall maintain our military superiority for another 8-10 years, thanks to our infinitely greater capacity to assimilate new armaments." Nevertheless, Dayan demanded "a free hand" for the Israeli army as "the 'retaliation' actions are our vital lymph. Above all, they make it possible for us to maintain a high tension among our population and in the army. Without these actions we would have ceased to be a combative people, the settlers would leave the settlements."²⁴ So, Dayan feared that unless the Zionists whipped up war hysteria they would lose their grip on the mass of the Israeli people. "It is necessary to convince our young people that we are in danger", Dayan insisted.²⁵ To achieve that the Israeli military were

prepared to go to extreme lengths and stage any provocation, however bloody.

Sharett made this entry in his diary: “The conclusions from Dayan’s words are clear: This state has no international obligations, no economic problems, the question of peace is non-existent. It must calculate its steps narrow-mindedly and live by the sword. It must see the sword as the main and only instrument with which to keep its morale high. Towards this end it may – no, it must – invent nonexistent dangers, and to do this it must adopt the method of provocation-and-retaliation. And above all – let us hope for a new war with the Arab countries, so that we may finally acquire our space.”²⁶ This might well have come not from the Israeli Army Chief-of-Staff, but from the Nazi general making preparations for the provocation at Gleiwitz radio station or other Nazi criminal acts designed to manufacture a pretext for aggression and gain “Lebensraum”.

But the Israeli military also needed obedient tools for carrying out its criminal plan. Stirring up an atmosphere of racism and militarism in Israel, the Zionist leaders seek to educate the youth to follow the example of such “heroes” and “model Zionists” as Joseph Trumpeldor and Meir Har-Zion.

Trumpeldor, a former noncommissioned officer in the tsarist Russian army, had participated, together with Z’ev Jabotinsky, in the creation during the First World War of the Jewish Legion and later directed the work of forming Zionist paramilitary units in Palestine. He was killed in 1920 in a clash with Arabs. Jabotinsky named the youth organization of “Zionists-Revisionists” after Trumpeldor, “B’rit Trumpeldor” (Sons of Trumpeldor). In his diary, which is widely publicized by Zionists among Israeli youth, Trumpeldor wrote: “We need men prepared to do everything... we must raise a generation of men who have no interests and no habits.....Bars of iron, elastic but of iron. Metal that can be forged to whatever is needed for the national machine. A wheel? I am the wheel. If a nail, a screw or a flying wheel are needed – take

me! Is there a need to dig the earth? I dig. Is there a need to shoot, to be a soldier? I am a soldier....I am the pure idea of service, prepared for everything.”²⁷

Meir Har-Zion, who belonged to a new generation of Israelis, was just such a cog in the machine. In the early 1950s he served in the 101st Company commanded at the time by a young air airborne troops officer, Arik Sharon. The company had a special mission which was to carry out “reprisal operations” against the Arab civilian population in the border areas. The “pure idea of service”, in this case, took the form of sadistic atrocities committed against innocent Palestinian peasants. When one of the officers of the company hesitated for fear that the wanton killings of civilians might diminish the “purity of Israeli arms”, Sharon’s aide berated him: “There are no pure or impure arms; there are only clean weapons that work when you need them and dirty weapons that jam the moment you fire.”²⁸ Har Zion, however, was not among those whom conscience bothered too much. He relished killing Arabs so much that he was not content to take part in routine raids on Arab villages. Even when he was off duty Har-Zion would join his fellow cutthroats on their night forays in order to kill more Arabs.

The Israeli authorities were fully aware of the atrocities committed by gangs of cutthroats of Har-Zion’s type, and they made no secret of it either. Sharett’s diary contains an entry which says that Ben-Gurion once reported such an incident to the cabinet. Ben-Gurion once reported such an incident to the cabinet. Ben-Gurion described “how our four youngsters captured the Bedouin boys one by one and took them to the wadi where they knifed them to death one after the other after having interrogated them, asking them questions in Hebrew which they didn’t understand and could not answer, while none of the group knows any Arabic. The group was headed by Meir Hartsion from kibbutz Ein Harod.” An officer later told Sharett about this crime in more detail: “An officercame to tell me that the whole reprisal op-

MARXIST

eration was organized with the active help of Arik Sharon, the commander of the paratrooper battalion. He furnished the four with arms, food, equipment and transportation and ordered their retreat secured by his patrols.”²⁹ The officer did not exclude that Dayan, too, knew of the operation in advance. The four were confident that they would not be punished and later refused to talk about it on explicit orders from Arik Sharon, probably approved by Dayan. The murderers were not prosecuted and Har-Zion became a “national hero”.

Sharett made this entry in his diary: “We justify the reprisals – we removed the mental and moral brakes on this instinct and made it possible ...to uphold vengeance as a moral principle. This has become so among large parts of the public in general, the masses of youth in particular, but it has reached the level of a sacred principle in (Sharon’s) battalion which constitutes the vengeance instrument of the state....”³⁰ We should introduce a correction here – not vengeance but terror that was elevated to the status of government policy.

TERROR AS GOVERNMENT POLICY

Zionist terror is spearheaded against the Arabs. It also represents a form of anti-Semitism since the Arab people belong to the Semitic group.

Shortly after the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948-1949 ended, the Zionist leadership in Israel introduced a “state of siege” in those regions of the country where Palestinians remained. In the border zone the Israeli military, under the pretext of stopping Palestinian “infiltration”, waged an undeclared war on Arab villages and refugee camps, killing Palestinians who were trying to return to their homes and fields. In 1952 alone 394 Arabs were killed, 227 wounded and as many as 2,595 captured. In 1953 the Zionists staged a massacre in the Palestinian village of Qibya on the Jordan-Israeli cease-fire line. Forty-five houses were blown up; 66

Palestinians were killed and 75 wounded.

Judging from the memoirs of the then Prime Minister of Israel Moshe Sharett, the country's ruling circles gave their generals "a blank check" and called their criminal deeds "retaliatory actions" in response to alleged "acts of terror" by Palestinian refugees. Thus, after the attack on Qibya Ben-Gurion "...insisted on excluding (from the official communiqué) any mention of the responsibility of the army; the civilians in the border area had taken matters into their own hands."³¹ In fact, however, the slaughter was the work of cutthroats from Ariel Sharon's 101st Company.

To broaden the scale of terrorist operations, in December 1953 the 202nd paratrooper battalion was formed on the basis of the 101st Company. Sharon was appointed commander of the new battalion. In 1954 the 202nd battalion was engaged in almost nonstop terrorist operations along the cease-fire line with Jordan, Egypt and Syria. On March 28 it attacked the village of Nahalin, on April 3 – Gaza, on April 7 – the village of Husan, on May 9 – Khirbet Ilin, on May 27 – Khirbet Jimba, on June 28 – Azzun, on August 1 – Jenin, on August 13 – Sheikh Madhkur and on August 15 – Bir-es-Saka.

In February 1954 David Ben-Gurion was returned to the Israeli cabinet after his temporary retirement and given the post of Defense Minister. As Moshe Sharett who was Prime Minister at the time noted in his diary, Ben-Gurion had said that he would only agree to "join a government that followed a policy of force."³² The Zionist leadership launched a policy designed to provoke a new war. On February 27 Ben-Gurion and Army Chief-of-Staff Moshe Dayan got the "go-ahead" for an "operation" in the Gaza Strip where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in refugee camps were under the protection of the Egyptian army. The plan was to attack an Egyptian army base just outside Gaza. To mislead world public opinion, Zionist propaganda subsequently portrayed the attack as "defensive action". Sharett recalled: "The army spokesman, on instructions from the minister of defense,

published a false version according to which a unit of ours, after having been attacked inside our territory, pursued the attackers and engaged a battle which later developed as it did.”³³ In actual fact, the Israeli action was nothing but unprovoked aggression. The Canadian general, E.L.M. Burns, who headed the group of UN observers on the armistice line, wrote:

“On the night of February 28, 1955, two platoons of Israeli paratroopers crossed the Armistice Demarcation Line east of Gaza, advanced more than three kilometers into the Egyptian-controlled Strip, and attacked a military camp near the railway station. Using small-arms, mortars, bazookas, hand-grenades, and Bangalore torpedoes they stormed the camp and completely demolished a stone military building, four Nissen huts, and a pump-house with heavy explosive charges. They killed fourteen Egyptian or Palestinian soldiers, an adult civilian, and a little boy, and wounded sixteen soldiers and two civilians.

“Another group of Israeli soldiers entered the Strip six kilometers south of Gaza and laid an ambush on the main road from Rafah. Into this ambush careered a truck carrying a lieutenant and thirty-five soldiers, mostly Palestinians, coming up from the south to reinforce the defenders of the camp.”³⁴

Carried out in violation of the armistice agreement between Egypt and Israel, this sneak attack further aggravated the Middle East conflict. In this way the Zionist leadership tried to make Egypt and other Arab countries withdraw their support for the Palestinian cause, thus setting the stage for creating a “Greater Israel”.

At a cabinet meeting in late March 1955 the Israeli Defense Minister said that Israel should annul the armistice agreement with Egypt and thus obtain a “right” to renew the war of 1948-1949. “Nasser,” he said, “will not even react to our occupation of the West Bank because if he does, he will be defeated and his regime, which is wholly based on the army, will collapse. The Arab states will not come to Nasser’s aid anyway. Finally, the Western

powers will not react militarily.”³⁵

Sharett, who was considered to be a moderate among the Zionists, did not back Ben-Gurion’s proposal. Not that he was reluctant to assume responsibility for the aggression. What gave him pause was something else: he feared that the seizure of new territory would dramatically increase the Palestinian population under Israeli jurisdiction. And Israel, according to the Zionist theory, was supposed to be a “pure” Jewish State.

This line of argument did not impress Ben-Gurion, who said that “Our future depends not on what the Gentiles say, but on what the Jews do.”³⁶ He once told the government: “Our force is in the accomplishment of facts – this is the only way for us to become a political factor which has to be taken into consideration. This is the right moment because the Arab world is divided.”³⁷ Ben-Gurion believed that Israel could impose its peace terms on the Arabs only after winning a decisive victory in a total war, i.e. by occupying Damascus, Cairo and Amman. But the Israeli cabinet was divided on the issue: six ministers voted for an immediate occupation of the Gaza Strip, six voted against and four abstained. The plan was put aside for the moment, but not abandoned.

Egypt found itself under the threat of an attack, and the Nasser government turned for help to socialist countries after the United States had refused its request for arms following the Israeli attack on Gaza. In September agreements were signed on arms shipments to Egypt (at its request) by the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Poland. This angered Israel’s protectors in the United States. Washington, which had until then maintained a posture of “impartiality” in the Arab-Israeli conflict, was now changing tack. The director of the CIA’s covert operations in the Middle East, Kermit Roosevelt, told the Israeli intelligence chiefs: “If, when the Soviet arms arrive, you hit Egypt – no one will protest.”³⁸

At 5 a.m. on October 29, 1956, without declaration of war, 395 Israeli paratroopers landed near the Mitla Pass on the Sinai

MARXIST

Peninsula. This was the start of the tripartite aggression against Egypt and was at the same time the second Arab-Israeli war. It was followed by a third, fourth and fifth war.

For three and a half decades Israel's ruling elite has almost continually waged wars against Arab countries. Terror has become the chief instrument of Israeli policy towards the Arabs.

The Zionist terrorists also used religious fanaticism to prove their "right" to indiscriminate killings. The headquarters and the Rabbinical Council of the Israeli army issued a booklet in which one of its authors, Rabbi Abraham Avidan, wrote that Israeli soldiers did not have to distinguish between enemy military and civilian personnel even though it was technically possible to do so. According to him, when it came to killing civilians in wartime no religious Jew should trust a non-Jew and should always remember that even civilians may help the enemy. This rabbi-militarist called for virtual genocide when he wrote that when the Israeli army attacked the enemy, its soldiers were allowed, and they were in fact in duty bound, to kill also good civilians because the religious law said that no Gentile should be believed that he would not help the enemy.

When the Israeli newspaper *Al-Hamishmar* carried a report about this booklet, on March 28, 1975, the Tel Aviv authorities, to hush up the scandal, announced that it was being withdrawn from circulation. The Chief Rabbi of the armed forces said that the book "dealt" with abstract aspects of religious law which had nothing to do with everyday life and that no one was putting forward these principles as guidelines for the conduct of Israeli soldiers in time of war or peace. But there is clear evidence that with the blessing of clerics Israeli aggressors perpetrated and are still perpetrating crimes against the civilian Arab population.

An illustration of just how the "philosophical" percepts of the Zionist apologists of murder and terror are put into practice was provided by the tragedy that befell the Arab village Kafr Qassem in Israel on October 29, 1956. On that day, as mentioned earlier,

Sharon's paratroopers launched a war of aggression against Egypt. In accordance with a scenario worked out in advance, the Israeli government issued an official communiqué explaining that the military actions were a limited operation against "terrorists" and not the start of a war to seize the Gaza Strip and the Sinai. It was only later that hostilities began along the entire front with the participation of the Anglo-French army of invasion. But on October 29 the Israeli authorities imposed a curfew on all the Arab villages within Israel. The Zionist leadership regarded Israeli Arabs as the "enemy" who could help neighboring Arab states.

At 4.30 p.m. an Israeli border guard officer told the Mukhtar (elder of the village) of Kafr Qassem that a curfew would be imposed from 17.00 hours and that all villagers should remain indoors. The elder explained that 400 peasants were still out in the fields and could not be informed of the curfew, but the Israeli officer did not accept this explanation. Afterwards for about an hour shots could be heard on the outskirts of the village. Israeli border guards, without prior warning, shot at point-blank range the Arab peasants returning to the village from the fields. Forty-seven people were killed including a 66-year-old man, nine women and seven children. Later another two men were killed.

News of the crime leaked out. Under pressure of the country's democratic forces the Israeli government was forced to put those responsible on trial. It was established that the slaughter had been planned by a group of Israeli army officers. General Zvi Tsur, Commander of the Central Military District, had issued the order on the morning of October 29 to the battalion commanders including Yshishkhar Shadmi who was in charge of the border guards. "The battalion commander (Shadmi)told the unit commander (Melinki) that the curfew must be extremely strict and that strong measures must be taken to enforce it. It would not be enough to arrest those who broke it – they must be shot."³⁹

Returning to his headquarters Melinki told his subordinates about the order. "He ...informed the assembled officers that the

war had begun, that their units were now under the command of the Israeli Defense Army, and that their task was to impose the curfew in the minority villages from 17.00 to 06.00, after informing the Mukhtars to this effect at 16.30. With regard to the observation of the curfew, Melinki emphasized that it was forbidden to harm inhabitants who stayed in their homes, but that anyone found outside his home (or, according to other witnesses, anyone leaving his home, or anyone breaking the curfew) should be shot dead. He added that there were to be no arrests, and that if a number of people were killed in the night (according to other witnesses: it was desirable that a number of people should be killed) this would facilitate the imposition of the curfew during succeeding nights.⁴⁰ He also said that no exception should be made for people returning from their fields, or for women and children.

Lieutenant Joubrael Dahan, who was in charge of establishing “order” in the village of Kafr Qassem, deployed his men on the approaches to the village and calmly watched as the Mukhtar and his relatives ran about in the streets trying to warn as many people as possible and prevent tragedy. But it was too late. At 17.00 hours the slaughter began. The lieutenant who was in charge of the operation and was also himself shooting unsuspecting peasants returning from the fields radioed to Major Melinki: “...one less... fifteen less....many less; it is difficult to count them.”⁴¹

An Israeli court took two years to investigate this crime. The accused were eleven servicemen including Major Melinki and Lieutenant Dahan. Three of the accused were acquitted, eight were sentenced to prison terms ranging from seven to seventeen years. However, the Supreme Military Court intervened and the sentences were reduced. Later the Chief of General Staff again cut the prison terms and finally...the President of Israel himself interceded. As a result, a year after the sentences were passed all the murderers were set free. In 1960 the municipal council of the Israeli town of Ramla appointed Dahan “officer responsible for Arab affairs in the city.”

The battalion commander Shadmi and General Tsur were not prosecuted at all. Incidentally, General Tsur was later appointed Chief of General Staff.

The policy of terror toward the Arab population of Israel is even sanctioned juridically. The whole legislation dealing with the affairs of Arabs in Israel amounts to legalized plunder and terror. The 19th Congress of the Israeli Communist Party noted that the Begin government had “stepped up its policy of discrimination and oppression towards the Arab population of Israel, which is a national minority and part of the Palestinian Arab people. The Likud bloc government has also intensified its policy of confiscation and ejection of Arab population from their lands.”⁴²

The Israeli Knesset has adopted a series of racist laws designed to drive Arabs from their homeland. These include the notorious Emergency Laws (Security Areas) of 1949, the Absentees' Property Law of 1950, the Law for the Concentration of Agricultural Land of 1965, and other acts “legalizing” the robbery of the Arabs. Thus the Absentees' Property Law stripped Palestinians who fled the country during the first Arab-Israeli War of the right to retain their property.

In as much as the Israeli authorities have categorically refused to give them permission to return home and present their claims with regard to their property, the meaning of the law is clear enough.

Confiscation of Arab land for “military reasons” or under other pretexts was widely resorted to as well. Thus, 78 Arab villages which at one time owned 1.1 million *dunam* of land ended up with just 376,000 *dunam*. All told, the Israeli authorities have done the Arab peasants out of more than 1.2 million *dunam* of land. These figures show how the racist dogma about creating a “pure” Jewish State is implemented.

Another instance is the “Judaization” of Galilee, the Northern District of Israel, which under the UN decision was to have become part of the Arab state of Palestine. Notwithstanding this

decision, Israel occupied Galilee in 1948. This region had no Jewish population to speak of, which was why the Zionist leadership adopted a strategy of “Judaization” of Galilee. It was outlined in a number of secret documents of which the first was a memorandum to Ben-Gurion drawn up by Joseph Nahmani of the Jewish National Fund. It said: “Though Western Galilee has now been occupied, it still has not been freed of its Arab population, as happened in other parts of the country....The Arab minority centered here presents a continual threat to the security of the nation..... At the very least, it can become the nucleus of Arab nationalism, influenced by the nationalist movements in the neighboring countries, and undermining the stability of our state.”⁴³ Nahmani believed that “it is essential to destroy this concentration of Arabs by building Jewish settlements” and subsequently transferring Arab lands to the Jewish National Fund.

In 1962, another Zionist leader, Joseph Weitz, put forward a plan for accelerating the “Judaization” of Galilee, which called for the building of a new town, Upper Nazareth, and outlined measures for establishing new Jewish settlements. In 1976 Israel Koenig, the Northern District (Galilee) Commissioner of the Ministry of the Interior, came up with a new plan for the further “Judaization” of Galilee. Koenig’s report emphasized that the growth of the Arab population in Galilee was a threat to the Israeli authorities’ control of the district, and contained a number of recommendations typical of Israel’s racist policy. One of them suggested “expanding” Jewish settlement in areas “where the contiguity of the Arab population is prominent, and where they number considerably more than the Jewish population”, and examining “the possibility of diluting existing Arab population concentrations.”⁴⁴ Another called for an “investment” policy which would ensure that the Arabs would not make up more than 20 per cent of the employed, for an increase in taxes and for putting an end to the “dependence” of the Jews on the Arab sector of the economy.

Publication of this report caused a scandal in Israel. The government was forced to dissociate itself from the document, at least verbally, but the measures proposed by Koenig have since been implemented by the Zionist leadership in Tel Aviv. Significantly, a week after the publication of his report Koenig was appointed head of the Commission for the Northern District including Galilee charged with preventing “illegal construction” of Arab houses “on Israeli government-owned land”.

The Arab population of Israel, supported by the democratic section of the Jewish public, has been waging a fight for their rights. Protests against attempts by the Israeli authorities to deprive the Arabs of the land they still own have assumed a mass scale. A major protest demonstration was held on March 30, 1976, on the occasion of the “Land Defense Day” proclaimed by the Arab community.

On that occasion, as on many previous ones, Arab demonstrators were attacked by security forces who opened fire, killing six and wounding dozens. Hundreds of people were arrested, beaten and tortured.

The 19th Congress of the Communist Party of Israel pointed out that the Begin government had stepped up its campaign of terror against Arab youth. This took the form of baiting, fascist-style attacks organized by the Tehya party, and acts of hooliganism carried out by Rabbi Kahane’s gangs and similar groups. Significantly, the administration of most universities in Israel protect and even encourage these fascists.

But the Palestinian population on the West Bank and the Druses on the Golan Heights (which belong to Syria) find themselves in an even more difficult situation than the Arab population of Israel. The local population of Israeli-occupied Arab lands are subject daily to humiliations and terror. Palestinians detained in concentration camps and in prisons are tortured. Even the Western press, which tends to take on trust assertions by Zionist propagandists about the “prosperity” of the Arabs in Israeli-occupied

territories, has acknowledged it. The *Sunday Times* wrote, after a group of its reporters had made a special study of the position of Arab inmates of Israeli prisons:

“1. Israel’s security and intelligence services ill-treat Arabs in detention. 2. Some of the ill-treatment is merely primitive: prolonged beatings, for example. But more refined techniques are also used, including electric-shock torture and confinement in specially-constructed cells. This sort of apparatus, allied to the degree of organisation evident in its application, removes Israel’s practice from the lesser realms of brutality and places it firmly in the category of torture. 3. Torture takes place in at least six centres: at the prisons of the four main occupied towns of Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron on the West Bank, and Gaza in the South; at the detention center in Jerusalem, known as the Russian Compound; and at a special military intelligence centre whose whereabouts are uncertain, but which testimony suggests is somewhere inside the vast military supply base at Sarafand, near Lod airport on the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv road. There is some evidence too that, at least for a time, there was a second such camp somewhere near Gaza.”⁴⁵

The US State Department, which publishes annual reports on the “civil rights situation” in different countries, reports that are crammed with crude allegations about violations of human rights in the USSR and other socialist countries, gives high marks to the Israeli authorities for their human rights record in occupied territories. And this despite the fact that even US consulate staff in Jerusalem have repeatedly informed Washington about the use of torture in Israeli jails. After a visit to the West Bank and Gaza Strip by a delegation of US lawyers from the National Lawyers Guild, the Guild published a report entitled “Treatment of Palestinians in Israeli-Occupied West Bank and Gaza”, which cited cases of violation of Palestinians’ rights by the Zionists. The authors of the report emphasized that the Israeli court procedure was almost wholly based on “confessions” by the accused charged with ‘terrorist’ activities. No other evidence of their “guilt” was re-

quired.⁴⁶ Official Washington, however, preferred to turn a blind eye to such flagrant violations of court procedure. A staff member of the US consulate in Jerusalem who had sent telegrams to the State Department in Washington on the use of torture against Palestinians was fired.

The “collective punishment” meted out by the Israeli authorities against whole towns and districts in occupied areas is particularly shocking. In May 1980 the Palestinian town of Hebron, with a population of 60,000, was “placed under arrest”. After Palestinian guerrillas had attacked Israeli settlers in the streets of Hebron the town was subjected to “collective punishment”: its Mayor and Qadi (religious leader) were deported; its residents were forbidden to leave town or to have guests or visitors from abroad; a curfew was enforced for over a month, which mostly affected the peasants (the majority of Hebron’s population), who could not work in their fields and orchards or look after their cattle; telephone service was cut off for 45 days; Hebron traders were forbidden from taking their wares to Jordan; all men in the town were detained and interrogated, scores were arrested; every house in Hebron was searched. “Eye-witness accounts of these searches by soldiers who took part in them revealed that in the process food supplies were destroyed, furniture wrecked and parents were beaten and humiliated before their children. All this was done pursuant to specific instructions by their officers.”⁴⁷

From late 1981 to July 1982 “collective punishment” was inflicted on the entire Arab population of the Golan Heights. On December 13, 1981, the Begin government announced this extension of Israeli legislation to this Syrian territory (a move tantamount to its annexation) and tried to force the local Druse population to take Israeli citizenship. But the Druses refused to do so. The Israeli authorities then sealed off four Druse villages and imposed a curfew. Israeli soldiers entered the homes of the villagers and tried to make them accept Israeli papers. The Druses went on strike and burnt the papers.

MARXIST

As the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* reported on March 15, 1982, 12,000 people were actually imprisoned in their homes: "Nobody comes or goes. The telephones have been cut off. The villages are surrounded by barbed wire and road blocks... The local people are trapped in their villages without food supplies (except for what the Israeli army is prepared to sell them), without regular medical services, drugs and other essentials. Sometimes they are also without electricity. Herdsmen are forbidden to graze their flocks. Peasants may not cultivate their fields or look after their orchards."⁴⁸ Day after day, week after week, and month after month the blockade introduced under the notorious Emergency Laws of 1949, was maintained. The defenseless Druses were subjected to humiliations and were terrorized by maddened Israeli soldiers. The *Jerusalem Post* described how soldiers burst into a house to force the family living there to accept Israeli papers. Having failed, the Israelis threw the papers on the floor and left the house. "...A soldier clubbed a three-year-old boy who threw an identity card out of the house, shot the boy's mother in the leg when she attacked the soldier, and grazed the brother's head with a bullet when he rushed to his mother's defence."⁴⁹ Even a former member of Israel's Supreme Court, quoted by the paper, described the behavior of the Israeli authorities as barbaric.

The ultimate goal of Israeli policies in the occupied Arab lands is to turn them into a colony of Israel, and above all, by means of establishing Jewish settlements there. And these are Jewish, not Israeli settlements, for Arab citizens of Israel are not allowed to live in them (but all Jews arriving from the Diaspora have this right).

The expropriation of the property of Palestinians in Israeli-occupied territories was intensified after the Begin government had taken office. At present 40 per cent of all land and over half of all water resources on the West Bank are under Israeli control. The number of Jewish settlers on the West Bank reached 2,500 in 1982. The Zionist leadership plans to have 100,000 Jews settled on

the West Bank by 1986, and 1,000,000 by the year 2010.

Jewish settlements on occupied Arab territories have become not only outposts of Israeli annexation but hotbeds of Israeli terrorism as well. Encouraged by the authorities, Zionist fanatics from the Gush Emunim organization and various other extremist groups attack neighboring Arab villages and towns and carry out pogroms there.

And yet the Israeli government has failed to impose its will on the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, who have displayed determination to fight for their legitimate rights and who regard the PLO as their sole legitimate representative. Faced with this resistance, the Zionist leadership has tried to implement the “final solution” of the Palestinian question through physical destruction of the PLO in Lebanon, an act of aggression it code-named “Operation Peace for Galilee” to mislead world public opinion.

Here is what Jody Powell, one of President Carter’s aides who was present on many occasions during talks with Begin and Sharon and at the signing of the Camp David deal, wrote in the *Washington Post*: “Operation Peace for Galilee has as much to do with the West Bank as with Galilee. The goal in Lebanon and on the West Bank is to remove the PLO as a political and military factor. Thus unencumbered, Begin and Sharon apparently feel they will be able to induce West Bank Palestinians to accept a fig-leaf autonomy plan and proceed with making the West Bank a permanent part of Israel.”⁵⁰

The aims of this Israeli aggression went well beyond that. Apart from destroying the PLO Begin and his close associates planned to install a puppet regime in Lebanon and to inflict a military defeat on the Syrian forces stationed there. Besides, the Zionists had long regarded Southern Lebanon as part of what they call the “historical land of Israel”. They are particularly interested in its water resources – the Litani river and its tributaries – for irrigation of fields in the north of Israel. As a Gush Emunim ad-

vertisement in the newspaper *Ma'ariv* of October 3, 1982, put it: "We regard the Peace for Galilee Campaign as a holy war, and as a great act of Praise the Lord who intervened in this campaign.... It brought back the property of the tribes of Asher and Naftali into Israel's boundaries."⁵¹ Thus, invoking the Lord and long-disappeared "generations of Israel" the Zionists seek to justify their plans to perpetuate their control over Southern Lebanon.

"Operation Peace for Galilee" escalated into a war of genocide against the Palestinians and Lebanese. According to UNICEF statistics, only during the period between June 4 and August 15, 1982, or by the time agreement on the withdrawal of PLO combatants from Beirut was reached, 11,840 children aged under fifteen had been killed or wounded, along with 8,686 women and 2,409 old men (aged sixty and more). During the siege of West Beirut 300 people starved to death, 2,058 were critically ill, 1,637 suffered from severe food poisoning, 1,845 had nervous breakdowns and 2,372 succumbed to infectious diseases.⁵²

Of the 92,000 Palestinians who lived in Southern Lebanon, 60,000 were left homeless. The number of people left homeless among the Palestinian refugees in Beirut was 20,000, in the Bekaa Valley 12,000 and in Tripoli 4,000. The homes of tens of thousands of Lebanese were destroyed. Six towns, more than 30 villages and 17 Palestinian refugee camps were razed. Senator Charles Percy, Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, reported in the summer of 1982 that 14,000 people had been killed and 55,000 injured in Lebanon.⁵³ Subsequently, the figures grew dramatically.

Following in the footsteps of the Hitlerites, Begin and Sharon extended their reign of terror to genocide proportions. They set up the Ansar Camp, a huge concentration camp in Southern Lebanon, where 9,000 to 15,000 Palestinians, aged from 14 to 60, were confined. According to Amnon Rubinstein, a Knesset member, conditions inside the camp "are intolerable and are a stain on Israel's reputation. Prisoners are walking about barefooted in

The Ideological Underpinnings of Zionist Terror

the bitter cold and there have been numerous assaults on them.”⁵⁴ Palestinians were rounded up and taken to the camp like cattle, inside huge cages hitched to helicopters.

The International Commission of Inquiry Into Israeli Crimes Against the Lebanese and Palestinian Peoples at its Geneva session in February-March 1983 emphasized that the Zionist leadership, relying on US support, continued to violate international law, the UN Charter and the Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and that its intolerable behavior was an insolent challenge to world public opinion.

(Extracts from “Zionism Counts on Terror” by Sergei Sedov of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1984)

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MARXIST

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The Ideological Underpinnings of Zionist Terror

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MARXIST