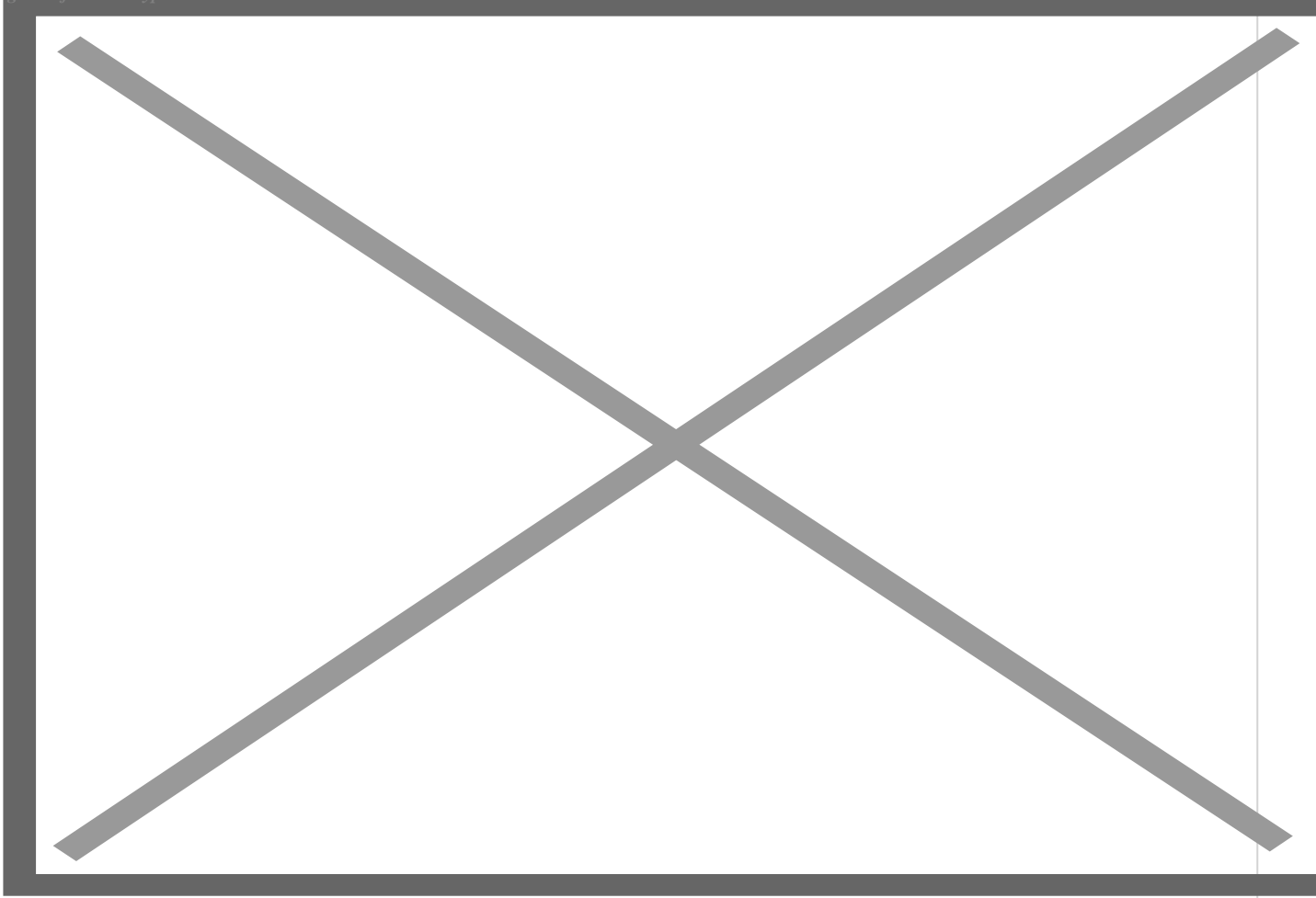


Don't Let Biden and Blinken Get Away With Aiding a Second Nakba

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The first Nakba in 1948 with the creation of Israel on Palestinian lands

By Michel Moushabeck / TRUTHOUT
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On Wednesday, the Israeli army raided Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital, terrorizing patients, medical staff and families sheltering in the hospital compound. Ahmed El Mokhallalati, a surgeon, told Al Jazeera from inside the hospital that "food and drinking water haven't come to the hospital for the sixth day now, with no way of getting anything in the hospital." He expressed shock that "the whole world has been witnessing this crime and seeing everything that is happening and no one has stopped it."

"No one has said loudly this is not allowed," he added. "Where is the international community?"

The United States's support for Israel's ongoing attacks on Al-Shifa and broader genocide in Gaza is a clear violation of international humanitarian law. On Monday, November 13, the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a federal lawsuit against President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin for "failing to prevent an unfolding genocide where they have influence over the State of Israel to do so, and directly abetting its development with weapons, funds, and diplomatic cover, in breach of duties enshrined in the Genocide Convention and customary international law."

As a Palestinian, I wonder what version of international law the U.S. government is following in failing to prevent the genocidal horror that is taking place in Gaza before our very eyes. What message does it send to the rest of the world when the U.S. is actively helping Israel commit one of the worst crimes in modern history in violation of international humanitarian law? How long will our elected officials be able to hold off calling for a ceasefire? How do they feel as human beings when they see images of dead Palestinian children crushed under the rubble?

By not demanding a ceasefire, the U.S. is telling Israel: We'll always have your back; it's fine to keep killing innocent civilians; it's OK to keep killing journalists, doctors, medical staff and United Nations workers; we will look the other way as you starve people to death. No water, no food, no electricity, no fuel — no problem, as far as we're concerned. We will always say you didn't mean to, and that you are doing everything you can to minimize civilian casualties.

"The United States has a clear and binding obligation to prevent, not further, genocide. They have failed in meeting their legal and moral duty to use their considerable power to end this horror. They must do so," said Center for Constitutional Rights Senior Attorney Katherine Gallagher, one of the lawyers who brought the case.

Far from the moral and ethical conscience of humankind, the Biden administration has granted Israel impunity and blocked a ceasefire that would have saved thousands of lives lost to Israel's mass killing, mass starvation, mass dehydration, and nonstop heavy bombardment of civilian neighborhoods, schools, hospitals and places of worship. It's as if the Biden administration is going out of its way to alienate voters who actually do care about human rights and international law.

In Congress, only 26 representatives have called for an immediate ceasefire and joined "Ceasefire Now" House Resolution 786. Instead of proposing a bill that calls for an end to the ongoing assault on innocent civilians and affirms the U.S.'s commitment to human rights for all human beings, Congress is supporting Israel's inhumane policies of ethnic cleansing and rewarding Israel's actions by voting on November 2 to spend \$14.3 billion in U.S. taxpayer dollars on an aid package — in addition to the \$3.8 billion it gives Israel each year — in order to replenish the missiles used in its carpet bombing of Gaza.

Norman Solomon, acclaimed author, media critic and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, wrote in a recent article for Antiwar.com that "the two governments are locked into shared, long-term, overarching strategic interests in the Middle East that have absolutely no use for human rights except as rhetorical window-dressing." He added: "The United States and Israel remain enmeshed. To the power elite in Washington, the bilateral alliance is vastly more important than the lives of Palestinian people. And it's unlikely that the U.S. government will really confront Israel over its open-ended killing spree in Gaza."

The U.S. corporate media is no better; it also has a Palestine problem and a major pro-Israel bias. We are accustomed to hearing the U.S. media amplifying narratives like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's assertion that "Israel is fighting according to international law" and that "the Israeli army is doing an exemplary job trying to minimize the civilian casualties." U.S. corporate media also continue to repeat Israel's ungrounded claim that there is a Hamas command center underneath Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital—a claim that Israel has been unable to prove or provide visual evidence of.

U.S. media are highly tuned into the Israeli hasbara (propaganda) machine and rely largely on Israeli talking points. Listening to anchors and journalists at different mainstream media outlets, I'm amazed how they sound as though they're reading from the exact same script. They make no effort to show the Palestinian perspective or bother to put the crisis in any historical context. They ignore the root causes of the violence: Israel's brutal military occupation, apartheid and settler colonialism.

What U.S. viewers and readers don't get from corporate media is the harsh reality that millions of Palestinians lack basic human rights. For decades, Palestinians have endured horrific living conditions that constrained every aspect of their lives in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. For decades, they've lived in daily fear of violence — both from the Israeli Defense Forces and from the armed settlers living on stolen Palestinian land. Since the first Nakba 75 years ago, Palestinians have suffered from Israel's occupation, racism and oppressive policies. Gaza and its 2.3 million inhabitants have been under siege for nearly 17 years with no freedom of movement and total Israeli control over what goes in and what is allowed out of Gaza. Gaza is often described as a densely populated concentration camp or as an over-crowded open-air prison.

This context matters. The October 7 Hamas-led attack is being used as justification for genocide and what appears to be a clear strategy — which I previously called the "out-of-state" solution — intended to displace the entire Palestinian population of Gaza.

The International Committee of the Red Cross recently reported on the dire, "precarious and unsafe" conditions under which civilians are evacuating in the Gaza Strip. One would think that the Red Cross's statement that "Men, women, and children, waving white flags, walk for dozens of kilometers past dead bodies lying on the streets and without necessities like food and water," would shock anyone with a grain of humanity in them. The trucks of humanitarian aid that have been allowed to pass through the Rafah crossing are insufficient and can't possibly meet the needs of the massive number of people who have been displaced from their homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Israel's institutionalized dehumanization of Palestinians, aided by the corporate media and coupled with the U.S. and European governments' normalization of oppression and ethnic cleansing, is what is allowing for this second Nakba. As reported by Ha'aretz, Avi Dichter, Israeli security cabinet member and agriculture minister, said: "We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba," referring to the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land during the creation of the state of Israel. "Gaza Nakba 2023. That's how it'll end," he concluded.

Since the start of the second Nakba on October 8, which has rendered Gaza largely unlivable, the number of Palestinian deaths has exceeded 11,000, and nearly 5,000 of those killed have been children. An estimated 1.6 million Palestinians have been displaced, and no one knows how many are still missing or are buried under the rubble. But I also wonder, does the U.S. really care about the enormous death toll and civilian casualties, knowing that nearly 4 million children, women and men perished in the U.S.'s so-called "war on terror" since 9/11?

As the brutal onslaught on Gaza continues and as Israeli generals ramp up their genocidal rhetoric, activists — on college campuses and in major cities around the world — have been organizing daily protests and have intensified their demand for ceasefire and an end to the genocide even as they are being met with censorship, repression, harassment and accusations of antisemitism in an effort to silence the growing and fearless pro-Palestinian voices.

Palestinian and Jewish students, Muslims, Arab Americans and pro-Palestinian supporters are facing attacks for speaking up for Palestinian rights, demanding a ceasefire and demanding an end to the 17-year-old suffocating blockade of Gaza and Israel's crimes of apartheid. The weaponization and redefinition of antisemitism to mean any criticism of the Israeli state is creating a climate on college campuses that increasingly renders discussion of Israel's crimes off-limits.

In an effort to silence dissent, Brandeis University became the first private university to ban Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) from campus, followed by Columbia University, where the chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace and SJP were both suspended. At Brown University, 20 Jewish students face up to a year in jail following their arrest in a protest on November 8 pushing their administration to divest from Israel and call for a ceasefire.

The majority of the world's nations and the overwhelming majority of the people of the world are demanding a ceasefire. The U.S. can and must stop the second Nakba.

During the 1948 Nakba, my family was terrorized; they were displaced from their home in West Jerusalem and became refugees in countries that did not want them. I carry their pain with me to this day as I raise my voice in support of Palestinian rights. It's devastating to witness a second Nakba in Gaza. The despicable, abhorrent and unjustifiable killing of innocent civilians is unfathomable. There are no safe places in Gaza for Palestinians to run to or take cover from Israel's relentless bombardment.

Racism in Israel is not a flaw in the system; it is the system. The director of B'tselem, Israel's oldest human rights organization, said it clearly: "It is apartheid." It is a colonial project that employs oppression, violence, persecution, checkpoints, house demolitions, displacement, expulsion, imprisonment, land theft, torture of children and collective punishment to ethnically cleanse non-Jewish inhabitants. It is not "complicated." It is not "an age-old religious feud." It is not "a conflict of extremists on both sides."

Simply put in one sentence: Palestinians want to live in their homes; on their land; with freedom, dignity and equality; and without fear. It is our duty as U.S. taxpayers to uplift the Palestinian struggle and to demand that our elected officials hold Israel accountable for its atrocities, and work for an end to the ongoing U.S. complicity in Israel's denial of Palestinian rights.

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