

Auschwitz Museum decries Israeli mayor's sick call to empty Gaza

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By BRETT WILKINS

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland has decried what critics called genocidal remarks by the mayor of an Israeli town who said all of Gaza should be ethnically cleansed of Palestinians and turned into a museum like the notorious Nazi death camp.

"The whole Gaza Strip needs to be empty. Flattened. Just like in Auschwitz," Metula Mayor David Azoulai said in a radio interview on Sunday, according to The Times of Israel. "Let it be a museum for all the world to see what Israel can do. Let no one reside in the Gaza Strip for all the world to see, because October 7 was in a way a second Holocaust."

In response, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim, southern Poland wrote on social media that "David Azoulai appears to wish to use the symbol of the largest cemetery in the world as some sort of a sick, hateful, pseudo-artistic, symbolic expression."

"Calling for acts that seem to transgress any civil, wartime, moral, and human laws, that may sound as a call for murder of the scale akin to Auschwitz, puts the whole honest world face-to-face with a madness that must be confronted and firmly rejected," the museum added. "We do hope that Israeli authorities will react to such shameful abuse, as terrorism can never be a response to terrorism."

Last month, the museum posted a statement from the International Auschwitz Council—whose members include Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum director Piotr Cywiński—supporting Israel's war on Gaza, which according to Palestinian and United Nations officials has now killed, maimed, or left missing more than 70,000 people, mostly women and children.

Numerous Israeli political and military leaders—as well as journalists, pundits, celebrities, and others—have made statements that critics have called incitement to or supportive of genocide in response to the Hamas-led attacks that killed more than 1,100 Israelis and others on October 7.

In a televised October speech, far-right Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invoked Amalek, the ancient biblical enemy of the Israelites whom God commanded the Jews to exterminate. Israeli President Isaac Herzog asserted that there are no innocent civilians in Gaza, while Defense Minister Yoav Gallant vowed to "eliminate everything" there.

Last month, Israeli Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter declared that "we are now rolling out the Great Nakba," a reference to the ethnic cleansing, sometimes by massacre and death march, of over 750,000 Arabs from Palestine during the establishment of the modern state of Israel 75 years ago.

Members of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, have called for Gaza to be "wiped off the map," bombed with nuclear weapons, and burned to the ground.

Numerous U.S. politicians, including Republican presidential candidate and former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, have echoed Israeli calls for genocidal violence against Palestinians.

Brett Wilkins is a staff writer for Common Dreams.

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