

*Renowned Indian writer and
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Indian author and activist Arundhati Roy has been named as the winner of the PEN Pinter Prize 2024. (Archives)

New Delhi, October 13 (RHC)-- No amount of power, money, weapons and propaganda on earth can any longer hide the wound that is Palestine, says world-renowned writer and activist Arundhati Roy.

Roy was on Thursday named the winner of the PEN Pinter Prize 2024, an annual literary award launched in 2009 by English PEN, an international that advocates for human rights. Her acceptance speech focuses mainly on the ongoing Israeli-American genocide in the besieged Gaza Strip, which has already claimed more than 42,100 lives since October last year.

She said the “unflinching and televised genocide” in Gaza as well as Lebanon is being perpetrated “in defense of a colonial occupation and an apartheid state.” “To assuage their collective guilt for their early years of indifference towards one genocide – the Nazi extermination of millions of European Jews – the United States and Europe have prepared the grounds for another,” said Roy, who is known for her

firebrand speeches and writings.

Since October 7th, 2023, the New Delhi-based Booker Prize winner, said apart from the tens of thousands of people it has killed, Israel has displaced the majority of Gaza's population, besides bombing hospitals, and deliberately killing doctors, aid workers and journalists.

"A whole population is being starved – their history is sought to be erased," she stated, adding that the genocide is aided and abetted "by the wealthiest, most powerful governments in the world.

"There is no daylight between these countries and Israel. In the last year alone, the U.S. has spent 17.9 billion dollars in military aid to Israel. So, let us once and for all dispense with the lie about the US being a mediator, a restraining influence, or as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (considered to be on the extreme Left of mainstream US politics) put it, 'working tirelessly for a ceasefire'. A party to the genocide cannot be a mediator," Roy asserted.

The author of 'God of Small Things' dismissed the notion that Israel is fighting "a war of self-defense", calling it "a war of aggression, a war to occupy more territory, to strengthen its apartheid apparatus and tighten its control on Palestinian people and the region."

"Unlike President Joe Biden, who calls himself a non-Jewish Zionist and unflinchingly bankrolls and arms Israel while it commits its war crimes, I am not going to declare myself or define myself in any way that is narrower than my writing. I am what I write," Roy said in her power-packed speech.

"The root of all the violence, including the violence of October 7th, is Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and its subjugation of the Palestinian people. History did not begin on 7 October 2023.

"I ask you, which of us sitting in this hall would willingly submit to the indignity that Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank have been subjected to for decades? What peaceful means have the Palestinian people not tried? What compromise have they not accepted—other than the one that requires them to crawl on their knees and eat dirt."

Roy said when Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu holds up a map of West Asia in which Palestine has been erased and Israel stretches from the river to the sea, he is "applauded as a visionary" but when Palestinians and their supporters chant 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free', they are "accused of explicitly calling for the genocide of Jews."

She also referred to the dehumanization of Palestinians over the years, invoking former Israeli premier Menachem Begin calling Palestinians 'two-legged beasts', Yitzhak Rabin calling them 'grasshoppers' who 'could be crushed' and Golda Meir saying 'There was no such thing as Palestinians'.

"I refuse to play the condemnation game. Let me make myself clear. I do not tell oppressed people how to resist their oppression or who their allies should be," Roy stated.

"From the river to the sea, Palestine will be Free. It will. Keep your eye on your calendar. Not on your clock."

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