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## ***Ethnic cleansing in Gaza: Israel's agriculture minister declares, "We're Rolling Out Nakba 2023"***



Palestinians look for survivors following an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023. (AP Photo/Mohammed Dahman) [AP Photo]

With every passing day, it is becoming clearer that Israel's assault on Gaza has as its aim the ethnic cleansing of the region, in which Palestinians who survive bombing, starvation and dehydration will be permanently expelled from their land.

In an interview on Saturday, Israeli security cabinet member and Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter, a member of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, declared, "We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba." The Nakba, meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic, refers to the ethnic cleansing of about 700,000 Palestinian Arabs resulting from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the establishment of Israel.

Dichter, a former director of Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, declared, "Gaza Nakba 2023. That's how it'll end." When asked whether residents of Gaza would be allowed to return, Dichter said, "I don't know how it'll end up happening."

At the same time, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made clear Friday that Israel will retain total control over the Gaza Strip even after the conclusion of the "war." He declared categorically, "IDF forces will remain in control of the Strip, we will not give it to international forces."

Israel's genocide in Gaza has promoted mass demonstrations by millions of people all over the world, with demonstrations over the weekend in dozens of major cities demanding a ceasefire.

Against this backdrop, US officials continued to give Israel carte blanche to carry out the systematic massacre and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population.

In an interview on CNN's "State of the Union," US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan refused to answer whether Israel was committing war crimes, instead declaring the US's backing for anything the Netanyahu regime does.

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Asked by moderator Dana Bash, "Is Israel operating according to the rules of war?" Sullivan replied, "Well, Dana, I'm not going to sit here and play judge or jury on that question." He declared, "Israel has a right, indeed, a responsibility to defend itself against a terrorist group that just in the last couple of weeks has come out and said that it would like to repeat October 7 over and over again until Israel no longer exists."

Asked to respond to the fact that Israel has systematically attacked and blockaded Al-Shifa hospital, Sullivan reiterated the claim that Hamas was using civilians as human shields. "You can see even from open-source reporting that Hamas does use hospitals, along with a lot of other civilian facilities, for command-and-control, for storing weapons, for housing its fighters," he said.

As Israel continued its unrelenting bombardment of Gaza's healthcare infrastructure, nearly the entire healthcare system of northern Gaza has ceased to function.

In its report on the situation in Gaza, the United Nations reported that the number of deaths in Gaza has not been updated in 48 hours, because of the collapse of the healthcare system.

“For the second consecutive day, following the collapse of services and communications at hospitals in the north, the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza did not update casualty figures,” the United Nations reported. As of Friday, the last up-to-date count, the death toll was 11,078, of whom 4,506 were said to be children and 3,027 women. Another 2,700 people, including 1,500 children, were missing.

On Sunday, Gaza’s minister said that unburied bodies and medical waste are accumulating on Al-Shifa Hospital, with staff unable to bury 100 decomposing corpses. Shifa hospital has completely run out of fuel, leading to the death of two premature babies. Dozens of premature babies have been removed from neo-natal units due to lack of oxygen and other supplies.

The bombardment near the hospital escalated on Sunday. The United Nations reported, “Critical infrastructure, including the oxygen station, water tanks and a well, the cardiovascular facility, and the maternity ward, was damaged, and three nurses killed. While many internally displaced persons (IDPs) and some staff and patients have managed to flee, others are trapped inside, fearing to leave or physically unable to do so.”

In a statement on Twitter, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote that the situation at Shifa hospital is “dire and perilous.” He continued, “It’s been three days without electricity, without water and with very poor internet which has severely impacted our ability to provide essential care. The constant gunfire and bombings in the area have exacerbated the already critical circumstances. Tragically, the number of patient fatalities has increased significantly. Regrettably, the hospital is not functioning as a hospital anymore.”

He concluded, “The world cannot stand silent while hospitals, which should be safe havens, are transformed into scenes of death, devastation, and despair. Ceasefire. NOW.”

On Sunday, the Palestine Red Crescent Society announced that the Al Quds Hospital in Gaza City was no longer operational due to the depletion of available fuel and power outage.

The United Nations noted, “On the afternoon of 11 November, an airstrike reportedly hit and destroyed the Swedish clinic in Ash Shati camp, west of Gaza City... Overnight (11-12 November), another airstrike hit Al Mahdi Hospital in Gaza City, reportedly killing two doctors and injuring others.”

An estimated 1.5 million of Gaza's 2.2 million people are internally displaced, according to the UN Relief and Works Agency, with three quarters of a million staying at UNRWA shelters.

Even as the humanitarian disaster continues to intensify, the US is escalating its direct involvement in the widening war in the Middle East. On Sunday, the United States carried out its third round of airstrikes inside Syria in two weeks.

In a statement, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said, "U.S. military forces conducted precision strikes today on facilities in eastern Syria used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iran-affiliated groups in response to continued attacks against U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria." He concluded that President Joe Biden "directed today's action to make clear that the United States will defend itself, its personnel, and its interests."

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