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## ***The Gaza Genocide: A New Low in Democracy and Human History. Part 1: The German Genocides***

Observing countries like Germany, the UK, and the U.S. fervently supporting actions that support genocide prompts a critical question: How can these nations advocate for democracy and human rights while endorsing such measures? Whom do they believe they are convincing?



The West in general, and the European Union and its members in particular, portray themselves as champions of democracy, human rights and abiding by international norms. Still, according to a Carnegie Strategic Europe study, the EU's selective application of international law has tarnished its reputation in the Middle East and the Global South. No country, besides Israel, has suffered greater harm to its image due to its stance on the Gaza war than Germany. Repairing this damage will be an immense challenge.

Germany's steadfast political support for Israel is perceived as tacit approval of Israel's military actions in Gaza

The severe blow to Germany's image is also closely tied to the country's recurring involvement in genocides.

### **The Herrero People Genocide**

The first well-known genocide was carried out by Imperial Germany's colonial rule (between 1904 and 1908) against the Herero (and Nama) people in Namibia, then known as German South-West Africa. It began after the Herero people rebelled against German colonial forces in January 1904. The German response, led by General Lothar von Trotha, was brutal. He issued the Extermination Order (Vernichtungsbefehl), which declared that all Herero people—men, women, and children—should be killed. Survivors were forced into the Kalahari Desert, where many died of starvation and dehydration. Others were captured and sent to concentration camps, where forced labour, malnutrition, and disease led to further deaths.

It is estimated that around 65,000 Herero (80% of their population) and 10,000 Nama (50% of their population) were killed. This genocide is widely considered one of the first of the 20th century, preceding the Holocaust. Germany formally acknowledged the atrocities as genocide in 2021 and has pledged to provide financial reparations to Namibia, though the process has been contentious.

### **The Holocaust**

The second was the Holocaust, committed by Nazi Germany against the Jews and other minorities. The persecution against the Jews started in April 1933 with the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, barring Jews from civil service jobs. In the same month, a boycott against Jewish businesses was enacted. It escalated in 1936 when Jews were increasingly excluded from schools, professions, and public life, and culminated with the Holocaust (the Final Solution), the systematic extermination of Jews, which was planned and executed from 1941 onward. Over 6 million Jews were murdered in ghettos, mass shootings, gas chambers, and forced labour camps because of Nazi racial ideology based on a "racial hierarchy" and scapegoating for national problems.

While the Jews were the primary target, with an estimated 6 million murdered, other groups suffered immensely under the Nazi regime.

It is estimated that 200,000–500,000 Roma people (Gypsies) were killed under the Nazi racial purity ideology. They were subjected to forced sterilisation, deportation, and extermination in concentration camps.

Approximately 275,000 disabled individuals (Aktion T4 Programme) were murdered as part of a eugenics program to “purify” the Aryan race. This included individuals with physical and mental disabilities.

Millions of Poles and Soviet prisoners of war were killed or enslaved. Slavic peoples were deemed “subhuman” and targeted for extermination or displacement under the Nazi plan for Lebensraum (“living space”).

Political opponents were persecuted as early as March 1933, having the Dachau concentration camp (near Munich) opened for this purpose. Communists, socialists, and trade unionists were among the first imprisoned in concentration camps. Thousands were executed or died from inhumane conditions.

Jehovah’s Witnesses were killed (between 1,000–5,000) for refusing to pledge allegiance to the Nazi regime or serve in the military, as it conflicted with their religious beliefs.

Gays, gay men, in particular, were targeted, with an estimated 5,000–15,000 sent to concentration camps. Many were forced to wear pink triangles and subjected to medical experiments, torture, and execution.

### **Complicity Charges in Genocide in Gaza**

The third instance is Germany’s charges of complicity in the genocide in Gaza against the Palestinian people, perpetrated by the state of Israel, which carried out deliberate killings of children, women, civilians, and Hamas fighters. Children and women constituted the majority of those murdered. By mid-December 2024, the death toll of Gazans had exceeded 45,000, including 200 journalists. However, according to the renowned scientific medical journal *The Lancet*, the numbers could exceed 186,000, as many deaths remain unreported or involve victims still buried under the rubble.

Further, Germany has faced accusations of complicity in the genocide in Gaza due to its unconditional support for Israel by providing arms, military aid and political backing to Israel. Arms exports to Israel after the conflict receive a “fast-track” special treatment: the export documents receive priority to be treated.

Germany approved arms exports to Israel worth around 31 million euros (\$34 million) in the past eight weeks of October 7, more than twice as much as in the first seven and a half months of 2023.

Germany’s steadfast political support for Israel is perceived as tacit approval of Israel’s military actions in Gaza, overlooking breaches of international humanitarian law by Israel, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of genocide in Gaza. “Germany has only one place,

and that's on Israel's side," said German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the Bundestag, justifying the delivery of arms to Tel Aviv.

Trying to dismiss their responsibility, German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock said that Berlin was waiting for a letter from the Israeli government assuring that international humanitarian law would be observed when using military materiel supplied by Germany.

Alexander Schwarz, a lawyer at the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, which has filed five lawsuits against Berlin, said the letter would not exempt Germany from legal violations, citing the country's War Weapons Control Act standards.

Next, in Part 2 of this article, I will examine the German government's domestic assaults on democracy and its disregard for international law in supporting Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Ricardo Martins, January 15, 2025

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