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## Trump and Ethnic Cleansing of Gaza



Image by Mohammed Ibrahim.

US President Donald Trump's declaration to remove the Palestinians from Gaza reveals the two truths. First, history repeats itself, but in doing so, it does in farcical ways. Second, whatever shred of rules-based order that was imposed by the United States on international politics is effectively dead.

In The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Karl Marx elegantly opens by stating "Hegel remarked somewhere that all great world historic facts in person just appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." In the case of Trump's desire to expel the Palestinians from Gaza, his declaration is the culmination of a nearly eighty-year assault on the Palestinians.

Israel was forged out of the forced expulsion of Palestinians from their lands. In 1947 the United Nations partitioned Palestine into Jewish and Arab areas. Israel was formed out of the Jewish territory. But between the partition and the 1948 war, around 700,000 Palestinian Arabs were expelled from their homes. Over time, and especially under Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli settlements into Palestinian lands continue to expel Palestinians from their homeland. Over the last year or so, as Israel has devastated Gaza, it has used the pretext of retaliation and national security to continue what the UN started in 1947. Joe Biden's tacit support or indifference to the plight of the Palestinians and failure to apply pressure to Israel to halt its military action have culminated in Trump's declaration. All this is tantamount to a Trump's and Netanyahu's decision to use force and relocation to permanently and address and bring finality to the Israeli security needs and the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

But such an action violates numerous principles of international law. Already the International Court of Justice has indicated that Israel's actions may constitute genocide and the International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu.

Going back to the original Nuremberg trials in 1946 and the creation of the International Military Tribunal, war crimes under international law were construed to include the forced removal of people from their lands.

Article II of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide makes it illegal to undertake acts with the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

The Geneva Convention of 1949 declares that mass forcible transfers of civilian populations is a violation of international law,

Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights declares "no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence."

Article 7.1 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court includes as a crime the displacement of civilian populations or deportation or forcible transfer of a population as a form of a war crime.

There are many other provisions of international law that also make forced relocation a war crime, and they are a form of ethnic cleansing. All these rules are supposedly part of the post-WWII rules-based order to bring peace to the world. These were rules put in place by the United States and the victorious Allies. Yet since WWII many accused the United States of hypocritically disregarding these rules as a prerogative of superpower status.

Now with Trump's call for the relocation and effective ethnic cleansing of Gaza, what has been stripped naked is US respect and adherence to international law. It makes it harder, if not impossible, for the US to oppose Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as a possible Chinese invasion and takeover of Taiwan. It suggests also that what the Us and Israel are doing is not just tragic but a farce. It is a farce on the fiction of Israel's latest war, and a farce on US support for human rights, international law, and an effort to find a just solution for the Palestinian-Israel conflict that started nearly eighty years ago.

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