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Covering up the crimes of Israel and Netanyahu



These days, despite his best efforts, everything is going wrong for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The massive and relentless assault on Gaza, now in its seventh month, has failed to deliver the decisive victory he solemnly promised Israelis after Hamas' successes on 7 October. The US and other Western allies, horrified by what they have done in conjunction with the Israelis in Gaza against the Palestinians, are warning Tel Aviv against carrying out the much-publicised ground invasion of Rafah. And daily rallies by families of captives who want B. Netanyahu to agree to a prisoner swap deal with Hamas, tear apart and continually agitate Israeli society.

Pro-Palestinian protests at US colleges and universities are piling pressure on the White House over unprecedented US support for the Gaza war, dealing a blow to Israel's once stellar image at home. For its part, the UN International Court of Justice has indicted Netanyahu on charges of genocide, and worse, pressure is mounting on the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants for the Prime Minister himself, his

Defence Minister and the Commander-In-Chief of the Israeli army. Interestingly, the Israeli media reported that the ICC prosecutor, British-born Karim Khan, could issue these warrants in the coming days. The Jewish press reported that Netanyahu and his military cabinet have held several emergency meetings to discuss the looming crisis. Many leading newspapers and opposition leaders believe that under these unprecedentedly harsh conditions, the Prime Minister is very hopeful that the US will do something to make this nightmare go away and to some extent pull Netanyahu out of the military-political impasse he has driven himself into. The US has shown the world many times how it can ruthlessly and instantly abandon friends and allies it does not need.

Apparently, hoping for help from Washington and, above all, from the powerful Israeli lobby, which has enormous influence on the Congress, the Israeli Prime Minister is still chortling and making a good face at a bad, or rather bloody game. In particular, he stated flatly: “We will never stop defending ourselves. While the judgements of the court in The Hague will not affect Israel’s actions, they will set a dangerous precedent that threatens the soldiers and officials of any democracy fighting criminal terrorism and aggression”. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz also criticised the possibility of the ICC issuing arrest warrants for Netanyahu and other senior officials, warning of an anti-Semitic reaction in the world. He called the possible issuance of warrants “absolute hypocrisy”.

Incidentally, Israel is not a member of the ICC, but Palestine was admitted in 2015, giving the court jurisdiction over crimes committed on Palestinian territory. The move was highly controversial as it raised questions about Palestine’s legal status as a state and the extent of the ICC’s authority in the region. In 2021, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber ruled that the court had jurisdiction over Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967. This opened the door for the prosecutor to investigate alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in these areas. However, although Palestine requested in 2015 that the ICC investigate crimes committed on its territory since June 2014, the court has been slow to act due to significant political pressure from Israel and the United States.

But after nearly seven months of brutal bombardment of Gaza and an appalling death toll, mostly among civilians, in addition to mounting evidence that hunger is being used as a weapon, Karim Khan has been forced to take action. According to British media reports, he has taken some steps to speed up the ICC investigation into alleged war crimes by Israeli troops and authorities in the Palestinian territories. On the advice of American friends, he has appointed Andrew Cayley, a British lawyer and former military prosecutor and now chief trial lawyer at the ICC to oversee the court’s investigation. As they say, it’s all caught up, and

one can only speculate what kind of investigations the ICC leadership will conduct under American tutelage.

What are the activities of the so-called International Criminal Court and of Khan himself with regard to investigations into the crimes of the Israeli military against the Palestinians? Last year, he visited Israel and even travelled to the southern settlements attacked by Hamas. He also met only with the families of Israeli captives, but not with representatives of Palestinian civilians who are being summarily killed by the IDF by the tens of thousands. He even reached the Rafah crossing, but said that Israel would not allow him – the ICC Chief Prosecutor – to enter the Gaza Strip. The “courageous” prosecutor then fell silent, as if he had filled his mouth with water.

But his silence on the mounting evidence that Israel is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza was widely seen as deafening and incomprehensible. Finally, in February, Khan tweeted that he was “deeply concerned” about reports of bombings and a potential ground invasion by Israeli forces in the southern Gaza town of Rafah. He said the ICC was allegedly actively investigating any crimes allegedly committed in Gaza and that “those who break the law will be held accountable”. **He later demagogically told** Reuters that “this is a situation that I prioritise. It is an issue that we are moving forward on”. The truth is, seven months have passed and the world has yet to see a single ICC document condemning Israel’s atrocious crimes in the Gaza Strip. That is exactly how the democratic Themis of the West works!

Now, with conflicting reports about whether Khan is going to issue an arrest warrant, Netanyahu is really hoping that President Joe Biden will come to his rescue. But the US is also not a member of the International Criminal Court, and it would be detrimental to the court’s credibility (if it still has any left) if Khan is seen to be backing down simply because Washington doesn’t like what he’s about to do. It is naive to believe that Khan’s decisions are not politically motivated. In March 2023, the ICC urgently! issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for his ‘alleged responsibility for a war crime.’ And in March this year, the ICC issued arrest warrants for two high-ranking Russian officers on charges related to alleged attacks on civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. But Khan has done nothing against the neo-Nazi regime in Kiev for its crimes of killing civilians in Russian cities. And how can he do so when Foreign Secretary Cameron himself has just visited Kiev and held friendly talks with Zelenskyy. Reuters published an interview with the United Kingdom’s Foreign Minister in which he claimed that Ukraine had the right to strike British weapons at targets inside Russia. In other words, Cameron clearly signed off that London is

working with Ukraine to strike Russian civilians. Khan, where are you and where is your arrest warrant for Zelenskyy and Cameron? Here is another vivid example of unprincipled action of the Western Themis.

The war against Russia, unleashed by the West with the help of neo-Nazis in Kiev, has already caused great damage to normal relations between the two nations. But all this pales in comparison to the atrocities Israel has committed in Gaza and the West Bank since last October. The speed with which the ICC has taken action against Russian officials raises serious and numerous questions. For example, why Khan has yet to take concrete action against Israel, even though he failed to heed the UN International Court of Justice's January interim ruling ordering it to cease all acts of genocide and take steps to ensure that humanitarian aid is provided to civilians in Gaza.

For decades, Israel has been able to commit an endless list of war crimes and violations of UN resolutions and international conventions with impunity. It has long relied on the support of the US and other Western allies. Today, however, the world faces a moment of truth. The horrors emanating from Gaza are too great for even Tel Aviv's closest defenders to swallow or hide. The more than 14,000 children murdered in Gaza by today is a toxic legacy that can never be excused or glossed over.

Restoring justice to the Palestinians has become an unattainable goal as Israel, backed by the US, continues to raise the stakes in an effort to derail the two-state solution and undo the existence of Palestine. Now, after 34,000 Palestinian deaths, the world is about to reach a crossroads: either it will allow Israel to continue its mockery of justice, or it must right a historic wrong and realise the UN decision to create a State of Palestine alongside Israel. There is no other way, and everyone understands that very well.

If Khan goes further and issues arrest warrants for Netanyahu and his top aides, it will cause a political earthquake not only in Israel but around the world. How the US and other Western countries react to such an event will determine the future of the rules-based international order that Washington supports and claims to be trying to enforce. But if Khan does not, as seems likely, the ICC and all relevant international codes and conventions will be rendered meaningless. The question facing Israel's allies today is how long will they look the other way and remain criminally silent as Netanyahu continues his criminal war? Or will there come a moment of reckoning when they tell him that he is endangering Israel's future and that he must pay the price? He is aware of this, but like a panicked horse, he rides down the criminal path to his ultimate fiasco.

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