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The Tectonic Shift: The Gaza Genocide and the Limits of Israeli Hasbara



Image by Dylan Shaw.

The ongoing war and genocide in Gaza is unprecedented. Nothing that Israel and its supporters can say or do will avoid the historical accountability of the extermination of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

The above assertion is critical, both for ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and achieving Palestinian freedom. This is why.

In all past wars and adjoining war crimes, Israel managed to push the reset button in its relationship with occupied Palestinians.

Following each war, the Israeli hasbara, propaganda machine, would start – utilizing the always-willing western mainstream media – to paint Palestinians in a negative light and

to present Israel, a country that is supposedly in a permanent state of self-defense, as the victim, or even the lone defender of western civilization.

This campaign is always paralleled with the whitewashing of Israel in popular entertainment, from Hollywood movies to TV sit-coms, to magazine covers with such titles as “Gorgeous Photos Capture The Unseen Lives Of Female Soldiers In Israel”.

Generally, Western politicians of varied ideologies, along with intellectuals, news talking heads and church leaders all praise, in tandem, the miracle that is Israel.

At the beginning of Israel’s genocidal war in October 2023, for example, British playwright Tom Stoppard said that “before we take up a position on what’s happening now, we should consider whether this is a fight over territory or a struggle between civilization and barbarism.” He, of course, leaned towards the latter.

This Israeli tactic always includes the demonization of Palestinians as well, where the victim becomes the ‘terrorist’ and those under siege become the besiegers. This last claim, in particular, was expressed in the words of former US Secretary of State Madeline Albright who said, in an interview with NBC in August 2000, that “the Israelis feel under siege from the Palestinian rock throwers and the various gangs that have been roaming around.”

Why will those same Israeli tactics fail this time? Indeed, they will fail, not due to Israel’s lack of trying. In fact, Israel is already bracing for the fight of a lifetime.

One new tactic that Israel is already employing in ‘friendly’ countries, like the United States, is the passing of laws to block the mere conversation on the Israeli genocide in Gaza, so that it will have exclusive access to the American public.

On November 14, the US House of Representatives passed two bills: H.R.6408 and H.R.9495. The latter, in particular, aimed at giving the Treasury Secretary the authorization to revoke an organization’s tax-exempt status and decide when the designation would end.

Once these bills pass the Senate and are approved by the president, the most democratic and peaceful expressions of rejecting the Israeli occupation of Palestine and demanding sensible US foreign policy will be equated to a direct violation of the law and, in some cases, to terrorism – as defined by the Department of Treasury, at the behest of the pro-Israeli lobby.

But even these desperate attempts will not quell the anger or distract from the conversation, for the following reasons:

One, not only did Israel commit genocide in the Gaza Strip, but this genocide and extermination are being investigated and are acknowledged by the world’s largest legal institutions, namely the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Two, unlike previous investigations, for example, the Goldstone Report probing the 2008-09 war on Gaza, the international community has already taken some practical steps to hold Israeli war criminals accountable, including an arrest warrant issued on November 21 against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.

Three, those who routinely come to Israel's defense, the US and other Western governments, are now directly clashing with the very international law they helped articulate after World War II, depriving them of any credibility as 'neutral' parties in this conflict.

For example, Biden said that the warrants were "outrageous" while the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs claimed that Netanyahu and other ministers enjoy immunity since Israel is not a party to the ICC.

Four, despite the inherent bias of western media, Palestinian journalists, isolated and killed in large numbers, managed to communicate the genocide to the rest of the world, making it impossible for Israel to hide its crimes.

Five, the impact of the Israeli genocide on Gaza has already penetrated the various layers of public opinion, unprecedented in history.

Typically, the conversation on Palestine is confined to specific strata of society, reaching academics, social justice activists and other groups interested in politics and global issues.

Today, ordinary people have been made aware of the conversation, to the extent that it is widely believed that anger over Gaza has contributed in determining the outcome of the latest US elections.

In Africa, the growing political and public interest in the Palestinian struggle have re-enlivened the spirit of anti-colonial, liberation struggles on the continent, bringing many countries, from South Africa to Algeria, back to the frontlines of global solidarity.

No amount of Israeli propaganda, unjust laws, unfair categorizations of Palestinians or the hardly-clad models of the IDF, will ever succeed in reversing these realities.

Now, there can be no reset buttons. Rather, the global momentum of Palestine's liberation will accelerate in the coming months and years.

The price exacted from the Palestinian people for this earth-shattering moment has been high and painful, but the history of all national liberation struggles, Palestine included, demonstrates that the price for freedom is always high.

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