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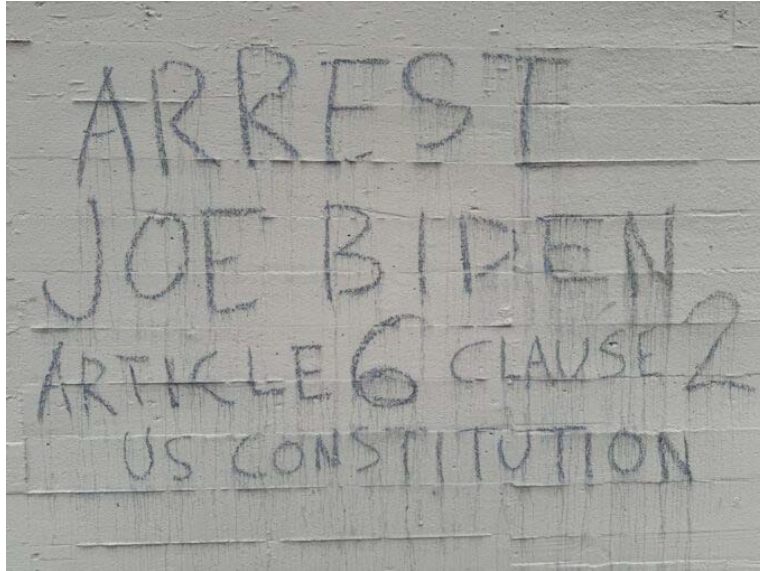
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Three Declarations of Genocide and the U.S. Responses



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

Three recent reports by respected international humanitarian organizations have generated global approbation; and negative reactions by both the Israeli and U.S. governments.

– *Amnesty International*

Amnesty International (AI) issued its 296-page report (“You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza”) on December 4th. Israel immediately called it “a fabricated report that is entirely false and based on lies.” The US. State Department echoed the Israeli government in disagreeing with the report. Spokesperson Vedant Patel declared: “We have said previously and continue to find that the allegations of genocide are unfounded.” He gave no reasons for that opinion.

Reviewing the nine-month period from October 7, 2023, AI concluded that Israel committed prohibited acts under Articles II (a), (b), and (c) of the Genocide Convention of 1948,

specifically the killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction in whole or in part.

After describing the Genocide Convention's definition of genocide, AI examined both the specified prohibited actions and the requirement of intent. The Report concluded that both benchmarks were met. In his December 7 *Counterpunch* article ("The Worst of International Crimes,") Jeffrey St. Clair quoted portions of the report that detailed the destruction of life and infrastructure, successive evacuations of residents and the denial of food and humanitarian assistance. The ICC arrest warrants of Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant expressed international condemnation of the same war crimes cited in the AI Report.

Human Rights Watch

Not to be outdone, Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued its 179-page report ("Extermination and Acts of Genocide: Israel Deliberately Deprives Palestinians in Gaza of Water") on December 19. It focused not on bombs and bullets, but rather on the deprivation of water for the inhabitants of Gaza.

The HRW report cited Israel's: "Extensive damage and destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure, including the apparently deliberate, systematic razing of the solar panels powering four of Gaza's six wastewater treatment plants by Israeli ground forces, as well as Israel soldiers filming themselves demolishing a key water reservoir" Based on such findings, Human Rights Watch blamed Israel for causing the deaths of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza by systematically restricting and targeting Gaza's water supply. According to HRW, such actions amounted to "acts of genocide."

Israel's Foreign Ministry denounced the report, accusing Human Rights Watch of "once more spreading its blood libels in order to promote its anti-Israel propaganda," It claimed that Israel has worked to facilitate the flow of water and humanitarian aid into Gaza throughout the war. throughout the war. The State Department spokesman said that the U.S. "disagreed with" HRW's accusation that Israel was carrying out "acts of genocide" by damaging water infrastructure.

Doctors Without Borders

A third report (33pages) published by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) on December 19 is entitled "Gaza: Life in a Death Trap." It centers on the systematic destruction of Gaza's healthcare system and the repeated forced evacuations of residents. In the words of the report, "MSF has witnessed 14 months of repeated attacks on civilians, the dismantling of

essential civilian infrastructure including healthcare facilities and a systematic denial of humanitarian assistance, seemingly underpinning Israel’s campaign to unravel the very fabric of society.”

The report continued, “MSF has witnessed 14 months of repeated attacks on civilians, the dismantling of essential civilian infrastructure including healthcare facilities, and a systematic denial of humanitarian assistance, seemingly underpinning Israel’s campaign to unravel the very fabric of society in Gaza....The consequences of these impediments are made even more harmful due to the uniqueness of a war being waged on a besieged area from which nobody can escape.”

According to MSF Secretary General Christopher Lockyear, “What our medical teams have witnessed on the ground throughout this conflict is consistent with the descriptions provided by an increasing number of legal experts and organizations concluding that genocide is taking place in Gaza.”

In response, an Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman accused MSF of “lying and misleading the public.” The U.S. response likewise denounced the report. State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said with respect to MSF: “Even within their report, they make pretty clear that they don’t have the legal authority to determine intentionality.”

Why has the U.S. government repeatedly denied allegations of Israeli genocide in Gaza? In the immediate aftermath of the October 7 Hamas attack, when he pledged to “stand with” its U.S. ally. Biden may have been driven by his decades-long admiration of Israel. The IDF’s scorched earth bomb and missile attacks on Gaza have continued unabated throughout the Gaza Strip; and Israel has severely limited the provision of water, food, medicines and other humanitarian aid. Now the death toll (not counting those buried under the rubble) has risen to more than 45,000. Yet Biden has repeatedly refused to stop arming the IDF. His massive transfers of U.S.-made lethal weapons have enabled Netanyahu, now an indicted war criminal facing ICC arrest warrants, to intensify his relentless bombardments on Gazan civilians.

If and when the war in Gaza is deemed a genocide by the International Court of Justice, Biden and his Secretaries of State and Defense could be (and, in my view should be) liable for complicity under the Genocide Convention of 1948.

Americans should understand that Biden’s legacy is not all domestic triumph. It is even more a shameful foreign policy legacy of destruction and death.

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