**Israeli Barbarism**

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The recent Israel-Hamas war, which erupted on Oct. 7, has inflicted devastating consequences on innocent Palestinian civilians, marked by extensive casualties and the destruction of critical infrastructure. The Gaza Health Ministry data further underscore the alarming toll: 8,005 Palestinians killed in Gaza among which 3,324 were children, 116 in the West Bank, with 20,242 and 2,000 injured in Gaza and the West Bank, respectively. The conflict has forced a staggering 1.4 million Palestinians in Gaza to flee their homes, while 27,781 residential units lay destroyed, testifying to the ongoing plight of Palestinian civilians amidst what many describe as continued Israeli barbarism.
Israel has imposed a total siege on the Gaza Strip, tightening the blockade enforced since 2007. This blockade has led to the cutting off of all supplies of food, electricity, fuel, and water. Only small amounts of aid have been allowed in through the Rafah crossing with Egypt since October 21. The lack of electricity, coupled with the scarcity of fuel to power generators, has forced hospitals to significantly reduce their operations. As a result, the health ministry declared Gaza’s health system in a state of “complete collapse,” posing a severe threat to the lives of children, including infants in need of energy-intensive neonatal intensive care. Moreover, the Israeli military has escalated its attacks close to al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City. Israeli forces ordered the hospital’s “immediate” evacuation, and despite the Palestine Red Crescent Society’s (PRCS) pleas, attacks in the vicinity of the hospital continued throughout the day.
Palestinians have accused Israel of being responsible for an explosion at al-Ahli Arab Hospital, which tragically claimed the lives of nearly 500 people on October 17. However, Instead, Israel blames the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, saying the armed group misfired a missile that hit the health facility. The outfit says the accusations are “baseless”. No one, except for its ardent supporters, is likely to believe Israel’s denial of responsibility, since its hands have been covered in the blood of Palestinian non-combatants for decades now. This threatening environment has added to the already precarious conditions, leaving the healthcare infrastructure in shambles and jeopardising the lives of many civilians, especially those seeking medical assistance amidst the ongoing conflict.
The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) has reported that the damage inflicted upon water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in Gaza has severely impacted services for more than 400,000 people, equating to approximately one-sixth of the total population. Moreover, Israel holds control over the majority of water resources in the Palestinian territories, situated in one of the world’s most water-stressed regions. This circumstance has created a dire situation, as experts have highlighted that the bombing and destruction of Gaza’s already fragile water infrastructure will exacerbate the existing challenges. Consequently, this will only compound the issues in an area where residents already grapple with gastrointestinal, liver, and skin problems attributable to the acute scarcity of clean water.
In wake of such scenario, The US support to Israel is inevitable. The American president has visited Israel to show solidarity with its leaders over the Oct 7 attack by Hamas that killed hundreds of Israeli soldiers and civilians. There, he justified Israel’s massive military response as the country’s ‘right to defend itself’. The US House of Representatives also recently gave its approval for a $14 billion aid package to Israel, a move, however, met with resistance in the Senate and opposition from the White House due to its failure to allocate funds for Ukraine and other key foreign policy initiatives. This Republican-led initiative saw 226 votes in favor and 196 against within the lower chamber of Congress. Washington has increased its military presence in the region; President Joe Biden has sent naval power to the Middle East, including two aircraft carriers, other warships and about 2,000 marines, heightening the danger of an American-backed Israeli invasion turning into a wider conflagration. In addition to it, the British government is not far behind supporting Israel. As the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak stated few weeks back to deploy two Royal Navy ships, helicopters and surveillance aircraft to the eastern Mediterranean to support Israel.
The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has unequivocally denounced the persistent and savage Israeli aggression in Gaza, urging the global community to enforce Israel’s compliance with international laws. OIC Secretary General Hissein Brahim Taha, in a resolute statement, deplored the unrelenting assault on the besieged enclave, which has resulted in the tragic loss of numerous lives, including innocent civilians, women, children, medical personnel, and journalists. Furthermore, the deliberate devastation of critical infrastructure, such as buildings, hospitals, schools, places of worship, and United Nations facilities, has deepened the humanitarian crisis and underscored the urgent need for immediate international intervention to alleviate the suffering and ensure the protection of vulnerable populations in the region.
It is mandatory that the global community withdraw its support and awaken its collective conscience to take a firm stance against the relentless acts of barbarism perpetrated by Israel. Failing to halt these egregious actions at this critical juncture could pave the way for the escalation of the conflict into a larger regional crisis, potentially creating a volatile environment that allows global powers to exploit the Middle East as a theater for their geopolitical rivalry and potentially reignite a new era of Cold War politics in the region.