**[The Arab inaction](https://www.dawn.com/news/1785469/the-arab-inaction)**

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WITH the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, public opinion around the world is turning against the Israeli invasion. While protest rallies are sweeping across the globe, Western countries have remained steadfast in their backing for Israel’s war crimes.

Ignoring calls to obey the laws of war, Israeli jets [hit the Jabalia refugee camp](https://www.dawn.com/news/1785460/desperate-israel-erases-50-lives-in-jabalia-camp-strike) on Tuesday, massacring dozens of civilians sheltered there. The relentless Israeli bombings have killed over 8,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, but the US and some of its Western allies are still not willing to call for a ceasefire.

Now, with the Israeli ground invasion of Gaza underway, an already catastrophic situation in the occupied territory is worsening. It is not just an unfolding humanitarian crisis; the use of brutal military power, in fact, threatens the entire region.

The theatre of conflict is expanding with the Israeli bombing of Lebanon and Syria and the extension of military action to the West Bank.

Despite incessant Israeli bombing over the last few weeks, which has reduced a large part of Gaza to rubble, the Palestinian resistance has not been crushed. The Israeli prime minister has warned that the war in Gaza will be a protracted one.

It is already perhaps the longest war Israel has fought since it became a state. It has also exposed the vulnerability of the Zionist state, notwithstanding its massive military power. Even the complete destruction of the Gaza Strip would not make this colonial power secure.

Meanwhile, the US has increased its military presence in the region, heightening the danger of an American-backed Israeli invasion turning into a wider conflagration. That will not only have implications for the Middle East, it will also impact global geopolitics.

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The ongoing Israeli war has compounded the predicament of the Arab countries, some of whom had made peace with Israel. Initially, the response of most of these countries was guarded, and they avoided direct condemnation of the Israeli aggression.

It was not surprising, given their receding support for the Palestinian struggle against occupation and their move to normalise relations with the Zionist state despite its policy of expansionism and apartheid.

But with public outrage at the massacre of the Palestinian population rising at home, these governments have come under intense pressure, causing some tangible shift in stance. The Israeli strike on a hospital in Gaza, which killed hundreds of people, has particularly heightened tensions, forcing Arab states to cancel their summit meeting with President Joe Biden in Amman.

The American president was then visiting 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’.

No step has been taken by Israel thus far to stop its invasion. There is not even any move by the Arab countries to suspend diplomatic relations with Israel, which is the least they could have done to increase the pressure on that country.

The Arab League meeting in Cairo on Oct 11 condemned the killing and targeting of civilians “on both sides”, equating the occupied and the occupation force. The Arab foreign ministers, who attended the meeting, vaguely talked about the need for peace, even as Israel relentlessly bombed the occupied territory in an action that has no parallel in recent years.

There was no mention of Israel’s long blockade of the enclave, which is home to over two million Palestinians, and the virtual ethnic cleansing that led to the Oct 7 incident. Surely, the killing of Israeli civilians cannot be condoned; but equating it with the ongoing massacre in Gaza is sheer hypocrisy. The response of the OIC countries has been equally feeble and flimsy.

But the widespread public protests triggered by the attack on the hospital have compelled the Arab states to play a more proactive role. Recently, Arab foreign ministers succeeded in lobbying UN member states to pass a UN General Assembly resolution condemning both the Oct 7 attacks and Israel’s atrocities, and calling for an “immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities”.

The watered-down, non-binding resolution was passed by the UNGA by an overwhelming majority, demonstrating Israel’s growing isolation in the international community.

Along with Israel, the US voted against the resolution, rejecting any restraint in the use of military power. Soon after the resolution, Israel launched the ground invasion of Gaza, cutting off all communication lines. Hundreds more children have been killed in Gaza since then.

What has provided Israel complete impunity is the increasing indifference of Arab countries towards the Palestinian right to a state. Several Arab countries have recognised Israel under the [US-sponsored Abraham Accords of 2020](https://www.dawn.com/news/1579852), including the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan.

The name of the Abraham Accords is meant to reflect the shared belief of the Abrahamic faiths, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, regarding the role of Abraham as spiritual patriarch.

The UAE and other Gulf countries saw commercial and other benefits in the field of technology in the agreement, which is also envisaged as an anti-Iran front. Interestingly, Sudan agreed to join the accord on the American assurance that the country would be removed from the list of states promoting terrorism.

Huge financial benefits were also promised to the impoverished nation. Similarly, Morocco signed the normalisation agreement with Israel in exchange for US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over disputed Western Sahara.

Although Saudi Arabia didn’t sign the accord, it gave its tacit approval to the deal. The kingdom, however, had come close to recognising the Zionist state just before the start of the latest Israeli war on Gaza.

The accord certainly helped Israel ease its isolation and there was nothing in the deal about Palestinian rights and the end of Israeli expansionism. Israel even continued to build settlements on the occupied land with no end in sight to the apartheid.

The so-called peace agreement is one-sided. In fact, it allows Israel to further suppress the Palestinian population. Now, coming under growing public pressure, some Arab leaders are condemning the Israeli aggression but are not ready to go beyond that. In fact, they don’t mean what they say.

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