**Care for Gaza**

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The six-word story, ‘For sale: baby shoes, never worn’ – popularly attributed to Ernest Hemingway although it is not clear whether he wrote it – is a tragic tale of a distressed woman who lost her baby too soon. Maybe the child died before coming into the world or died shortly after his birth.

The phrase ‘never worn’ invokes multiple possible meanings, but perhaps the most common is the tragedy of child loss. Those baby shoes were never worn, because the baby was not there to wear them. And the fact that the shoes are for sale implies that the poor lady wants to sell them because she is too poor and cannot afford the luxury of keeping them as a memory of her child.

In the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, over 32,000 people have been killed, including over 13,000 children. Entire families have been decimated, with nothing left behind save the rubble and debris of their destroyed houses. In many cases, there are neither children nor their shoes left behind. What is left are deep scars on humanity.

Finally, the conscience of the members of the UN Security Council has awakened to such atrocities, and the UNSC has passed a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire for the first time. Fourteen countries voted in favour of the resolution, a rarity in the UNSC unlike previous resolutions that the US regularly vetoed, and Israel’s staunch ally, the US, abstained from voting.

It must be mentioned that the US has provided a total of over $260 billion in aid to Israel since 1948, half of which has been in the form of military assistance. In addition, the US has vetoed the UNSC over 80 times, the most in UN history, and over half of these vetoes have been to rescue Israel.

While the international community, particularly the voices that matter most, have at last realized the gravity of the situation, it is too little and too late. Due to the West’s lacklustre response – often backing Israel’s ‘self-defence’ narrative during the Gaza war – there has been increasing disillusionment in the Global South.

A senior G7 diplomat was reported by the Financial Times (FT) to have said: “We have definitely lost the battle in the Global South. All the work we have done with the Global South [over Ukraine] has been lost . . . Forget about rules, forget about world order. They won’t ever listen to us again.”

The Palestine issue indeed is one of the oldest international disputes, and a majority of developing countries have traditionally supported the Palestinian cause. In the Global South, the Palestinian struggle is seen through the prism of self-determination, as developing countries perceive it as a push against the global dominance of the US, Israel’s most important backer.

That the Global South has historically backed the oppressed population of Palestine can be gauged from the fact that the UNSC draft resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire was introduced by Mozambique’s ambassador to the UN Pedro Comissario Afonso. It was put forward by the non-permanent members of the Security Council.

When it was about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the entire West firmly stood behind the Ukrainians, provided all kinds of material and diplomatic support to the besieged country, and unequivocally condemned Russian aggression. Unfortunately, the response of most Western governments was altogether different in the case of the Israeli invasion of Gaza.

“What we said about Ukraine has to apply to Gaza. Otherwise, we lose all our credibility,” the senior G7 diplomat added in the FT report, “the Brazilians, the South Africans, the Indonesians: why should they ever believe what we say about human rights?”

Now that the UNSC has ultimately passed a resolution asking for a halt to Israeli aggression, it is high time a complete ceasefire was declared and a lasting solution to this decades-old conflict pursued. In failing to find a sustainable solution, we will continue witnessing untold human tragedies.

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