**Genocide in Gaza**

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“They make a desert and call it peace” – Tacitus on Rome. Take the names of Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur (Sudan), and Myanmar and now add the name of Gaza to the annals of genocide in recent years.

After more than 100 days of relentless bombing and shelling by Israel, Gaza has been completely destroyed with more than 25,000 persons killed of which a majority are women and children. Countless more are dead under the rubble. At least 10,000 children have had their limbs amputated, most of which have been done without anesthesia.

More than 85 per cent of the structures in Gaza have been destroyed, particularly hospitals, schools, and small business workshops. Refugee camps have come in for repeated bombardments as if the misery found in these camps was a luxury the Palestinians were not entitled to. Indeed, even Gaza’s cemeteries have not been spared by Israeli bombs.

Instead of ‘mowing the lawn’, a phrase the Israeli military cruelly uses for its periodic bombing campaigns of Palestinians – as if the Palestinians are inanimate objects and not human – this time they have engaged in a no-holds-barred orgy of the systematic destruction of life and property in Gaza. Most of the bombs used in pursuit of the ‘scorched earth’ policy are massive 2000-pound ‘dumb’ bombs that were last used by the US in its Vietnam War. One can only imagine the sheer terror and utter devastation in Gaza’s small urban areas caused by these weapons of mass destruction.

According to the UN and other aid agencies working in Gaza, water, food, and medicines are not accessible and disease is prevalent. The UN also points out that four out of five people around the world today who are starving are in Gaza.

This genocidal campaign is a damning indictment of the double standards espoused by countries like the US and UK. They are quick to condemn Russian attacks on civilians in Ukraine but keep silent or only express muted concern about civilian deaths among the Palestinian population. Their expressions of concern do not stop them, however, from replenishing munitions supplies whose sole intent is to eviscerate an entire population and its living ecosystem.

Russian President Putin could be held as an aggressor and violator of international law but he has never proclaimed that he wants all Ukrainians to be exterminated, unlike Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s hate-filled diatribe in which he said that like the ancient tribe of the Amalek, mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, the Palestinians should all be killed without exception.

Western mainstream media is complicit in this dehumanizing of Palestinians. An instance of the blatant media bias against the Palestinians was the fact that if you were resident in the US or Western Europe you would have been hard-pressed to see the live airing of South Africa’s lawyers’ case of genocide against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on any of the leading western media news channels. But the very next day they were busy livestreaming Israel’s defence team’s arguments.

The fact is that journalists have been deliberately targeted by Israel and thus far around 120 journalists have been killed in Gaza since October 7 of last year. One Palestinian journalist noted in a recent TV interview that some of his colleagues were afraid to pick up a mobile phone for fear of being assassinated.

What can we say about the political repercussions of this genocide? Who gains and who loses?

By filing the genocide case against Israel at the ICJ, South Africa, a non-Muslim country, has seen its reputation soar diplomatically, particularly among the populations of the Islamic countries. With the exception of Qatar, the leaders of Islamic countries were at best watching from the sidelines and wringing their hands but were unable to convince the US to stop the genocide.

Qatar has also proven itself to be a diplomatic heavyweight despite its relatively small size compared to other countries in the Middle East. Any negotiation about a ceasefire in Gaza must involve Qatar which hosts Hamas’s political leadership; it also has cordial ties with Iran.

Putin has also emerged as a winner. His assaults upon Ukrainian civilians and infrastructure, although deadly, are far less brutal compared to the Israeli rage-filled bombing of Gaza.

The surprisingly big winner is the Houthis of Yemen. Their willingness to confront the United States and its allies defies all logic and the principles of power politics. Here we have one of the world’s most underdeveloped and poorest countries taking on the might of one of the world’s richest countries with the most powerful military. In fact, the Houthis appear delighted to have seized center stage and insist that they will target ships in the Red Sea destined for Israeli ports so long as there is no ceasefire in Gaza.

By facing US-led missile strikes, the Houthis have also mobilized domestic public opinion on their side.

What about political losers? One obvious loser is US President Joe Biden who has damaged his standing in states like Michigan, Arizona, and Georgia which have large numbers of Arab American and Muslim-American populations. These are the same states that narrowly voted in favour of Biden in 2020.

Younger Americans also disapprove of Biden’s staunch support for Israel as shown by the US vetoing ceasefire resolutions brought before the UN Security Council. Many of these disillusioned Biden supporters from 2020 may decide not to participate in the 2024 presidential election, giving the Republicans an edge.

Another loser is US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken who appears to be logging air miles for no purpose except to appear to be doing something.

Particularly egregious was Blinken’s comment on South Africa’s charge of genocide against Israel, dismissing it as ‘meritless’. This attitude that ‘there’s nothing to see there’ will go down with the US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan’s remarks on the Middle East as an instance of statements that the speakers wish they could walk back in hindsight. Thus, one week before Hamas’ attack on Israel, Sullivan opined that: “The Middle East region is quieter today than it has been in two decades”.

Of course, as Putin’s fortunes in the war in Ukraine rise, it is Ukraine’s President Zelensky whose prospects have ebbed. With the US supply chain of weapons drying up, the odds against him clawing Ukrainian territories back from Russian control are getting worse by the day.

That Germany would join Israel’s side at the ICJ is a foreign policy act of folly. Of course, the Germans are bending over backward in a gesture of atonement for their horrific acts of genocide against the Jewish and non-Jewish population of Europe between 1933 and 1945 in which six million Jews and around five million other ‘undesirables’ such as Poles and other Slavs, Roma Gypsies, and members of the LGBTQ community were sent to the gas chambers.

But engaging in ‘guilt washing’ has opened up a new can of worms for Germany. The world is also now aware that Germany is also responsible for the twentieth century’s first act of genocide in South West Africa in what is today’s Namibia. It murdered around 60,000 Herreros and 10,000 members of the Nama tribe between 1904 and 1908.

All those of non-European origin currently living in Germany should definitely be worried if the far-right parties, whose popularity keeps surging after each election, attain power. As the famous American writer and humorist, Mark Twain is reported to have said “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it rhymes”.