**Immediate ceasefire**

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In late October while his military bombed the people of Gaza around the clock in response to the Hamas October 7, 2023 massacre of Israelis, Benjamin Netanyahu told the world that “our civilization is at stake.” Therefore, Israel would continue its bloody massacre in Gaza and the West Bank. I think it’s reasonably safe to assume Israel’s prime minister was talking about a certain civilization; one that includes among its fiercest champions the governments of Great Britain and the United States.

These two “civilized” nations are known by many for their genocidal wars on the people whose land they have taken for their own (temporarily or forever) than most anything else; genocides they wash over while simultaneously celebrating them. Yet, due to Washington’s military might and Britain’s historical role as the mightiest of empires, they place themselves above the rest of the world, deciding who will live well and who won’t.

For the sake of that rare reader who might not be familiar with the history involved, let’s review. Israel has been occupying Palestine since 1947. This means it has been stealing land, taking it by force, expelling Palestinians from their homes and killing a lot of them in the process. Israel has attacked Gaza several times, killing thousands. Nothing has changed for the better as far as the Gazans are concerned.

The current slaughter is an amplified version and continuation of this history. The same can be said for the other parcel of Palestine in the West Bank, where settlers and the Israeli military continue to steal land and brutalize those whose lands they are stealing. Since the latest round of bombing began in Gaza, the brutality of the occupation has ramped up considerably in the West Bank, with over one hundred murders of Palestinians and multiple arrests.

According to information from the American media giant Bloomberg, one scenario for the post-massacre Gaza would involve putting a multinational force consisting of army units of the United States, France and Great Britain into Gaza. Another possibility, according to the article, is that Gaza will be brought under the control of UN troops. This would occur after the enclave is completely cleared of resistance elements – an exercise left exclusively to the IDF. In other words, after the Israeli military kills another several thousand Palestinians, another occupying army would move into Gaza.

While the makeup of any United Nations forces remains unclear and therefore, difficult to predict its allegiances, if a multinational force composed of US, British and French forces went into Gaza, their allegiance to Tel Aviv would instantly make them nothing more than an imperial occupying force. These three nations are a primary cause of most of the region’s troubles, both historically and in the present day. Such a move would not bring a genuine peace. However, they would provide the Israeli state with a greater cover and backup for its ongoing illegal occupation, siege and oppression of the Palestinians.

I’ve written emails to Vermont’s senator Bernie Sanders. I’ve argued with some of his supporters and staff. While I am not naive when it comes to Bernie Sanders’ acceptance of US imperialism and its military manifestations around the globe, I didn’t think he had lost his moral compass. I didn’t think his many years in the swamp of the US ruling class otherwise known as the US Capitol had made him blind to a wanton massacre of human beings because of where they lived. After all, he did oppose both invasions of Iraq in word, if not consistently in deed. In other words, he opposed the resolutions that legalized both invasions, but usually voted for funding the military once it began its exercise in killing. He even pushed through legislation condemning the US arming of Saudi Arabia in its war against Yemenis.

Then again, in 2015 as he began his first campaign for president, he was quoted on ABC: “I believe that the United States should have the strongest military in the world. We should be working with other countries in coalition. And when people threaten the United States or threaten our allies, or commit genocide, the United States, with other countries, should be prepared to act militarily,” he continued. One wonders however, as Israel’s bombing of Gaza approaches genocidal proportions (and is probably being done with genocidal intent), how Sanders reconciles his belief that the US should stop genocide when it is funding Israel’s massacres in Gaza as I write.

After a month of continuous bombing of the trapped population in Gaza; after at least 10,000 Palestinian deaths (murders, in my mind) and threats of annihilation on a biblical scale, Bernie finally suggested what the media calls a humanitarian pause. We are told the purpose of this pause would be for humanitarian reasons: get patients out of bombed out hospitals, bring in food, water and other life-giving materials for the displaced, and maybe get some of the hostages out of Gaza. Then the bombing can begin again. While this is good, it is not nearly enough.

There needs to be an immediate ceasefire and a withdrawal of Israeli forces. A few members of the US Congress have prepared a resolution demanding a ceasefire. The bombing has to stop. The starvation has to stop. The attacks on schools, ambulances, hospitals and homes have to stop. The fact that Sanders resists adding his name to this resolution is a gross moral failure on his part. No matter how repulsed one might be by the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, the mass murder being perpetrated by US weaponry and the Israeli military is morally unacceptable. Likewise, while supporting that murder might be seen as politically shrewd in the United States, it is potentially ruinous internationally.

Then again, that’s never seemed to matter in the long run. US and other western politicians remain steadfast in their defense of empire and its wars, impoverishment and environmental degradation. The only thing that ever put a pause on their inhumane acts and policies has been massive and militant protest. Bernie knows this because at one time he joined protests against those acts and policies. We’ll see how he votes on any upcoming bills giving more aid to Israel’s slaughter.

When one of your closest advisors calls himself an “unapologetic Zionist,” as longtime Sanders confidant Richard Sugarman did in a December 2012 newspaper article (The Wondering Jew, Seven Days, K Picard, 12/12/2012), voting against the Israeli colonial project might take more resolve than Sanders possesses.

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