**[South remembers](https://www.dawn.com/news/1790835/south-remembers)**

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IN the world of WhatsApp, Muslim and Arab countries have taken a serious stance against Israel. In that little chamber — isolated from fact, reason and logic — the emir of Qatar has threatened to cut off global LNG supplies if the West keeps supporting Israel the way it always has and likely always will.

More recently, Turkish President Erdogan sent a medical task force, accompanied by a special forces unit and dared the Israelis to shoot at them.

Nothing of this sort actually happened, or is likely to happen outside the world of WhatsApp. In the real world, Saudi Arabia is annoyed the screams from Gaza are interfering with its ongoing coming out party, while the UAE — which spearheaded [normalisation with Israel](https://www.dawn.com/news/1692534) — is pretending nothing is happening.

Iran, for all its bluster, reportedly isn’t happy with Hamas taking such action on its own, and as far as Jordan and Egypt go, the less said the better. That leaves Turkey which, despite Erdogan’s rhetoric, hasn’t yet taken anything that even remotely resembles concrete action.

Instead, we see that states further physically removed from the theatre of murder have shown greater moral fibre: Belgium openly condemned Israel’s collective punishment of the Palestinians, while also expressing support for the International Criminal Court’s role and its ongoing investigation into the Palestine crisis.

Norway’s parliament has called on its government to be ready to recognise a Palestinian state, and Spain’s Ione Belarra, minister for social rights and leader of the leftist Podemos party, has not only called for an end to the genocide but also for Spain to end all diplomatic ties with Israel.

But the strongest response so far has come from Latin and South American states: Bolivia has cut ties with Israel while Chile, Colombia and Honduras have withdrawn diplomats from Tel Aviv. Brazil’s left-wing President Lula has said that Israel is “killing innocent people without any criteria”.

Even Argentina, which hosts the largest Jewish community in South America, called Israel’s attack a “violation of international humanitarian law”. Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden carries on quoting ‘evidence’, that has long since been debunked, in support of Israel’s barbarous actions.

South America understands the Palestinian struggle.

What explains the support for the Palestinian cause in so many Latin and South American countries? The Palestinian diaspora has played a part, given that some 700,000 people of Palestinian descent live in that continent — the progeny of those expelled by Israel — with the largest contingent in Chile.

This diaspora has been politically active, has deep cultural roots, and has made common cause with indigenous groups and left-leaning political groups. The links go beyond South America. In fact, one South American activist recalls that during his exile in Germany, it was a Palestinian who taught him the German word for ‘refugee’.

Another reason is that the Cold War and its legacy conditioned leftist leaders in the region to support the Palestinian cause; Fidel Castro was the first Latin American leader to snap ties with Israel.

Then there is the shared experience of being ground under the boot heels of empire, an experience that is personal for many of these leaders who have seen the US attempt to depose them and destabilise their countries — ushering in murderous right-wing regimes — in order to serve its imperial interests.

So, you may say that on one level at least it is a shared history and experience that draws them closer. Hav-ing suffered colonialism and West-backed dictatorships, the people of these countries un­­­derstand the Palestinian struggle.

Ideology plays a part too. In Colom­bia’s case, it has been prioritised over strategic interests. By condemning Israel, Colom­bia has jeopardised its military deals with Tel Aviv, which suspended arms sales to Colombia.

However, before the ‘pink tide’ swept these states, the right-wing governments that had taken power had tilted towards Israel. Jair Bolsonaro was a prominent supporter of Israel, which has always been a close friend of regressive forces in South America.

Colombia’s military — often accused of murder — was well armed and trained by Israel, and when in Venezuela Juan Guaidó attempted to take power in a US-backed coup, Israel was one of the few countries that recognised him as a legitimate ruler.

As usual, Israel is not shy to make alliances with even the most anti-Semitic of countries, such as Alfredo Stroessner’s Paraguay. A Nazi sympathiser, Stroessner made Paraguay a haven for Nazi war criminals and despite this, was courted by Israel for the simple reason that the left, with its emphasis on decolonisation and rights — was a greater threat to Israel than the Nazis. The world may have willingly forgotten, but the South remembers.

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