

Israel: On the Murder of Children and the Return of Genocide to Banality

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It is one of the cruel ironies of history that those who claim to speak on behalf of the victims of Nazi genocide are the perpetrators of the most horrific campaign of extermination in the history of contemporary settler colonialism. Their behaviour is a source of inspiration for the far right in the contemporary world. They have made genocide banal again.

The Russian bombing that targeted a children's hospital in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, last week, killing dozens, naturally provoked a massive wave of denunciation in Western capitals, especially since it happened on the eve of the NATO summit in Washington. Most Western leaders condemned it in the harshest terms, led by US President Joe Biden, who saw it as a "horrific reminder of Russia's brutality", and the new British Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, who described it as "the most depraved of actions". Since these same two are among the most prominent enthusiastic supporters of Israel and have both famously justified the most horrendous atrocities committed by the Zionist army, with a huge number of children among the victims, it must come to the mind of every person who places humanitarian considerations above geopolitical affiliations, that this represents an amazing degree of hypocrisy, with multiple standards at work.

Indeed, humanitarian organizations sounded the alarm regarding children since the very beginning of the Zionist invasion of the Gaza Strip. On 30 October 2023, the Geneva-based Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor issued a communiqué titled "Number of Gazan children killed in under a month is 10 times higher than that of Ukrainian children killed in entire first year of Russia's ongoing war". The statement explained that "over the course of 24 days of Israeli airstrikes and artillery shelling in the Gaza Strip, 3,457 children were confirmed killed, with over 1,000 more reported missing beneath the debris. Based on data from the United Nations, this figure is more than 10 times the number of children killed in the first year of Russia's war on Ukraine."

The latest figures available from UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) indicate that the number of children killed in the Gaza Strip has now exceeded 14,000, in addition to the number of missing, wounded, forever disabled, and orphans, which is many times that number. As for the number of child victims in Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian invasion in February 2022, according to the same UN source, it amounts to over 600 dead and 1,350 wounded. Thus, the number of children killed in nine months of Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip is 23 times greater than the number of children killed in thirty months of Russian invasion of Ukraine. "Russia's brutality", as Biden called it, seems rather moderate compared to the Zionist state's brutality, which he supports.

Hardly a day goes by without a report being issued by a media source or a humanitarian organization pointing out the horror of what the Zionists are committing against the Palestinians, not only in the Gaza Strip, where the intensity of killing and destruction exceeds anything witnessed in contemporary history, but also in the West Bank as well as in Israeli jails. Palestinian prisoners are exposed to practices much worse than those committed by the US occupation army in the prison

of Abu Ghraib in Iraq, which sparked world outrage in 2004.

We recently saw a blatant example of the brutality of the Zionist army in the attack that targeted Hamas military leader Mohammed Deif in the Al-Mawasi area, which the Israeli leadership had previously designated as a safe zone for the people of Gaza. The attack claimed the lives of more than ninety Palestinians. The way that massacre took place clearly indicates that the Zionist forces deliberately killed the largest number of people without any distinction between alleged combatants and civilians, including children. This is because the Zionist army fired a first missile at the building in which it thought that Deif was present, then a second at the same building to complete its destruction, then a third in the vicinity of the building targeting those seeking to rescue anyone who remained alive among the rubble, then additional bunker-buster missiles to destroy any tunnels that might exist under the target area.

This determination to kill without any concern for the fate of civilians – children, elderly, women and men – has led to the fact that the proportion of civilians to combatants in Israel’s war on those it calls “terrorists” in Gaza far exceeds their proportion in other wars fought in various theatres under the banner of the “War on Terror” since the beginning of the current century. This, in turn, brings us to an ideological feature characteristic of Zionist thought, which reached its peak in the present, after decades of drift of the Israeli society to the far right leading to the current government, a collection of neo-fascists and neo-Nazis.

This characteristic is shared by Zionism with all types of settler colonialism that seek to seize a land, and hence deny the indigenous people’s rights, including their right to life. The moral justification for this supremely immoral project is achieved by denying the humanity of the people whose lands are coveted, downgrading them to the status of subhuman beings who do not deserve to live. This logic backfired into the heart of Europe in the last century with the Nazis, who classified certain categories of Europeans as subhuman beings (*Untermenschen*), reaching the point of exterminating them.

It is not unlikely that the logic of settler colonialism will return to European heartlands again after its decline following the defeat of the Nazis in the wake of the genocide they committed in the past century, especially since the far right is on the rise again throughout the Global North, east and west. It is one of the cruel ironies of history that those who claim to speak on behalf of the victims of Nazi genocide are the perpetrators of the most horrific campaign of extermination in the history of contemporary settler colonialism. Their behaviour is a source of inspiration for the far right in the contemporary world. They have made genocide banal again, with the complicity of “liberals” who have abandoned the most basic human values in the face of the ongoing genocidal war in Gaza, often under the pretext of compassion for the victims of the Nazi genocide.

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P.S.

• Gilbert Achcar Blog. 7/16/2024:
<https://gilbert-achcar.net/murder-of-children-and-banality-of-genocide>

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