

Rafah and El Fasher: Genocidal War and Duty of Solidarity

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While the Israeli army is completing its preparations to attack the city of Rafah, which sheltered more than half of the population of Gaza after their displacement from other areas of the Strip, that is, more than a million people, the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces are preparing to attack the city of El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, whose population has exceeded one million after new displaced people joined the previous ones. In both cases, the local population faces a genocidal war: one is waged by a Zionist army inspired by a Jewish racist project that aims to control the entirety of Palestine and is based on genocide accompanied by ethnic cleansing, while the other is waged by armed gangs motivated by tribal and Arab racist ambitions aiming to control the entire Darfur region (which is approximately twenty times the area of Palestine between the river and the sea) and is also based on genocide accompanied by ethnic cleansing.

As we face the horror of the ongoing Zionist genocidal war in Gaza, which has caused after seven months and one week nearly 45,000 deaths (taking into account the unidentified bodies still under the rubble, numbering 10,000 by the lowest estimate), we are facing a war that is no less horrific in Darfur, if measured by the number of deaths that fell last autumn in the city of El Geneina alone in West Darfur, where a UN report estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 were killed at the hands of the Rapid Support Forces out of a total population of 150,000. This percentage is a warning that the death toll in El Fasher could reach between 60,000 and 100,000 if the aggressors occupied it, especially since the genocidal war fought in Darfur under Omar al-Bashir, starting in 2003, left a number of dead that reached 300,000 according to UN estimate. This is not to mention the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe, which in Sudan surpasses that of Gaza, as the number of displaced people inside and outside Sudanese territory exceeds 8.5 million, a great portion of whom are threatened by a famine no less horrific than the one that is now threatening the people of Gaza.

If the Zionist army occupied Rafah after besieging it without any of its residents and those displaced there daring to leave for fear of being slaughtered, as is the case in El Fasher, the death toll would be no less than what awaits the capital of North Darfur. But international pressure on Israel, including pressure from its US partner in the war on Gaza – influenced by the amazing global movement in solidarity with the people of Gaza, including the movement that started from US universities – has forced the Zionist state to seek to reduce the number of potential victims of its attack on Rafah by calling on the Gazans to leave the city and move to the expanded “humanitarian” Al-Mawasi coastal area, west of the city of Khan Yunis. However, unlike Gaza and Rafah, there is no global movement around the ongoing war in Sudan nor any interest in the fate that awaits El Fasher, except for some rare articles in the world press.

This difference of interest is interpreted by Israel's supporters as stemming from “antisemitism” in

the sense of holding the “Jewish” state accountable to higher standards than those by which other countries are held accountable. The truth is that the Western world cares about Israel by “narcissistic compassion”, as it sees the Zionist state as a Western wedge in the flank of the Arab East. It is this “narcissistic compassion” that leads the Western media to pay much more attention to the victims of September 11, who numbered approximately 3,000, and the victims of October 7 who numbered 1,143 on the Israeli side, than it pays to the millions of victims who have fallen and are falling in wars in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. But Western identification with Israel, which is basically “narcissistic compassion”, backfires against it, as people of good conscience in Western public opinion hold it accountable just as they hold their own governments accountable.

Thus, the movement against the US war on Vietnam in Western countries greatly exceeded the movement against the Russian war on Ukraine. This is because those who are antiwar in the West saw that the responsibility for the former fell on the most powerful Western country, while they do not feel a similar responsibility for what the Russian state is doing. The reason why their interest in Israel’s onslaught on Gaza is much greater than their interest in what is happening in Darfur is their awareness that the Zionist state is an organic part of the Western camp, and that its aggression against the Palestinian people would not have been possible without US participation. This is what Mahmoud Darwish meant when he told the Israeli poet Helit Yeshurun, during an interview she conducted with him in 1996: “Do you know why we Palestinians are famous? It’s because you are our enemy. Interest in the Palestinian question flows from interest in the Jewish question. Yes. People are interested in you, not me ... ! The international interest in the Palestinian question merely reflects the interest people take in the Jewish question.”

This is the truth, but it does not absolve us, Arabs, from the guilt of “narcissistic compassion” in showing interest in what the Zionist state is doing to our Palestinian brothers and sisters, using weapons provided by the United States of America, but indifference to what Arab gangs are doing to non-Arab African people in Darfur, using weapons provided by the United Arab Emirates. People of good conscience who adhere to humanistic values must denounce the crimes taking place in Darfur and Sudan just as they denounce the crimes taking place in Gaza and Palestine.

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P.S.

- Gilbert Achcar’s blog. 5/14/2024:
<https://gilbert-achcar.net/genocidal-war-and-solidarity>
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