

III. Opinion

The Shame of Gaza

by Donald Ramotar, President of Guyana 2011–2015

Former President Ramotar issued the following call on Jan. 8, 2024, for worldwide support for the South African case before the International Court of Justice. It is followed by his commentary of Jan. 2.

South Africa's stance in taking Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for its genocidal killings of innocent Palestinian civilians is an act that is saving our humanity. It is representing the vast majority of humans the world over.

This is a courageous step, since Israel is supported by the most powerful state in history, the U.S.A. Secretary of State Antony Blinken authorized millions of dollars in bombs for Israel just before he left Washington for the Middle East. His mission is not to get peace, but to ensure that no neighboring Arab state intervenes on behalf of the children of Gaza. He claims that he wants to get food into Gaza. It seems that he wants to ensure that they have a last meal, like condemned people, before they are killed by Israel using U.S. bombs.

We the people of the world must join with the heroic South African people and government in demanding an end to the massacre. We must stand up for the Palestinians' right to live in a country of peace and justice.

Mr. Ramotar wrote the following commentary on Jan. 2, 2024.

Down the corridors of the centuries, future generations would ask of this generation of human beings, what kind of people were we? This question would spring from what is happening in Gaza today. At the time of writing, some 22,000 civilians have been killed by Israel's bombing of that tiny strip of land some 21 miles long and four miles wide. Some 60,000 are seriously injured. The victims are mainly children and women. These figures change significantly on a daily basis.

More bombs have been dropped there in two months than were dropped in Afghanistan over 20 years; more

than those dropped on Dresden in Germany, or in Japan during the Second World War.

In addition to the dead and injured, the destruction is horrendous. Of the 2.4 million people in the Gaza Strip, 2 million had their homes destroyed by Israel's bombs. Places to bury the dead have run out, and people are being put into mass graves.

The fascist Netanyahu regime is even using food as a weapon. By preventing food and medicine from going into the strip, people are starving and diseases are on the rise.

Medical staff at the very few hospitals that can function are forced to do amputation without anesthetic. It is a gruesome situation, with one calamity after another.

Apart from the general slaughter that is taking place, Israel's armed forces are doing targeted killings. Doctors, nurses, and emergency health workers are being murdered on a daily basis, while hospitals are routinely bombed over and over again, to ensure that they are non-functional.

The other group which appears to be a high priority for assassination are Palestinian journalists. At the time of writing, more than 105 have died since Oct. 7, 2023. Clearly, Israel and its allies do not want the world to see what is happening, therefore, they have resorted to killing journalists in the Gaza while refusing entry to others.

The Weapons and Their Suppliers

Despite this humanitarian disaster, the United States and some European member states have been opposing a ceasefire in Gaza. They chose to facilitate the massacre.

More than that, those states have been supplying arms to Israel, including huge bombs to kill Palestinians. This is even though Israel has the fourth-largest army in the world, and it is very equipped. It is one of the countries that export weapons and military/

intelligence technologies, such as the Pegasus spy equipment, capable of hacking any phone or computer. It is well supplied with ultra-modern weapons from the West, mainly Germany and the United States.

Israel has 169,500 active personnel in its army, navy, and paramilitary. It has 465,000 reservists.

It possesses 2,200 tanks; 540 artillery pieces; 196 F-16, 83 F-15, and 30 F-35 airplanes; 142 helicopters, of which 43 are Apache attack gunships; 5 submarines; and 49 patrol boats.

It also has a very modern air-defense system known as the Iron Dome; and last and most dangerous, it has nuclear weapons, which it is threatening to use in Gaza.

Yet the U.S. keeps supplying this army on the grounds that they are fighting a “war.” These supplies are in addition to the U.S. \$3.8 billion per year, based on an agreement which was signed by President Obama in 2016.

The Palestinians have no army, no tanks, no planes, no helicopters. Whatever missiles they launch they make in a very primitive way in Gaza; they are kitchen made.

Therefore, it is clear that this is not a war against Hamas, as they disguise it to be. This is a war against the people of Palestine. The main objective is to force the Palestinians off their lands, to ethnically cleanse them from Palestine, by killing or by forced migration. This is naked fascism.

Western powers are having their masks removed by their support for this genocide. All the talk about human rights and freedom of speech lie in pieces in the rubble of Gaza.

All the talk about international law and respect for international institutions have been bulldozed in the bloody streets of Gaza.

Indeed, they have not said anything about the more than 100 UN personnel that have died in the Gaza. No

protection for anyone. Israel is defended and acts with impunity because of the support from “Western democracies.”

Clearly, human lives are not the priority for those states that support Israel. They have lost all moral authority in our troubled world. Their integrity is soaked in the blood of the women and children of Palestine.

‘South Africa Saving Our Humanity’

The Arab world, too, has displayed a cowardice and an uncaring attitude toward the industrial-scale killings taking place on their doorsteps that is unprecedented.

Faced with one aircraft carrier which the U.S. placed in the area to threaten them, they have remained with their tails firmly between their legs. One wonders why they spend such huge sums of money buying arms and yet refuse to go to the assistance of an unarmed people.

The Palestinians are mainly being helped by non-governmental forces. Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen have provided invaluable solidarity to the besieged residents in Palestine.

For us in the South, our leaders content themselves by occasionally making a statement or two. Some feel that they have no responsibility because the Arab world is not doing much.

The country that is saving our humanity is the Republic of South Africa. From the very beginning, this nation and its people have stood up in real solidarity with the Palestinian people. They were among the first to break diplomatic relations with Israel and now they have taken the bold step to take Israeli leaders to the International Court of Justice.

This has given progressive and democratic people the world over hope, that our brothers and sisters, our comrades in South Africa are standing up for our common humanity. Future generations will hail these actions of South Africa as one of the only redeeming features of our generation!