

The War in Gaza Must End

As this writing estimates are that some 19,000 inhabitants of Gaza have died under the assault conducted by Netanyahu's right-wing Israeli government, including 7,000 children and 5,000 women. United Nations workers and journalists have also been killed in unprecedented numbers. Most of the rest of the population is homeless and gradually being starved to death, as the humanitarian aid being funneled in is far from sufficient to sustain a population of over 2 million people. And then there are the scores of Palestinians killed in the West Bank at the hands of the Israeli military and vigilante settlers. It is a disaster few if any of us can fully comprehend. As a response to the horrific October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas, it is unconscionably disproportionate, to put it as mildly as I can. This is not the supposed justice of "an eye for an eye," this is an obscenely vindictive, immoral, and criminal revenge that has seldom if ever taken place while the whole world was watching. Could it be that Netanyahu doesn't care, perhaps even that this is precisely the way he and his authoritarian right-wing government want it to be?

Some things we know. Israeli government officials are claiming that this war, in some form, will go on for many months. Netanyahu does not want a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine question, and never has. To that end, at least during his tenure as prime minister, the policy has been (with the aid of Qatar) to provide all the necessary support to keep Hamas in control of Gaza and to thwart any attempt to bring Gazans and Palestinians residing under Israel's apartheid regime in the West Bank into a cooperative political alliance. We also now know that Israeli intelligence knew of Hamas' plans for the attack long before it happened, and that female Israeli border observers informed their superiors of suspicious actions by Hamas in the months leading up to October 7 – this after the widespread media pronouncements expressing surprise that the attack was not anticipated by Israel. Israeli officials clearly knew about the attack plans, but are said to have discounted them as unrealistic. One must ask whether it is possible they deliberately let the attack take place, presumably as a pretext for the current war.

Throughout all this, and from long before, the United States has resolutely stood by Israel, providing extraordinary amounts of aid, including routinely supportive vetoes in the United Nations, all while turning a nearly blind eye to Israel's violations of international agreements and international law. The United States remains complicit in what Israel is doing now, including vetoing the recent call by the United Nations for a cease-fire.

Up until October 7 I would have said that Joe Biden has been one of the best Presidents of my lifetime – and that's not just in comparison to Donald Trump but going back all the way to Harry Truman, who was President when I was born. I might still say that, but now with much ambivalence given that Biden has thus far failed to act decisively to confront the Netanyahu government with sufficient opposition, in the form of rhetoric, political disapprobation, and withholding of material and military aid, to change the trajectory of Israel's war. Things are only going to get worse for Gaza and Israel for the foreseeable future, and they will only get worse for Biden with other world leaders and, at home, with some of his core constituencies if he continues to tolerate Netanyahu and his war of annihilation.

I cannot help wondering if the right-wing authoritarian Netanyahu may even intend to bring Biden down, replaced by Trump, a criminal right-wing authoritarian like himself. He's got to know that Jewish Americans are seriously divided regarding this war, and that every U.S. President since the founding of the State of Israel has been wedded to near unconditional support of that nation. Netanyahu's prosecution of the war has put Biden in what appears to be a no-win situation. To make support for Israel significantly conditional could be very costly, politically speaking, but to continue that support is patently unethical by any objective standard, and viscerally unpopular with certain segments of the Democratic party. These segments are not being frivolous or hysterical in calling Israel's policy in the West Bank apartheid and its war against Hamas in Gaza tantamount to genocide. Gaza is hell on earth, with no positive end in sight. Yet it could become even worse. It's way past time to cease what award-winning Russian-American Jewish journalist and writer Masha Gessen, has termed the "liquidation" of Gaza.

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