

Backing Israel's genocide: Not just the US

India's support for Israel is unique in Global South



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By this point, we all know the US has sent billions of dollars in military aid and thousands of lethal weapons to perpetuate Israel's genocide and ethnic cleansing plan in Gaza. On February 23, experts from the United Nations published a statement warning nation states to refrain from transferring weapons or ammunition to Israel that would be used in violation of international and humanitarian law. With the spotlight on the US—Israel's biggest ally—little is said about other governments around the world who are also supporting Israel politically, militarily, and economically—weighing strategic partnerships in the geopolitical fora with more importance than their citizens' moral compasses.

Since October 7 last year, over 30,000 civilians have been killed in Gaza at a historic pace, and over a million have been displaced, in indiscriminate attacks that may amount to a genocide, according to a preliminary ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), a US federal court, as well as dozens of UN experts and legal scholars. Following the ICJ ruling on January 26, the Italian and Spanish prime ministers said they have stopped all arms sales to Israel since the war began in Gaza, more than four months ago. Subsequently, on February 5, a Dutch high court banned The Netherlands from continuing its export of F-35 parts to Israel. Two Japanese arms companies also ended their MoUs with Elbit Systems, Israel's largest weapons manufacturer.

Germany, on the other hand, continues to unabashedly back Israel. It also must be noted that, unlike the US government which offers a degree of transparency, the EU and the UK do not provide as much public information, according to Campaign Against Arms Trade. But according to the German Economic Affairs and Climate Protection ministry's 2023 Federal Government Arms Policy, the country's arms and military equipment sales to Israel increased tenfold from 2022 to 2023. In the few weeks after the start of Israel's attacks

on Gaza, the German government approved 185 additional export licence applications to supply arms to Israel. On January 16, the Spiegel magazine reported that the country was considering sending tanks in "great secrecy"—10,000 rounds of 120mm precision ammunition—to Israel, while also offering to intervene in the genocide case. On February 23, a group of German lawyers sued senior German politicians, including Chancellor Olaf Scholz, accusing them of "aiding and abetting" genocide.

The United Kingdom has also come under scrutiny for its complicity. The world's seventh-largest weapons manufacturer, UK company BAE Systems manufactures the M109 howitzer, a 155mm mobile artillery system that the Israeli military has been using extensively, firing tens of thousands of 155mm shells into the Gaza Strip. Some of these shells are also white phosphorus bombs—which have been used in Gaza illegally. While the US State Department recently announced they'll investigate whether white phosphorus was used in the Israeli attacks in Lebanon, the UK has not once publicly acknowledged that a British arms company has supplied the forbidden chemical bombs. The UK also supplies 15 percent of the components of F-35s—the Israeli army's flagship asset—employed in Israel's indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza, according to Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT).

The UK government has witnessed legal challenges launched by its human rights organisations for exporting British arms, and a warning from the Human Rights Watch. Yet, the nation is continuing to respond with its hardliner pro-Israel stance. On February 26, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he wanted a clampdown on pro-Palestinian protests, stating there is a "growing consensus that mob rule is replacing democratic rule." Civil rights groups have hit back on Sunak's comments, which they say bear the risk of making legitimate protests illegal.

Interestingly, as some nations withdrew supplying arms following

the ICJ order—Israel's biggest defence export market, India, emerged more starkly in the list of its backers. The first indication of India's tilt towards Israel was seen in their decision to abstain from a ceasefire in the first vote in the United Nations General Assembly, and the mass arrests of activists, particularly Muslims, in non-violent pro-Palestinian protests

venture since 2018 between India's Adani Defence and Aerospace and Israel's Elbit Systems became the first entity to manufacture Israeli UAVs outside of Israel. Though New Delhi and Tel Aviv have not publicly acknowledged the export of 20 drones, sources at Adani confirmed to The Wire that the export had indeed taken place.

to endorse the latest ICJ ruling and refrain from "any sort of complicity with Israel." The group also criticised India's close ties with Israel, saying, "unlike many other countries in the Global South that are re-assessing their relations with Israel, India continues its close collaboration with it, particularly in the defence and surveillance sectors."

ways Israel is executing its ethnic cleansing plan.

With India's unemployment rate hovering just over eight percent, Israel's offer is seen as a way to address unemployment of low-skilled workers at home and earn foreign exchange as well. But labour activists have raised concerns that sending workers to Israel, a conflict zone, endangers their lives. The Ministry of External Affairs, however, ruled out security concerns for workers putting Tel Aviv on the "Emigration Clearance Risk," stating that the labour laws in Israel are very strict and robust. This brings us to a fundamental dilemma: isn't Netanyahu fighting a war to destroy Hamas and ensure Israel's safety? Each time the US vetoes the ceasefire, it does so on the ground of Israel's right to defend itself and ensure full security to prevent October 7 attacks from happening again. If the Israeli land is safe enough for thousands of foreign workers, then, why are they killing thousands of people in the neighbouring country?

According to Al Jazeera, the Haryana government advertisements said the salary for the jobs would be approximately USD 1,625 workers a month—in a state where per capita income is around USD 300 a month. In December, the Israeli government approved the arrival of 10,000 workers, and on January 31, The Business Standard reported that 10,000 workers would reach Israel in batches and more is expected soon. The aftermath of the Hamas attacks expedited an agreement that was already in place between the Indian and Israeli government. In May, 2023, Israeli foreign minister Eli Cohen signed an agreement with his Indian counterpart, S Jaishankar, allowing 42,000 workers to migrate for work. Some analysts have pointed out that sending Indian workers to Israel now could also hurt their employment prospects in the fiercely competitive job markets in several other Arab countries, and entangle them in a deadly war in the Middle East.

Despite widespread protests in all of the countries that are backing Israel and backlash from humanitarian groups, the governments have maintained their positions. The UN's calls to cease arms sales and support the ICJ case continue to fall on deaf ears in a world where politics of power and great power rivalries have overtaken the values of democracy and humanity. Whether one calls it realism or realpolitik, both the blatant and subtle support for Israel's genocide against Palestinians shows that the world we live in today, becoming more soulless by the day.



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets Israeli Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his visit to New Delhi in January, 2018.

PHOTO: REUTERS

and vigils. Explaining India's drift from being a leading voice for decolonisation and strategic "non-alignment," to supporting Israel "unrecognisably," Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor penned it on the nation's shifting foreign policy, with more affinity towards the US, whose concerns about China it shares. Though India has reiterated the need to send humanitarian aid, the nation has been cautious and withdrawn to criticise Israel, especially compared to its neighbour Bangladesh, which was the first nation to officially offer to file a declaration of intervention to support South Africa's case. India is also the only nation in the Global South, and in BRICS, which has been backing Israel.

On February 7, the Indian news channel TV9 Hindi reported that the Israeli army is set to include 20 Indian-made Hermes 900 drones in its expanding fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). It was first reported on February 4, by defence-related website, Shephard Media, that Hyderabad-based Adani-Elbit Advanced Systems India Ltd, a joint

Drones have been on the frontlines of Israel's aggression in Gaza, as they strategically reduce risks to soldiers. The Hermes 900 drones that India has reportedly exported to Israel are capable of remaining airborne for over 30 hours, and are considered one of the four types of lethal or "killer" drones that Israel has been using. The Hermes drones were first used by Israel in 2014 in Gaza, where 37 percent of the 2,100 people were killed due to Israeli drones according to the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights.

A defence analyst in India, Girish Linganna, told Middle East Eye, "Regrettably, it is highly likely that drones manufactured through the Adani-Elbit venture may be deployed in Gaza. When India supplies drones to Israel, it becomes indirectly linked to any actions those drones take in Gaza. This blurs the line between the supplier and potential accomplice, even if India has no direct control over how the drones are used."

Recently, Indians for Palestine publicly sent out a statement urging the Prime Minister Narendra Modi

The recent development has been seen as a distinct escalation of India's support for Israel, and has added more fuel for criticism by prominent activists who were already vocal about India's passive approach towards Palestinians. In December last year, writer Arundhati Roy significantly criticised India's response to Israel's aggression in Gaza. During her acceptance speech at the P Govinda Pillai award function held in Thiruvananthapuram, Roy said, "We, as a country, have lost our moral compass. The streets of our country, which once was a true friend of colonised people, a true friend of Palestine, where one would have seen millions marching, too, are silent today."

Some activists have also condemned India's response to Israeli construction companies asking the Indian government to allow them to hire up to 100,000 workers to replace 90,000 Palestinians whose work permits were revoked following the October 7 attacks. The seizure of work permits is seen as economic exclusion of Palestinians—one of the

Will the US and UK's support for Israel backfire?



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Two recent events in the US and the UK underscore the magnitude of public anger towards the complicity of the respective governments in the massacre being unleashed by Israel in Gaza in reaction to Hamas' October 7 attack last year. Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden will compete in elections this year in their nations, both of which have been engulfed in mass protests for Gaza.

Aaron Bushnell, a US airman, died of self-immolation in front of the Israeli embassy in Washington, DC. "Free Palestine," he cried after he set himself on fire. Across the Atlantic, George Galloway, a long-time thorn on the side of the British Labour Party, trounced mainstream British parties in a by-election in Rochdale, a Manchester suburb. "This is for Gaza," an ebullient Galloway declared after his victory, where he won more votes than Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrats put together.

These are growing signs of substantial public disaffection in these two nations which have been conspicuous in refusing to take Israel to task for its slaughter. In a recent UN Security Council vote for an immediate ceasefire, all members voted for the motion with the exception of the usual suspects. The UK abstained, and the US vetoed the motion.

One of the bitter ironies of global

politics is there is only one country in the world which has the power to bring Israel to its senses—the US, which is particularly loath to do so. Biden is currently locked in a close fight with former President Donald Trump, who has all but won the Republican nomination for US presidential election in November. There are enough signs of discontent in the US to send shivers down the spine of the Democratic establishment.

In a recent Democratic primary in Michigan—the over 100,000 "uncommitted" votes driven by dissatisfaction with US policy on Gaza is a wake-up call. Michigan is a crucial battleground state, and if the past razor-thin margins are anything to go by, this could be enough to tip the state to Trump come November. To win, Biden needs the support of two demographics key to victory—African Americans and young voters.

The slaughter in Gaza is exacting a toll. Over 1,000 African American pastors pressured Biden to push for a stop of the killing in Gaza. Rev. Timothy McDonald, the senior pastor of First Iconium Baptist Church in Atlanta, told *The New York Times*, "It's going to be very hard to persuade our people to go back to the polls and vote for Biden." Gaza resonates particularly with

African Americans, who know from their lived experience and painful history about the yawning gap between lofty pronouncements and the ugly reality of racial violence.

Many young people in the US are also seething. In a late December NYT/Siena poll, three quarters of voters between 18 and 29 years old disapproved of Biden's

On the night of the Hamas attack in October last year, a coalition of more than 30 student groups at Harvard University posted an open letter, saying that Israel was "entirely responsible" for the violence that ended up killing more than 1,400 people, most of them civilians. The reaction was vicious. Critics made students' names public, donors



US President Joe Biden meets British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at the Grand Central Hotel, Belfast, Northern Ireland on April 12, 2023.

PHOTO: REUTERS

handling of the conflict in Gaza. "And among registered voters, they say they would vote for Mr. Trump by 49 percent to 43 percent—in July, those young voters backed Mr. Biden by 10 percentage points," adds *The New York Times*. "Few of them believe Israelis are serious about peace with the Palestinians. Nearly half say Israel is intentionally killing civilians. Nearly three-fourths say Israel is not taking enough precautions to avoid civilian casualties."

threatened to withdraw funding and Wall Street executives vowed not to hire the students.

In the US, Biden is in damage-control mode. His recent policy of air-dropping food and supplies to Gaza is in stark contrast to his continued refusal to restrain Israel in any way. This was preceded by a strange media Kabuki of "leaks" where we were informed that Biden is getting increasingly frustrated with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Biden was

"closer to a breach with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu than at any time since the Gaza War began," *The Washington Post* breathlessly informed us. *Politico* reported Biden called Netanyahu a "bad [expletive] guy." The White House subsequently denied it.

The Nation magazine noted in a headline: "Biden is Mad at Netanyahu? Spare me." Be that as it may, there are few signs that Netanyahu is exactly quaking in his boots.

Meanwhile in the UK, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak greeted the election of George Galloway—whose pitch was focused on Gaza and heavy criticism of Israel—in the Rochdale by-election with all the enthusiasm of a man headed for the hangman's noose, calling the win "beyond alarming." For context, Galloway won the election—for a seat in Rochdale, north of Manchester—after a chaotic campaign that is emblematic of the anger that has swept through the British political scene over the war in Gaza. Sunak's response to an election that was by all accounts free, fair, and peaceful is rather odd, especially coming from an unelected prime minister—who faces tough competition from Keir Starmer in the upcoming UK elections. Following Sunak's speech where he claimed extremist groups are "tearing us apart," London's mayor Sadiq Khan has publicly condemned the prime minister for failing to call out "racist, anti-Muslim and Islamophobic" remarks by the former Tory vice-chair Anderson.

There has been aggressive pushback in the UK against massive pro-Palestinian protests. Former Home Secretary Suella Braverman said to *The Telegraph*, "The truth

is that the Islamists, the extremists and the anti-Semites are in charge now." Former Conservative Party Vice Chairman Lee Anderson believes that "Islamists had control over London and its Mayor Sadiq Khan." Following public outcry, the Conservatives withdrew Anderson's MP privileges.

Few institutions have come out looking worse in this situation than the mainstream media in the US and UK, whose slavish adherence to the official narrative is enough to give the Soviet-era *Pravda* a run for its money. A growing culture of intolerant name-calling has turned the moniker "liberal" on its head. Question the West's position on Ukraine and you become a pariah, "Putin's useful idiot." The slur "anti-Semite" is tossed around liberally to silence any sympathy for Palestine. Only those with unimpeachable credentials can survive the wrath of the media—people like University of Chicago political scientist John Mearsheimer or Columbia professor Jeffrey Sachs. The media can't smear them, but do avoid them like the plague. Both agree that Israel is committing genocide. Since it would be foolish to expect either of them to pop up on CNN, BBC, or *The New York Times* any time soon, let's end with an extended recent remark of Sachs: "Israel is deliberately starving the people of Gaza... Israel is in war-crime status now, I believe in genocidal status. This will stop when the United States stops providing the munitions to Israel. It will not stop by any self-control in Israel. There is none in this government. This is a murderous gang in government now... And it's our mumbling, bumbling president and the others that are not stopping this slaughter."