



PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Avnery crossed the front lines and met Yasser Arafat on July 3, 1982 during Israel's siege of Beirut.

Israel's sense of moral immunity needs breaking



Bir Bikram Shamsher M Chowdhury
is former Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh.

SHAMSHER M CHOWDHURY, BB

The late Israeli academic, journalist, and politician Uri Avnery once famously described Israel as a small America and America as a huge Israel. If Avnery were alive today, he could be forgiven for including Europe as an extended part of Israel. Uri Avnery was among the founders of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Shortly after the group's founding, Avnery was assaulted and stabbed several times—yet another graphic manifestation of the Zionist state's culture of intolerance to the truth.

Avnery crossed the front lines and met Yasser Arafat on July 3, 1982, during Israel's siege of Beirut. He is said to have been the first Israeli politician to have met personally with Arafat. He was tracked by an Israeli intelligence team that intended to kill Arafat, even if it meant killing Avnery at the same time once the latter had inadvertently led them to Arafat's hide-out. The operation, "Salt Fish," failed when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) managed to lose their trackers in the alleyways of Beirut.

The late Robert Fisk, an English writer, journalist, and a major critic of United States foreign policy in the Middle East, interviewed Avnery shortly following the harrowing Sabra and Shatila massacre of 1982 and asked him how survivors of the Holocaust and their children could look on as 1,700 (the actual figure was said to have crossed 3,000) Palestinians, unarmed men, women, and children, were massacred in cold blood. Avnery replied, "I will tell you something about the Holocaust. It would be nice to believe that people who have undergone suffering have been purified by suffering. But it's the opposite, it makes them worse. It corrupts. There is something in suffering that creates a kind of egoism... You get a moral 'power of attorney,' a permit to do anything you want... This is a moral immunity which is very clearly felt in Israel."

Gaza today is Sabra-Shatila multiplied many times. But then some believe differently. Nothing but respect can there be for someone like Professor Norman Finkelstein, a son of Holocaust survivors. Both his parents were victims of Nazi persecution against the Jews, and still, that has not stopped him from speaking out openly about the truth in the face of denial of the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza. Finkelstein has, on more than one occasion, said he is dead against using the Holocaust card to justify Israel's atrocities

against the Palestinians and has dared the Jews of the world to do the same if they have any heart.

The present state of Palestinian persecution has its roots in the Nakba of 1948. This historical tragedy finds little or no mention in the narrative that pervades in Western capitals. Israel's continued persecution in Palestine in general, and now the genocide in Gaza in particular, has been possible only because of the direct support from those governments in the West that profess the values of human rights and democracy across the globe but choose to exempt Israel from their list.

intentions that underlie that philosophy – Israel as Germany's 'raison d'état,' in the words of Scholz's predecessor Angela Merkel – are clear. But Germany's unquestioning support for Israel is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Germany sees itself as a global voice for human rights, yet it has continued to sell arms to Israel... German opinion polls have swung dramatically in ways that no politician can ignore. Critics of the Gaza assault have more than doubled to 69%; support for Israel's conduct of the war has collapsed to just 18%. Almost nine in 10 Germans now think there should be more pressure on Israel."

Germany's Green Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, has also said that aid must immediately get into Gaza with "no more excuses." And even Scholz has begun to sound critical, asking on a visit to Israel last month, "No matter how important the goal, can it justify such terribly high costs? Or are there other ways to achieve your

The key question that remains unanswered, though, is how much of the global outrage for Gaza will impact Washington's attitude and its policy of blind and unconditional support for Israel. There are signs of slow but visible unease among the policymakers in the US capital. But with an election looming on the horizon and the gripping power of the Jewish lobby all across the land, how strongly, to quote Avnery, "a large Israel" can confront Israel and unshackle itself from its "most strategic ally" remains to be seen.

The words of Norman Finkelstein and those of the late Uri Avnery did prove that among all the mayhem and Western double standards, there exist voices of sanity; not that those have made much difference to the policymakers in the West. But maybe, just maybe, that could begin to change.

In a case filed by Nicaragua, the World Court will likely rule on Germany's support for Israel. This could be a sign of how geopolitics is shifting as a fallout from the genocide being committed by Israel in Gaza.

Steve Crawshaw, the former Russia and East Europe editor at The Independent and former UK director at Human Rights Watch, in an article in The Guardian on April 9, has said that Germany is under pressure. Crawshaw says that after October 7, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that "there is only one place for Germany: at Israel's side." It was, Scholz said, "a perpetual task for us to stand up for the security of the state of Israel."

Crawshaw writes, "The good

goal?" Meanwhile, German lawyers have reportedly brought a case calling for Germany to end its arms sales to Israel. Britain and other governments are facing similar pressures, while a Dutch court found a "clear risk" that exported F-35 jet parts to Israel could be used in breaches of international humanitarian law.

The key question that remains unanswered, though, is how much of the global outrage for Gaza will impact Washington's attitude and its policy of blind and unconditional support for Israel. There are signs of slow but visible unease among the policymakers in the US capital. But with an election looming on the horizon and the gripping power of the Jewish lobby all across the land, how strongly, to quote Avnery, "a large Israel" can confront Israel and unshackle itself from its "most strategic ally" remains to be seen.

In the meantime, Palestinians continue to pay with blood for the horrific crimes committed by Europe on the Jews for ages.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the recent editorial published in your esteemed newspaper, titled "A rights body that remains paralysed." While we appreciate your effort to analyse the annual report 2023 of the NHRC, we feel compelled to address the inaccuracies and misunderstandings that were presented in your publication.

The article unfairly criticises the investigative powers of NHRC and labels it as a

"paralysed body." We strongly disagree with this characterisation, as it overlooks the significant contributions and achievements of the institution in various aspects of human rights protection and advocacy which ultimately contribute to upholding the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

It is important to recognise that while the investigative power against Law Enforcing

Agencies (LEAs) is indeed a crucial aspect of the institution's mandate, it is not the sole indicator of its effectiveness.

The NHRC is actively engaged in addressing a wide range of human rights violations and making impactful interventions across various sectors of human rights. These efforts are clearly documented and reflected in the NHRC's annual report 2023.

Last year, the NHRC disposed of 665 out of 1058 complaints, including 122 cases initiated on its own accord (suo moto complaints). The annual report, particularly pages 37 to 50, vividly showcases numerous successful interventions, with notable activities highlighted in part three; such as contributing to stop child marriage, violence against women.

Protection of the rights of the Dalits, Hijra, migrant workers, person with disabilities, paying

regular visits to the prisons, holding public hearings, etc. These interventions have had a profound impact on society, benefiting millions of community members of the country directly or indirectly. How did the NHRC manage to undertake such a multitude of activities within a single year despite being labelled as "paralysed"?

Unfortunately, these significant achievements have been unjustly overlooked and misrepresented, resulting in a derogatory portrayal of the NHRC in the public eye. Such discouraging words undoubtedly

Protection of the rights of the Dalits, Hijra, migrant workers, person with disabilities, paying regular visits to the prisons, holding public hearings, etc. These interventions have had a profound impact on society, benefiting millions of community members of the country directly or indirectly. How did the NHRC manage to undertake such a multitude of activities within a single year despite being labelled as "paralysed"?

stand as an impediment towards prosperity of a national rights body.

Furthermore, we believe that the article demonstrates a lack of understanding of the complexities of human rights issues and the multifaceted approach required for their resolution. Human rights violations extend beyond the scope of investigative powers against LEAs and encompass a broad spectrum of social, economic, and political challenges.

The Constitution of the people's republic of Bangladesh, International Covenants where

Bangladesh is a party, UDHR and so on enshrine various spectrum of human rights issues which deserve to be dealt with but the article failed to consider all these.

We urge your editorial to exercise greater diligence and responsibility in reporting on matters concerning NHRC and to refrain from making unsubstantiated claims that undermine the institution's credibility and reputation. We also encourage you to consider the broader context and implications of your reporting on issues related to human rights and institutional effectiveness.

In conclusion, we respectfully request that you publish this response to provide a more balanced and accurate perspective on the work of NHRC. We remain committed to promoting dialogue and understanding on issues of national importance and look forward to constructive engagement with your publication in the future.

Thanking you,
Sebastian Rema
Secretary
NHRC

OUR RESPONSE

Through our editorial, published online on April 5 and in print on April 6, we aimed to support the NHRC's own demand that the government should let the commission investigate law enforcers. As per its annual report, almost two-thirds of its enquiry requests—78 out of 122—to the home ministry over cases of human rights violation by law enforcers have been ignored. Even if it is not the sole indicator of the commission's effectiveness, it is a major indicator, and the fact that the NHRC itself wants an amendment to the law constraining its investigative power demonstrates this.

Moreover, this constraint is also one of the primary reasons why the commission is not considered fully independent.

Section 18 of the NHRC Act, which restricts the commission, has been one of the reasons why NHRC is considered a "Category B" organisation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), which assesses all the national human rights institutions of the world on how compliant they are with the Paris Principles. And the NHRC does not have the independence guaranteed by the Paris Principles. This is also evident by the fact that the

Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission has come second-to-last in South Asia, as per an evaluation by the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI).

We acknowledge the NHRC's many achievements—the fact that it has managed to do so much, despite the shortcomings, is to its credit. However, if it cannot hold state agencies accountable, then we stand by our editorial that it is, indeed, paralysed. We strongly believe the commission could do a lot more with greater independence.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Madaripur
Phone and Fax: 0661-61266, 01730-782807
e-mail: eemad@rhd.gov.bd
cemrdrhd@gmail.com

Memo No: 35.01.5400.442.07.006.24-645(20)

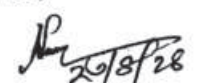
Date: 23.04.2024

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is being in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Madaripur for the procurement of:

Sl No	Tender ID	Name of work	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1.	974318 (e-GP-45)	Supply spare parts of China Roller, G.M Roller & Road marshal Roller and other mechanical devices under 1st line workshop Sub-Division Madaripur during the financial year 2023-2024	12-05-2024 at 17:00	13-05-2024 at 14:10	13-05-2024 at 14:10
2.	974321 (e-GP-46)	Supply of spare parts for Pazerо Zeep No. Dhaka Metro Gha-11-4543, Pickup No. Dhaka Metro Tha-11-6558, Pickup No. Dhaka Metro Tha-11-1908 & Pickup No. Dhaka Metro Tha-11-3888 and other Mechanical devies under 1st line workshop Sub-Division Madaripur during the financial year 2023-2024	12-05-2024 at 17:00	13-05-2024 at 14:20	13-05-2024 at 14:20

- This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the e-GP portal.
- To submit e-Tender registration in the e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
- For further information, Please contact e-GP helpdesk. (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)



Najmul Hasan
Personal ID: 601954
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Madaripur