

# The stakes are too high for the world to fail Palestine



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Martin Luther King Jr said that injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere. That warning has never been so relevant as today, when the global powers are themselves violating the rule-based world order established after the Second World War, with goals to avoid wars, maintain peace, uphold human rights, and assure security and justice to every nation-state and every people in this global society.

The horrible genocide in Gaza has slaughtered over 37,000 people—two-thirds of them women and children, injured over 85,000, and buried alive countless people under the 220,000 collapsed buildings in the tiny strip of land just 25 miles long and about five miles wide. This ethnic cleansing, and the crimes against humanity are being carried out with the full military and political support of none other than the US—once the architect, founder, and supposedly the de facto defender of the international rule of law. Such a monstrous injustice to a defenceless and long persecuted people who endured ethnic cleansing by the settler colonial state, Israel, for the last 75 years under the patronage of the West, especially of the superpower of our time, is undoubtedly giving messages to the entire world that the “might is right” policy of the dark ages is back, and no one is safe.

The Rohingya genocide in 2017 occurred in Myanmar while global powers watched. Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 and inflicted scorched earth destruction, mass murders, and inhuman atrocities. There are other examples of massive human rights violations by global powers. If the global community does not take measures to hold them accountable, the ultimate victim of this dangerously irresponsible pattern will be humanity in its entirety.

Washington’s polished mask is removed, and its ugly and rotten state is exposed to the world as it repeatedly counters and vetoes resolutions at the UN General Assembly

and the Security Council, cares little about world opinion, undermines the verdicts of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and opposes the International Criminal Court’s requests for arrest warrants against top Israeli officials including the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. These actions are sending alarms to the rest of the world that the world order based on universal principles is becoming dysfunctional. It is utterly disgraceful that the US Congress has invited Netanyahu to speak before a joint session.

Realising the stakes of the failure to address the current Gaza genocide, millions of people are coming to the streets to protest. They know that politicians and decision makers operate in a socio-political environment that must be changed by the people.

It is a dangerous signal to many states and non-state actors who struggle peacefully and within the law because they believe the international community will effectively address their issues. However, as they see the present hopeless state of affairs, these people and organisations often resort to illegal and violent means, abandoning peaceful resistance.

On the other hand, authoritarian regimes and predatory elites all find encouragement in a lawless world in which they can promote their vested interests by exploiting, subjugating, and victimising countless people. The alarming rise in authoritarian regimes and dysfunctional democracies in the world is an outcome of vicious geopolitics created by the global and regional powers under the heavy influence of predatory elites.

The US President John F Kennedy warned the world, “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.”

This explains the desperate events of October 7, when Hamas attacked Israel. All peaceful means have been systematically blocked for decades.

As Ilan Pappé, a renowned Israeli historian,

clearly exposed in his work: terrorism did not exist among the Arabs in the Middle East. Terrorism was introduced to the region by the Zionist forces by creating fierce organisations like the Hagenah in 1920, the Irgun in 1930, the Stern Gang, and others later, all to terrorise the Palestinians to drive them out of their homes and homeland, where their forefathers had lived for centuries. The project of establishing a settler colonial state started

created in the mid-1960s. The Palestinians waited patiently and peacefully, hoping the international community would address their issues. When the oppression continued, violent resistance started its course from the state of utter hopelessness and frustrations for which the inaction or inadequate actions of the global community were responsible.

During the last few decades, especially since 9/11, the “War on Terror”—a two-decade-

with each other to consolidate their collective power, establishing “strangleholds” on many Western governments, most dangerously on the US government. It’s not only the Palestinian people, but the whole world—directly or indirectly—who is a victim of this corrupt and repugnant state.

Today, the world is again at a crossroads. The enormously powerful transnational elites and their alliances are hijacking Western democracies and the international rule of law. On the other hand, the people of this global society are ever more determined to establish their rights and dignity. Two mega confrontational forces are dangerously approaching each other—one for the rule of law and justice and the other for authoritarianism, exploitation, and subjugation of the masses.

Europe’s might-right policy caused the two most devastating wars of the 20th century, bringing the world to its knees. That is why, right after WWII, the world leaders reached a consensus to establish the new world order in 1945. The international rule of law recognises the equal rights of all nation-states with respect to their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security. Since the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to mandate each member-state to uphold the rights, new optimism and vigour swept the world. As a result, 36 countries became independent during the post-WWII period, ending the colonial era.

The global rule of law ensures our collective well-being, freedom, and dignity. We, the people, are threatened when these universal ideas are undermined or trampled. The people of this global society are the stakeholders, and consequently, we all must fight to preserve, protect, and defend the world order that aims to help us achieve justice and peace.

Israel’s fanatic and extremist government has already conflagrated the Middle East, a region where the global powers and the regional powers are increasingly getting entangled, each moving in their own way, failing to see the bigger picture and pushing the world “sleepwalking” into World War III.

A people-to-people global movement to restore the rule of law, reclaim democracies from the mouth of monstrous forces, and establish good governance that upholds human rights and sustains stability worldwide is the paradigm shift that is needed now, an imperative necessity for a healthy global community.



**A man gestures as Palestinians search for casualties a day after Israeli strikes on houses in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, on November 1, 2023.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

more than one hundred years ago when the Palestinians were persecuted as these Jewish terrorist organisations were trained and armed by Britain and funded by the wealthy Zionist elites of Europe. Arabs were no match for the Zionist forces.

Israel was created in 1948 after destroying half of Palestine, perpetrating 31 massacres, and driving 750,000 Palestinians—then half of the population of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea—out of their homes and homeland to make space for the immigrant Jews from Europe.

Four decades later, after the Hagenah was created to terrorise the Palestinians, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was

long Western military onslaught without addressing the root causes of grievances and inhuman sufferings of countless people of the region—has been enormously painful, deadly, unjust, and in the end most counterproductive.

These are all tactics and agendas of transnational predatory elites to exploit, subjugate, and vilify targeted people to serve their mutual vested interests. The Palestinians are the worst and longest victims of this heinous agenda.

The people in the top positions of the military-industrial complex of Western powers and big businesses are the strongest allies of the pro-Israel elites, who all collude

## When violence hits home Death of Bangladeshi youth in America



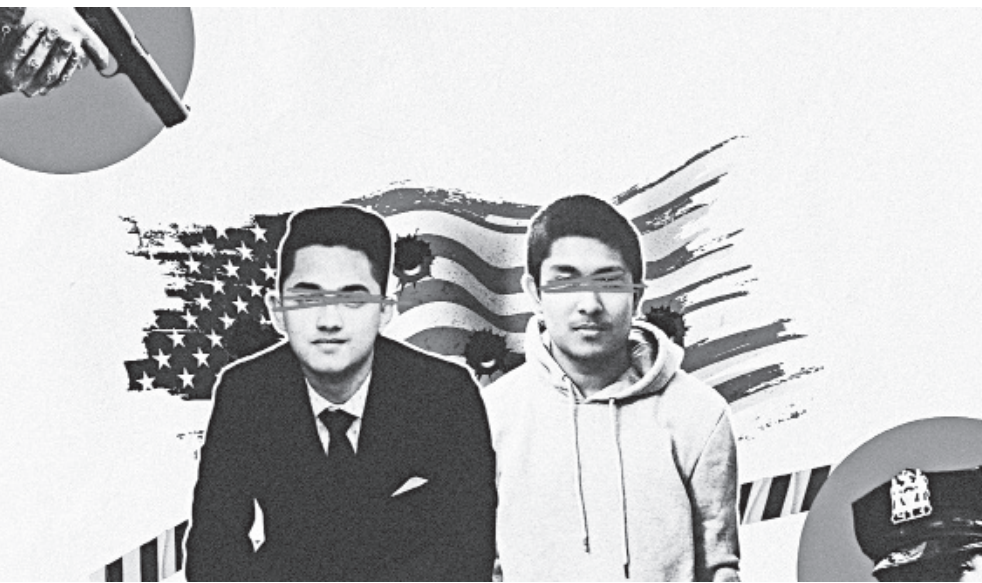
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The police killings of Win Rozario and Sayed Faisal, Bangladeshi American youth, have been devastating for the diaspora. In both incidents, killing came as a response to a mental health crisis. Both Faisal and Win were shot as a response to non-criminal calls, when they needed help. The instances of non-criminal domestic disturbance calls ending in police killings are numerous. The American Public Health Association posits that police violence limits the minority community’s ability to achieve good health outcomes. The rampant and poignant crisis of police killings is a case of double jeopardy for the Bangladeshi American community: the Bangladeshi community’s help seeking behaviour is limited as mental health and help seeking are generally discouraged and stigmatised in a system that is disinclined to provide social support and health services particularly to communities living on the margins.

Shahana Hanif, the first Bangladeshi American member of New York City Council and a leading progressive voice in the community, mentioned how there are many Bangladeshis serving the law enforcement establishment at different levels and before police killed Win, there was a dearth of critical discourse on police violence on minority communities. She mentioned that police officers are trained to de-escalate but they continue to harm communities of colour. The crisis for the community is intensified further when the city continues to cut funding for social services and go above and beyond to fund the police.

Bangladeshi Americans make up one of the fastest growing low-income communities in cities like New York. The long history of documented immigration of Bangladeshis goes way back but the recent profile of the Bangladeshi migrant community is defined by the migration pattern starting in during the third wave of Bangladeshi immigration post 1981, when more working-class Bangladeshis started migrating to major urban centres. This community experiences acute health disparities and neglect, coupled



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

with high rates of discrimination and low social support—added to the stressors of being in a recently settled immigrant household. Lack of meaningful access to resources also derails help seeking in the community. Win’s and Faisal’s deaths should not be moments of reckoning for the Bangladeshi community only, but for the whole of America as the processes that led to these heartbreaking outcomes sit on matrix of systemic bias, neglect, discrimination, inequality, and model minority mindset where “positive” stereotypes of Asians as hardworking, docile and apolitical migrants pushes the South Asian and Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States to excel at the expense of meeting their needs.

The negative verdict on Faisal’s case is not surprising: a Massachusetts judge found that the officer was justified in shooting Faisal. Oftentimes the rationale of self-defence, police being responsive to their training rules, overvaluation of police witness and narrative over non-police witness play pivotal roles in decision making. Bringing

guns and safety advanced by special interest groups, police unions and politicians that need to be considered to comprehend the intricacies around police violence. If the police officer “reasonably” believes that use of lethal force must be used to prevent harm to self or others, then that is seen as enough of a justification for violence resulting in death. The cost of police killing is not as well documented, but it is mainly borne by the victim’s family and the health care system, in some cases the city government if the case reaches a settlement—very small percentage of claims ever reach settlement. Killing comes at a minimal cost to the police department as many cases are squashed in the administrative reviews and procedures. The officers responsible for killing are usually put on paid administrative leave or modified duty and are eventually reassigned. If there are any sanctions on the police officer, they are usually recorded as disciplinary expenditure on the police department budget—not categorised as cost related to the use of lethal force.

Law enforcement officers can only use life threatening force when responding to a threat or use of deadly force. Win had a pair of scissors and Faisal had a knife. Would holding a knife or a pair of scissors in the presence of police officers armed with high calibre weapons count as using deadly force? What relative capacity of harm do these weapons possess compared to a gun used by a trained police officer with far more capacity for harm and damage? Knife is considered to be a weapon of deadly force under the twenty-one-foot rule which posits that the holder of a knife can cover a distance of 21 feet in the time it takes to fire two shots. All such minute technicalities and rules stand in favour of the police officer who decides to use force. Did Win’s and Faisal’s reaction triggered through unaddressed mental health issues constitute grave danger for the police? Did the victims substantially provoke police’s use of lethal force?

Pointing a weapon or something that reasonably looks like a weapon is seen as one of the most common triggers for the police to use their firearm. One detail about police misconduct is important to note: any police misconduct is counted as a single act of applying deadly force—if the first shot from the police’s gun is seen as justified, then that covers all subsequent shots and use of force and justifies any additional aggression. Liam McMahon shot Faisal a total of six times—and regardless of how many times the police would shoot, if the first shot is concluded as a justified shot, so are all the shots, even

**Bringing a criminal charge resulting in an ultimate criminal conviction in cases of police killings is an uphill battle—with bottlenecks on every step of the legal system that confirm systemic bias and provide broad impunity to the police.**

though death rate is much higher in cases where multiple shots are fired. Number of gunshots has a predictive value for death. Therefore, there is no disincentive for the police officer to use additional force or shoot additional times that lead to deaths.

Recent innovations in monitoring police conduct are only making incremental and

gradual changes. In my conversation with Tanvir Chowdhury, President of Bangladesh Association of New England, he mentioned how pleading for justice for Faisal pushed the Cambridge police to improve their policies, wear body cameras and led the city to consider alternate social service for emergency response. Regardless of minor innovations, issues of poor governance remain unaddressed, and the police continue to have major control over visual evidence. Public who film violence also put themselves at risk of being subjected to police misconduct—ultimately undermining non-police public witness narrative.

According to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics, the main reasons for the police wearing body cameras is to improve officer safety and reduce liability of police departments. However, small scale experimental studies have shown that the use of body cameras has the potential to improve police conduct. Video evidence has been pivotal for garnering public reaction, but it does not guarantee ease in bringing criminal charges or prosecution. Evidence would also not weigh in as much in instances where there are irregularities in disclosure. The bone chilling last moment of Win’s life is recorded, the public can hear his mother repeatedly pleading to the police not to shoot her son. It is yet to be seen how public reaction and the video evidence of violence shapes the investigation and verdict in Win’s case, but it has the potential to boost and prolong the campaign for justice. It was only in 2020 that Section 50-a of New York City’s Civil Rights Law, which kept disciplinary records of police officers hidden from the public, was repealed after almost a decade-long fight. Any change is hard-won. While the avenue for criminal prosecution might be exhausted with the ruling in Faisal’s case, Tanvir sees possibilities in civil litigation. The way Faisal was portrayed in the media in the aftermath of his undue death, caused his family severe distress. It is critical to pursue justice in the face of this gridlock to continue to honour and humanise our people.

Should the police be left out of the public safety plan then? Officers receiving training in de-escalation are quick to resort to lethal force, would calling the police for help entail an inevitable deadly outcome? Police violence, brushed off as a non-issue for the Asian and Bangladeshi community in America, has hit hard and hit home this time. For now, the only promise of change can be found in Win’s and Faisal’s families and communities that continue to fight for justice.