

# The West agonises over an ‘atrocities upsurge’ while backing Israel’s genocide in Gaza

The problem isn’t ‘global inaction’. It’s intense US and UK support

by Jonathan Cook,\* Israel



Jonathan Cook.  
(Photo ma)

*How do politicians, diplomats, the media and even the human rights community keep us politically ignorant, docile and passive – a collective mindset that prevents us from challenging their power as well as the status quo they benefit from?*

The answer: By constantly misrepresenting reality to us and their own role in shaping it. And they do it so successfully because, at the same time, they gaslight us by flaunting the pretence that they crave to make the world a better place – a better place where, in truth, the unspoken danger is that, were it to be realised, their own power would be severely diminished.

A perfect illustration of how this grand deception works was provided in a report at the weekend in the supposedly progressive Guardian newspaper, *headlined*<sup>1</sup> “World faces ‘heightened risk’ of mass atrocities due to global inaction”.

The opening paragraph reports that human rights activists fear the “international community has given up on intervention efforts to stop mass atrocities, leading to fears that such occurrences may become the norm around the world”.

In practice, this “failure”, according to the report, has manifested in an abandonment by western states of the principle of R2P – or “responsibility to protect”. This principle and related “humanitarian” pretexts were used to justify the US and its allies meddling since the

1990s variously in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, with disastrous consequences.

Millions were killed as a result of R2P-type interventions and tens of millions displaced, leading to mass movements of people that are seen today by western states in terms of an “illegal immigration threat”.

## Sustained massacre

The context for the human rights community’s concerns, we are told, are growing abuses of the Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Both were adopted in the immediate wake of the second world war to prevent a repeat of the Nazi holocaust and widespread atrocities committed against civilians on both sides of the fighting.

One might have assumed, at this point, that such fears have been heightened – resulting in their being raised at the United Nations – by the most egregious genocide of modern times: the sustained massacre over two months of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the wanton destruction of the vast majority of their homes to drive the survivors out of Gaza and into Egypt.

At least 17,000 Palestinians are known to have been killed by Israel so far, most of them women and children. More than 100,000 homes have been made uninhabitable. Some 2.3 million Palestinians have been herded into a tiny, ever shrinking space, close to the border with Egypt, denied water, food, and fuel.

This combined act of genocide and ethnic cleansing is the most intense, visible and industrial – using the very latest and most powerful weaponry available – in living memory.

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But extraordinarily, that does not appear to be the central concern of the “international community”. According to the *Guardian*, the following are the global crises primarily driving a steep rise in atrocities:

“The mass killing of civilians in Syria and Ukraine, and the internment of over a million Uyghurs and other Muslims in China, have been followed by war crimes in Ethiopia, and a resumption of ethnic cleansing in Sudan’s Darfur province, 20 years after the start of the genocide there.”

Notice anything significant about this list? It comprises only mass atrocities being committed by those not firmly within the US imperial sphere of subservience.

The mass slaughter of civilians in Gaza, which has been in the headlines for many weeks, cannot be credibly overlooked. So it is mentioned – but notice how the spotlight is sharply directed away from the present, highly pertinent events in Israel and Palestine. The genocide in Gaza, which has driven many millions of protesters on to the streets across Europe and North America, becomes an afterthought:

“The 7 October Hamas killing of 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, and the consequent Israeli invasion of Gaza, in which women and children have accounted for most of the estimated 16,000 dead, have added to the bloody chaos.”

### **Manifold deceptions**

The deception here is manifold, and not just because Gaza ought to be top of the list of concerns, not at the bottom.

The formulaic framing in this paragraph is designed – as ever in western reporting – to create a false equivalence between Hamas’ actions and Israel’s, and engender a sense that Israel’s mass slaughter of Palestinians is caused, and excused, by Hamas’ preceding mass slaughter of Israelis.

It should hardly need restating that Hamas’ breakout of the prison that is Gaza – and its predictably dire consequences – was preceded by decades of Israeli military abuses of Palestinians under military occupation and an illegal 16-year siege of their territory depriving more than 2 million people of their freedom, basic rights and dignity.

There has been a constant, slow-motion atrocity in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem for decades – long before the human rights community, the UN and the *Guardian* raised their new concerns about “a heightened risk of atrocity crimes”.

There is, too, a clear difference between the exceptional, one-off violence Hamas was able to wreak on October 7 because of dramatic and unexpected failures in Israel’s surveillance and control of the Palestinian population in Gaza and Israel’s intensification of the structural violence of a decades-long occupation and siege.

These, all too obviously, are not the same things – and they do not pose even vaguely comparable threats to the status of the Genocide Convention and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

To suggest otherwise – as all western reporting does constantly – is to exaggerate the threat posed to international law by the atrocities committed by Hamas and dramatically underplay the significance of Israel’s genocide and ethnic cleansing.

### **Weapons testing lab**

But there is a far deeper problem with the framing of these concerns. The critical problem is not “global inaction” over mass atrocities. It is the opposite: intense western – chiefly US – support for, and complicity in, such atrocities.

This problem is highlighted only too clearly by events in Gaza. Which is precisely why it is included reluctantly, and only as an afterthought, in the list of threats to international humanitarian law. The US is not helpless in the unfolding genocide. It is actively facilitating it. In fact, Israel’s genocide and ethnic cleansing would be impossible without not just US collusion but active participation.

The mass slaughter of civilians in Gaza is occurring because the US has supplied many of the heavy-duty bombs razing Gaza’s high-rises and killing its children. The slaughter is occurring because the US has sent warships to the region to intimidate neighbouring Arab states and militant groups into remaining quiet as Gaza’s civilians are murdered.

Lebanon’s Hezbollah, for example, is quite capable of ending “global inaction”, by engaging Israel militarily and drawing Israeli firepower away from Gaza. But no one in the “international community” presumably wants that kind of “action”.

The mass slaughter in Gaza is occurring because the US used its veto at the UN Security Council last Friday [8 December] to block a ceasefire. It is occurring because the US has funded the Iron Dome missile interception system that stops Hamas being able to fire rockets on Israeli communities – mirroring on a tiny scale

Israel's destruction in Gaza – to raise the political pressure in Israel for a ceasefire.

The slaughter is occurring because Washington has for decades propped up Israel's military with the bulk of the US overseas aid budget, and let Israel use the Palestinian territories as a profitable *laboratory for testing new weapons systems*,<sup>2</sup> surveillance techniques and cyber technology.

### **Peace talks blocked**

The problem here is most definitely not “inaction”. It is that the US picks and chooses when and how it wants to be active in creating, sustaining and ending conflicts around the globe.

Noticeably absent from the list of concerns about the spread of atrocities is the suffering of Yemen, where Saudi Arabia has been waging a genocidal war for years. On average, *four Yemeni children*<sup>3</sup> have been killed or maimed each day over the past eight years by Saudi atrocities.

Why is Yemen overlooked? Because factions there are seen as allies of Iran and therefore enemies of the West whose lives count for nothing. Because Riyadh is a critically important US ally and supplier of oil. And because the US and Britain have been arming the Saudis to the hilt to commit the genocide there.

Similarly, in Ukraine. The vast majority of the casualties on both sides of the fighting might have been avoided if peace talks had not been *blocked*<sup>4</sup> by the US and Britain in the first weeks after Russia's invasion.

It was that “action” and others – such as the *threatening expansion of Nato*<sup>5</sup> to Russia's borders and the West's flooding of Ukraine with weapons on the false promise that Nato would have Kyiv's back – that ensured nearly two years of war and its tragic death toll.

As with Gaza, the problem has not been inaction, it's been far too much action from the US and its lapdogs in Europe of the very kind designed to assist in slaughter and genocides.

### **'You must obey'**

There is, however, a reason why the “international community” is raising concerns about “atrocious crimes” now, while downplaying or denying the worst possible atrocity crime – genocide – in Gaza.

And that is because Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7 signifies a dangerous moment for western domination of the so-called “global, rules-based order”. The concern is not really

about a rise in mass atrocities. The West is just fine with atrocities when it commits them or it helps others carry them out.

It is about the West's increasing difficulty of keeping the rest of the world weak, intimidated and subdued through the use of its own atrocities. US military failures in Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine – and the growing self-assurance of Russia and China – are marking out new limits to Washington's supremacy.

The truth is that Hamas' attack on Israel – horrific as its consequences were – served as a signpost to a different future for many of those who have lived for decades under the thumb, or more often the boot, of the US and its allies. They see that it is possible, even as an oppressed, weak, abused party, to give the bullying global hegemon and its sidekicks a bloody nose.

What is seen by privileged, complacent westerners purely in terms of senseless, barbaric violence is understood by others as a slave revolt – as an “I am Spartacus” moment.

Which is why, just as happened after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, so much of the rest of the world is failing to join the West in its self-righteous chorus of outrage and condemnation. They view these professions of indignation as pure hypocrisy.

It is the reason, too, why the US is being so indulgent as Israel goes about its genocidal rampage in Gaza. The importance for Washington is not stopping Israel's atrocities but making sure Israel reasserts its famed “deterrence” to provide a lesson to those who might be inspired to wage their own slave revolt.

In front of the cameras, the Biden administration is calling for restraint and urging Israel to minimise civilian casualties. But behind the scenes, it is carefully calibrating just how much savagery Israel needs to unleash to send the right message to the non-Western world: You cannot win. You must obey.

Source: <https://www.declassifieduk.org/the-west-agonises-over-an-atrocity-upsurge-while-backing-israels-genocide-in-gaza/>, 11 December 2023

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2023/dec/08/un-and-us-efforts-to-stop-mass-atrocities-have-waned-activists-warn>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/11/17/israels-weapons-industry-is-the-gaza-war-its-latest-test-lab>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/more-than-11000-children-killed-or-injured-in-yemen-unicef/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/ukraine-russia-talks/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/russia-ukraine-us-invasion-paved-how>