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Webinar- Combatting the Genocide in Rafah: Global Reaction and Pursuing Justice

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) organised a webinar on Monday, February 19, focusing on the pressing topic, [“Combatting the Genocide in Rafah: Global Reaction and Pursuing Justice.”](#) The event shed light on the escalation of the Israeli attacks on what has become the last sanctuary for displaced Palestinians in Rafah, close to the Egyptian border. These attacks mark a continuation of the genocidal policy against Palestinians, persisting amidst international neglect and inaction.

The webinar moderated by activist Insiya Raja, featured a panel of esteemed speakers; Dr. Ahmed Elsayed, member of medical delegation to Gaza, Bill Law editor of Arab Digest and former MENA analyst for the BBC, Richard Boyd Barrett, Member of the Irish Parliament; Prof David Miller – British Academic and Sociologist; Edward Ahmed Mitchell, National Deputy Executive Director of CAIR; Patson Malisa –SA Diplomat and Development Executive; Abed Ayoub- Executive Director of ADC; Dr. Cengiz Tomar- Prof of Political Science and International Relations.

Dr. Ahmad Elsayed, an Egyptian doctor who spent two weeks working at the European Hospital in Khan Younis, Gaza, shared his harrowing experiences during a webinar. He vividly described the relentless violence and suffering civilians endure in Gaza, emphasising the continuous bombardment and the omnipresent threat posed by drones equipped with facial recognition technology. Dr. Elsayed and his team,



consisting of 21 members and representing the largest medical delegation allowed into Gaza since the war began, treated exclusively civilian casualties. He reported not encountering a single military casualty among the people they aided.

The injuries Dr. Elsayed described were severe and often life-altering, including chest wounds penetrating the heart, limbs lost or severely damaged by rocket fire or bullets, and cases of young individuals rendered quadriplegic. He recounted the specific plight of a 10-year-old named Ghazal, who suffered a spinal injury from a bullet, and other victims who sustained bullets aimed with lethal intent, targeting vital areas of the body. Dr. Elsayed highlighted the indiscriminate nature of the violence, noting that victims included children, women, and men, all civilians without distinction.

Dr. Elsayed also spoke of a three-year-old child wounded by a bullet that travelled from top to bottom of the body, a 30-year-old woman with a transversal bullet wound, young men who were helping feed people on the streets, and a 13-year-old child with a shattered chest wall, among others. Dr. Elsayed emphasised the targeted and intentional nature of the attacks on civilians, underscoring the dire situation in Gaza.

Bill Law, speaking as the Editor of Arab Digest and an analyst, reflected on the future implications of the war, emphasising the inevitability of accountability for both Washington's unwavering support for the Israeli genocide.

Law pointed out that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) would play a crucial role in pursuing a significant case against Israel, a process he believed would garner global attention.

Focusing his critique on the leaders of the Arab states rather than their populations, Law highlighted universal support for the Palestinians among Arab citizens, contrasting this with the disappointing stance of their governments. He specifically criticized major Arab nations like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt, for their actions that indirectly facilitated the Netanyahu regime's objectives. Law



argued that a stronger response from these countries, such as diplomatic withdrawals similar to those made by Turkey and Jordan, could have potentially altered the course of events.

Law commended Qatar for its role and relayed a poignant question raised by the Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary at the Munich Security Conference regarding the Arab states' responsibility towards the Palestinians. He stressed the necessity of examining the strategic decisions and hypocrisies of Western powers, while also calling for Arab states to leverage their economic and diplomatic influence against the Israeli regime. Law expressed frustration over the lack of strong denunciations and impactful actions from Arab leadership against the actions of Israel in Gaza and the West Bank, where he noted over 300 people had been killed by the Israeli Forces and settler vigilantes, explicitly mentioning the arming by Itamar Ben-Gvir, the national security minister.

Patson Malisa, a diplomat and development executive, emphasised the unequivocal condemnation of any attack strategy targeting civilian communities, their habitats, essentials, facilities, refugee assembly points, and the disconnection of humanitarian relief.

Malisa underscored the danger of reducing the franchise and humanity of people, a tactic employed in genocides such as the Rwandan genocide of 1994, where Tutsis were dehumanised, likening this rhetoric to the situation faced by Palestinians.

He called for a reassertion of the value of Palestinian civilians, emphasising their right to an official standing in the world, including freedoms of expression, movement, and settlement.



Richard Boyd Barrett, an Irish member of parliament, delivered a speech addressing the situation in Gaza, asserting that Israel's actions towards Gaza, particularly in Rafah, represent a regime out of control, with no place in the civilized world. He criticized the pretext of self-defence used by Israel following the events of October 7th, arguing instead that these actions are part of a genocidal agenda aimed at destroying Palestinian society and nationhood. **Barrett** highlighted that the violence is an extension of a campaign of ethnic cleansing beginning in 1948, involving decades of occupation, apartheid, and a prolonged siege of Gaza, all constituting crimes against humanity.

Barrett condemned the support provided to Israel by Western regimes, especially through the provision of weapons and favoured trade statuses, suggesting that such support enables the ongoing genocide against Palestinians. He lamented the missed opportunity for intervention by the Western world, which could have imposed sanctions on Israel in response to pleas from Palestinians and international human rights organizations.

The speech criticised the double standards of the Western world, particularly in its swift actions against Putin's invasion of Ukraine while failing to address Israel's assault on Gaza. **Barrett** praised the public mobilisation in Ireland against Israel's actions, noting its significant pressure on the Irish government to shift its stance from justifying Israel's self-defence to calling for a ceasefire and considering sanctions against Israel.

Highlighting the influence of public protest, **Barrett** mentioned the Irish government's reconsideration of the EU Mediterranean Association Agreement with Israel and the labelling of Israel as a rogue state. He emphasized the growing demand in Ireland for not engaging with U.S. President Biden due to his support for Israel, reflecting on the historical impact of public action against apartheid in South Africa as a model for addressing the situation in Israel and Palestine.



Barrett concluded by advocating for the power of public mobilisation to compel government action against apartheid and colonialism, drawing parallels between the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and the current efforts to support a free Palestine. He called for a dismantling of the apartheid colonialist regime in Israel, envisioning a future where individuals of all religions can live as equals, free from oppression.

David Miller, an academic, discussed his wrongful dismissal case, which concluded with the recognition that his anti-Zionist views are protected under the Equality Act in British law. He emphasised this as a defence for anyone in the UK facing employer retaliation for anti-Zionism or pro-Palestinian activities. Miller criticised the genocide in Gaza and the collaboration of Western and Arab states with it. His focus was on his work for the show "Palestine Declassified" on Press TV, examining UK and US government complicity, including British spy flights over Gaza and Israeli military training in the UK, and the broader complicity of the Zionist movement globally.

Miller detailed how charities in the UK and the US, such as the UK Friends of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel Soldiers, send money directly to the Israeli Army, funding amenities like swimming pools in the Nakab desert, contrasting sharply with the lack of basic necessities for children in Gaza. He criticised the UK's charity laws for allowing such actions under the guise of public benefit, despite the harm caused, and highlighted ongoing investigations into these charities by the Charity Commission.

He revealed research into charities funding the Israeli Army, naming the Levy family and others as significant contributors, including British citizens joining the Israeli Army and potentially participating in genocide in Gaza. Miller called attention to the need for legal actions in various countries to address the involvement of their citizens in these activities.



Miller also mentioned prominent Zionist families, like the Wolfson family, known for philanthropy but also for funding the occupation of Palestine, and Gerald Ronson, who runs a network of service stations, and the Community Security Trust, an organisation implicated in accusations against him and others. He concluded by emphasising the importance of targeting Zionist organisations globally as part of Palestinian solidarity efforts, in addition to focusing on the situation in occupied Palestine.

Edward Ahmed Mitchell- National Deputy Executive Director of CAIR, discussed the council's focus on combating anti-Muslim bigotry and advocating for justice causes, including Palestine. He criticised the Biden administration's policy towards what is happening in Palestine, predicting its failure to bring peace without establishing a Palestinian state. Mitchell highlighted the recent violence as part of a genocidal assault and emphasised CAIR's efforts to end the genocide against Palestinians and combat discrimination against Palestinian Americans and Muslims in the U.S.

CAIR's efforts also include lobbying, protesting, and legal action to advocate for Palestinian rights and pressure the U.S. government to halt its support for the ongoing genocide.

He detailed the backlash against Americans advocating for Palestinian rights and facing bigotry, hate, and censorship. Despite these challenges, Mitchell noted some progress, with more members of Congress calling for a ceasefire and a federal court acknowledging the genocide in Palestine. However, he expressed frustration with the Biden administration's continued support for Israel without condemning its actions in Gaza.

Mitchell remained hopeful for an end to the violence, stressing the need for a significant shift in American policy to stop Netanyahu's government. He mentioned the broad support among Americans, especially young people, for a ceasefire and opposition to U.S. funding of the genocide, predicting a future change in American policy towards Israel and Palestine.



Cengiz Tomar, a professor of political science and international relations from Turkiye, shared insights on the situation in Gaza and Rafah, expressing concern over the effectiveness of some Arab governments in assisting these areas. He noted the efforts by Turkey and other countries to submit evidence to the International Court of Justice regarding Israel's actions, highlighting Israel's disregard for international opinion unless it comes from the U.S. Tomar criticised the double standards of Western governments, which impose sanctions on Russia and Iran but not on Israel, despite its ongoing genocide that has resulted in over 20,000 innocent deaths, massive displacement, and severe shortages of essentials in Gaza.

He described the situation as dire, with people in Gaza facing uncertain fates amid the destruction. Despite the challenges in delivering aid, Tomar mentioned the efforts within Turkey, including academic and NGO initiatives, to provide support and mentioned discussions with the President of the Turkish Red Crescent about readiness to help Gaza. He also spoke about Turkey's attempts to improve relations with Egypt as a potential route to increase aid to Gaza, noting that over 700 injured individuals are currently being treated in Turkish hospitals.

Tomar emphasised the global responsibility to pressure the United States for policy change and the importance of sanctions against those supporting Israel's genocidal policies. He highlighted successful boycotts in Turkey against companies that support Israel. Tomar's remarks reflected a call for more concerted international efforts to address the crisis in Gaza and Rafah, urging greater pressure on the U.S. and broader international action to halt the genocide and support the Palestinian people.

Abed Ayoub, the Executive Director of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), emphasised the grave situation in Palestine and the need for global attention and action. He highlighted the the the ADC's long-standing commitment to Palestinian issues and the increased resources and efforts dedicated in light of the recent severe events since October. Ayoub pointed out the alarming developments in the region, including bombings in Lebanon and escalating tensions, suggesting a potential expansion into a regional war. He stressed the pivotal role of the US and the



Biden administration in potentially halting the violence with decisive actions and pressure on Israel for an immediate ceasefire, allowing humanitarian aid access.

Ayoub questioned the nature of any proposed ceasefire by the US, expressing concern over temporary measures that fail to address the root causes of the conflict. He noted the effectiveness of public pressure, boycott movements, and the importance of continuing to voice support for Palestinian rights despite censorship efforts on social media and attempts to silence critics of Israel and Zionism. Ayoub underscored the crucial upcoming days and weeks, hinting at political implications for the Biden administration and the necessity of distinguishing humanitarian motives from electoral politics in supporting a ceasefire.

Highlighting the risk of a forced transfer of populations from Rafah into Egypt as unprecedented and a major concern, Ayoub called for global preparedness and organisation to address the aftermath and continue supporting Palestinian rights. He expressed appreciation for global solidarity efforts and the importance of collective action to address the crisis in Palestine.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK