

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



Date: 24/04/2024

Webinar-200 Days of Genocide in Gaza: A Continuing Catastrophe

On Monday, April 22, 2024, Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) hosted a significant webinar titled "[200 Days of Genocide in Gaza: A Continuing Catastrophe,](#)" expertly moderated by Insiya Raja, an advocacy associate and researcher. The event addressed the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza resulting from the blockade by the Israeli occupation and the ongoing mass killings of civilians, shedding light on the serious human rights violations against Palestinian prisoners, particularly those arrested in Gaza since the beginning of the war on October 7.

The webinar featured a distinguished panel of speakers from diverse backgrounds and fields of expertise, including Richard Falk, an American professor, activist, and human rights defender; Ibbo Mandaza, a Zimbabwean academic, author, and advisory council member at FPRI; Craig Murray, a British former diplomat, Jeff Halper, an American/Israeli anthropologist,

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



author, and political activist; Dr. David Monyae, Co-Director of the UJCI and an expert in international relations and foreign policy; Ken Roth, an American attorney and human rights activist; Naomi Barasa, a Kenyan social justice activist; Cyprian Nyamwamu, Executive Director of the Future of Kenya Foundation; Riccardo Bocco, an author and Emeritus Professor of Political Sociology at the Geneva Graduate Institute; Oroub El-Abed, Lead Researcher in Jordan and co-investigator at the Centre for Lebanese Studies; Yaw Nsarkoh, a Ghanaian author and political scientist; and Eliette Choi, an organiser with Columbia University Apartheid Divest. Each brought unique perspectives and insights into the dire situation in Gaza, contributing to a rich and informative discussion.

Dr. David Monyae, the Co-Director of the UJCI and an expert in International Relations and Foreign Policy, reflected deeply on the ongoing crisis in Gaza. Speaking from his perspective in South Africa, Dr. Monyae drew parallels between the current events in Gaza and the dark times of apartheid in South Africa. As the war has reached its 200th day, he emphasised the severe impact on the Gazan population, including the displacement of families, massive killings, and the distressing statistic that over 33,000 individuals have been killed.

Dr. Monyae highlighted the widespread displacement and atrocities committed in Gaza, which he believes should prompt the global community

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



to reconsider the broader implications of the situation. According to him, the crisis transcends being a localised conflict and has significant repercussions for the Middle East and the world at large. He pointed out that the issues at hand are closely tied to the effectiveness of global governance institutions and their influence on international humanitarian law, human rights, and democracy.

Furthermore, Dr. Monyae stressed the urgent need for the international community to reflect on the positive changes observed since the end of apartheid, such as the resurgence of global solidarity movements. He strongly asserted that the atrocities committed by Israelis against Palestinians must cease immediately. His commentary shed light on the profound questions facing the global community concerning the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Craig Murray, a British former diplomat, has expressed grave concerns about what he perceives as a crisis in Western democracy, deeply linked to the genocide in Gaza. Murray underscored the contrast between public opinion and political actions, noting that despite a significant majority of the UK population opposing the Israeli government's actions in Gaza, major political parties continue to support Israel and its policies.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



He criticised the lack of real democratic choice, highlighting that both major parties in the UK and major candidates in the US are aligned with Zionist policies, leaving voters without genuine options that reflect their views. Murray pointed out that this issue extends beyond Gaza, as it also affects domestic policies like the privatization of essential services.

Addressing the situation in Gaza, Murray emphasised the disproportionate impact on children as a clear indicator of genocide. He compared it to other conflicts, noting that the high percentage of child casualties in Gaza starkly contrasts with global norms for wartime casualties, further proving that the situation in Gaza is not a war but a genocide. This stark reality, he argued, highlights the broader crisis of representation and policy alignment in Western democracies.

Ken Roth, an American attorney and human rights activist, discussed the nature of the war crimes and genocide in Gaza, emphasising the international response to the situation in Gaza. Roth critiqued the Israeli military's claims of avoiding civilian targets, pointing out the challenges in verifying such assertions due to restrictions on journalists and human rights defenders in the area.

He provided examples where Israeli forces have deliberately destroyed civilian structures, such as universities and large residential buildings, which,

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



according to Roth, are aimed not at military objectives but at demoralising Palestinian civil society. Such actions, he argued, constitute war crimes under international humanitarian law, which strictly prohibits attacks on civilian infrastructure solely to demoralise a population.

Roth also highlighted a specific incident involving the attack on World Central Kitchen staff, which resulted in the deaths of several workers, including internationals. This incident, he suggested, reveals the problematic rules of engagement followed by Israeli forces, where mere suspicion or minimal evidence, such as a fleeting glimpse of a possible gunman, can justify significant military actions against civilian targets. This, Roth indicated, raises serious concerns about the proportionality and discrimination of the Israeli military's engagement tactics.

In his speech, Ibbo Mandaza, a Zimbabwean academic and member of the advisory council at FPRI, articulated his concerns and actions regarding the situation in Gaza. He explained that his organisation has been actively highlighting the tragedy in Gaza since October 7th, utilising various platforms including seminars to discuss how to stop the ongoing genocide and end the occupation.

Mandaza emphasised the crucial role of social media and outlets like Al Jazeera in broadcasting the events in Gaza to a global audience. He pointed

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



out that while public opinion in the West generally supports the Palestinian cause, Western governments, particularly those of the USA, the UK, and the broader EU, continue to support Israel. This discrepancy is evident, Mandaza noted, in the large demonstrations supporting Palestine in cities like London and New York, which illustrate the division between the Western public and their governments.

Discussing the broader implications of the recent events, Mandaza highlighted the significant shift in global awareness towards the Palestinian issue. He believes that the last six months have marked a historical turning point, potentially altering the trajectory toward resolving the Palestinian question. This change has been catalyzed by the severe actions in Gaza, which he described as the worst genocide in recent history. Mandaza concluded by underscoring the importance of the African government's initiative to bring the issue before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), reflecting a proactive step towards addressing the crisis.

Eliette Choi, an organiser with Columbia University Apartheid Divest, addressed the widespread global reaction to the situation in Gaza, emphasising the consensus that it constitutes genocide, apartheid, settler colonialism, and occupation. Speaking about the response in the United States, especially across college campuses, Choi highlighted the significant pushback against

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



these oppressive policies, both globally and within the most controversial administrations and governments, including Israel.

Choi pointed out the internal disunity and lack of integrity within these administrations, noting that even within states known for their hardline stances, there are emerging calls for change. Choi specifically mentioned the arrest of over 100 students at the behest of Nemat Shafiq, the president of their university, illustrating the pressure and confusion faced by institutional leaders in response to the protests.

Choi called for a unified effort from students, professors, and professionals across various sectors to use their positions to focus attention on Gaza and exert pressure on those in power. Choi's speech underscored the mobilisation of a broad coalition to advocate for justice and policy changes regarding the situation in Gaza.

Oroub El-Abed, Lead Researcher in Jordan and co-investigator at the Centre for Lebanese Studies, addressed the ongoing issues in historical Palestine. She explained that over the past 76 years, Israeli policies aimed at displacing Palestinians have involved the systematic destruction of villages, psychological warfare, and the undermining of economic infrastructures. El-Abed highlighted the continuity of what she termed the "Zionist policy of

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



Transfair," which she described as an ethnic cleansing strategy that has persisted since 1948.

According to El-Abed, recent events demonstrate the same patterns of violence observed in historical records, including severe acts such as beheadings and other atrocities aimed at deterring survival and communication by targeting medical and media personnel. This ongoing situation, she asserted, represents a concerted effort to prevent the Palestinian people from receiving necessary care and suppress any reporting on the ground that could reveal the extent of the actions against them.

Richard Falk, an American professor, activist, and human rights defender, contributed further by contextualizing the situation as "the most transparent genocide in all history," visible to the global community in real-time through various media. Unlike past genocides, which were only reconstructed after the fact, the current situation allows for immediate worldwide witness to the atrocities.

Falk elaborated that this genocide is not merely motivated by dehumanization or hatred, as seen in historical examples like the Holocaust, but is strategically aligned with the Zionist project to clear historic Palestine of its native population. He tied this strategy directly to the policies of Netanyahu's coalition government, which he claims seeks to fulfill the Zionist objective of

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



establishing Greater Israel. This includes exploiting new economic opportunities such as oil and gas discoveries off Gaza's coast and strategic projects like the proposed Ben Gurion Canal, which would serve as an alternative to the Suez Canal, thus reshaping the geopolitical importance of Gaza in Israeli policy.

Yaw Nsarkoh, a Ghanaian author and political scientist, offered his perspective on the ongoing geopolitical discourse surrounding issues like the situation of what is happening by the Israeli forces against Palestinian people. Nsarkoh emphasised the importance of recognising the broader dynamics of hegemony that influence these conflicts. He argued that while the discussions often focus on potential resolutions like the two-state or one-state solutions, the underlying issue is the pervasive influence of hegemonic power, particularly since 1945, which uses all available means to pursue its agenda.

According to Nsarkoh, this drive for hegemony is not merely about empire-building but follows a logic where capital seeks domination, as noted by historian Walter Rodney. This pursuit inevitably leads to the expansion of empire. Nsarkoh stressed the need to understand these structural forces within the context of an interstate power struggle for global domination and wealth. He suggested that without acknowledging and addressing these deeper causes, discussions might rotate around the same themes without addressing the root causes of the issues.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



Naomi Barasa, a Kenyan social justice activist, spoke poignantly about the strategic use of water by Israel in its war against the Palestinians, highlighting this as a significant human rights issue. In her discussion, she described how the Israeli government has systematically used water as a weapon of war and oppression, particularly noting the severe restrictions placed on Palestinian access to water.

Barasa detailed how, from the onset of the occupation, Palestinians have been subjected to extreme water scarcity, with their daily water access severely limited, a situation she identified as a clear human rights violation. She elaborated that this scarcity has worsened over time, evolving into a complete denial of water access. According to Barasa, the strategy employed by the Israeli government includes reducing the quantity and quality of water available to Palestinians, blocking their access to clean and safe drinking water, contaminating the water sources they do have, and diverting significant water bodies like the River Jordan and the Red Sea.

She argued that these actions are part of a systematic and targeted approach to exterminate the Palestinian community as part of an ethnic cleansing agenda. Barasa stressed that this use of water as a tool of oppression is indicative of apartheid, colonisation, and genocide, underscoring the severity of the situation and its implications for Palestinian rights and survival.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



Cyprian Nyamwamu, Executive Director at the Future of Kenya Foundation, addressed the ongoing situation in Palestine, marking it as a crucial moment to advocate for significant global reforms. Speaking on the 200th day of the genocide, Nyamwamu highlighted the influence of powerful nations such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom within the United Nations Security Council, criticising their role in supporting the Zionist project with apparent impunity.

Nyamwamu asserted that for long-term solutions to the crisis in Palestine to be feasible, there must be a serious discussion on reforming the United Nations Security Council. He argued that the control exerted by these nations over the Security Council and, by extension, international institutions like the International Court of Justice (ICJ), underpins their ability to support such actions without facing consequences.

He called for a global effort to challenge and potentially dismantle the current structure of the United Nations Security Council, which he believes legitimizes and facilitates the ongoing support for the genocide. Nyamwamu's call to action was clear: to address the power dynamics within the Security Council as a necessary step towards justice for Palestine.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



Riccardo Bocco, Emeritus Professor of Political Sociology at the Geneva Graduate Institute, discussed the findings of two critical reports released by independent commissions concerning the actions of UN staff in Gaza. Bocco highlighted the significance of these reports amid allegations from Israeli authorities that around 3,000 Palestinian staff in Gaza are affiliated with Hamas. He noted that the reports, one led by Catherine Colonna, a former French minister, and the other by three Scandinavian institutes (Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish), have cleared the accused staff of these allegations, stating that Israel has not substantiated its claims.

Bocco then connected these findings to broader issues of misinformation and the treatment of Palestinians, criticising the ongoing narrative propagated by Israeli authorities. He mentioned specific instances where the Israeli Forces were found to spread false information, including during the October 7th attack where claims about beheaded children were later retracted by the Israeli army itself.

He also touched upon the symbolic and practical significance of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) in affirming Palestinian identity and rights, referencing UN Resolution 194 regarding the right of Palestinians to return or be compensated, which has not been implemented. Bocco expressed concern over the financial and reputational cost of defending against what he termed Israeli propaganda, questioning why the international

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



community should bear these costs when they stem from what he sees as defamation.

In concluding his address, Bocco called for accountability, suggesting that those disseminating false information should face legal consequences and bear the costs of misleading public opinion, reinforcing the need for factual integrity in international relations and conflict/war reporting.

Jeff Halper, an American-Israeli anthropologist and political activist, spoke on the persistence of the Israeli genocidal campaign in Gaza, now ongoing for over 200 days. Halper criticised the Israeli government's continued actions in Gaza, particularly the planned invasion of Rafa, highlighting a lack of strategic or political purpose behind these actions and noting the failure of the objectives, such as the destruction of Hamas and the rescue of hostages.

He emphasised that the broader international community, including the United States and Europe, while not opposing Israel's military actions, prefers these to be conducted with minimal Palestinian casualties. Halper sarcastically mentioned the impossibility of relocating over a million Palestinians to a "safe place" like Kansas, underscoring the absurdity of the situation.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK

المنظمة العربية لحقوق الإنسان في بريطانيا



Furthermore, Halper contextualised the crisis in Gaza within the larger historical and ongoing settler-colonial framework in Palestine, starting from 1947-1948 with the Nakba. He explained that genocide is an inherent part of the settler-colonial process, which involves the displacement of the indigenous population and the transformation of an Arab country into a Jewish state. Halper concluded by stressing the importance of not losing focus on the West Bank, which he considers politically more significant for Israel than Gaza.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK