

Arab Complicity in Israel's Genocide

Arab failure in Palestine goes beyond disunity or incompetence, writes Ramzy Baroud. It reflects a much more cynical reality.

By **Ramzy Baroud**

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Explaining Arab political failure to challenge Israel through traditional analysis — such as disunity, general weakness and a failure to prioritize Palestine — does not capture the full picture.

The idea that Israel is brutalizing Palestinians simply because the Arabs are too weak to challenge the Benjamin Netanyahu government — or any government — implies that, in theory, Arab regimes could unite around Palestine. However, this view oversimplifies the matter.

Many well-meaning, pro-Palestine commentators have long urged Arab nations to unite, pressure Washington to reassess its unwavering support for Israel and take decisive actions to lift the siege on Gaza, among other crucial steps.

While these steps may hold some value, the reality is far more complex, and such wishful thinking is unlikely to change the behavior of Arab governments. These regimes are more concerned with sustaining or returning to some form of status quo — one in which Palestine's liberation remains a secondary priority.

Since the start of the Israeli genocide in Gaza on Oct. 7, 2023, the Arab position on Israel has been weak at best, and treasonous at worst.

Some Arab governments even went so far as to condemn Palestinian resistance in United Nations debates. While countries like China and Russia at least attempted to contextualize the Oct. 7 Hamas assault on Israeli occupation forces imposing a brutal siege on Gaza, countries like Bahrain placed the blame squarely on the Palestinians.

With a few exceptions, it took Arab governments weeks — or even months — to develop a relatively strong stance that condemned the Israeli offensive in any meaningful terms.

Though the rhetoric began to shift slowly, the actions did not follow. While the Ansarallah movement in Yemen, alongside other Arab non-state actors, attempted to impose some form of pressure on Israel through a blockade, Arab countries instead worked to ensure Israel could withstand the potential consequences of its isolation.

In his book *War*, Bob Woodward disclosed that some Arab governments told then-U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken that they had no objections to Israel's efforts to crush Palestinian resistance. However, some were concerned about the media images of mutilated Palestinian civilians, which could stir public unrest in their own countries.

That public unrest never materialized, and with time, the genocide, famine, and cries for help in Gaza were normalized as yet another tragic event, not unlike the war in Sudan or the strife in Syria.

For 15 months of relentless Israeli genocide that resulted in the killing and wounding of over 162,000 Palestinians in Gaza, official Arab political institutions remained largely irrelevant in ending the war.

In the U.S., the Biden administration was emboldened by such Arab inaction, continuing to push for greater normalization between Arab countries and Israel — even in the face of over 15,000 children killed in Gaza in the most brutal ways imaginable.

While the moral failures of the West, the shortcomings of international law and the criminal actions of Biden and his administration have been widely criticized, the complicity of Arab governments in enabling these atrocities and for serving as a shield for Israel's war crimes is often ignored.

The Arabs have, in fact, played a more significant role in the Israeli atrocities in Gaza than we often recognize. Some through their silence, and others through direct collaboration with Israel.

Throughout the war, reports surfaced indicating that some Arab countries [UAE] actively lobbied in Washington on behalf of Israel, advocating against an Egyptian-Arab League proposal aimed at reconstructing Gaza without ethnically cleansing its population — an idea promoted by the Trump administration and Israel.

The Egyptian proposal, which was unanimously accepted by Arab countries at their summit on March 4, represented the strongest and most unified stance taken by the Arab world during the war.

The proposal, which was rejected by Israel and dismissed by the U.S., helped shift discourse in the U.S. around the subject of ethnic cleansing. It ultimately led to comments made on March 12 by Trump during a meeting with Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin where he stated that “No one’s expelling anyone from Gaza.”

For some Arab states to actively oppose the only relatively strong Arab position signals that the issue of Arab failures in Palestine goes beyond mere disunity or incompetence — it reflects a much darker and more cynical reality. Some Arabs align their interests with Israel, where a free Palestine isn’t just a non-issue, but a threat.

The same applies to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, which continues to work hand-in-hand with Israel to suppress any form of resistance in the West Bank. Its concern in Gaza is not about ending the genocide, but ensuring the marginalization of its Palestinian rivals, particularly Hamas.

Thus, blaming the PA for mere “weakness,” for “not doing enough,” or for failing to unify the Palestinian ranks is a misreading of the situation. The priorities of Mahmoud Abbas and his PA allies are far different: securing relative power over Palestinians, a power that can only be sustained through Israeli military dominance.

These are difficult, yet critical truths, as they allow us to reframe the conversation, moving away from the false assumption that Arab unity will resolve everything.

The flaw in the unity theory is that it naively assumes Arab regimes inherently reject Israeli occupation and support Palestine.

While some Arab governments are genuinely outraged by Israel's criminal behavior and growingly frustrated by the U.S.' irrational policies in the region, others are driven by self-interest: their animosity toward Iran and fear of rising Arab non-state actors. They are equally concerned about instability in the region, which threatens their hold on power amid a rapidly shifting world order.

As solidarity with Palestine has increasingly expanded from the global South to the global majority, Arabs remain largely ineffective, fearing that significant political change in the region could directly challenge their own position.

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