

Riyadh Summit on Israeli Genocide in Gaza: Arab despots' betrayal and political bankruptcy

By Latheef Farook

After over a year of relentless bombing, with Israel dropping more than 85,000 tons of explosives on Gaza, killing an estimated 200,000 Palestinians—70% of them women and children—and turning the enclave into a graveyard, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman convened an Arab-Islamic summit in Riyadh on November 11, 2024. The summit, ostensibly to address Israel's genocide in Gaza and Lebanon, brought together despots from the Arab world and elected leaders from other Islamic nations. Yet, the glaring irony of this meeting was evident: many of these Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE, had facilitated Israel's butchery of Palestinians by turning a blind eye or providing tacit support.

As anticipated, the summit failed to take any concrete steps to halt the genocide. Instead, the participants merely issued familiar appeals to the international community for action, exposing the gathering as little more than political posturing.

Saudi Crown Prince's Hollow Condemnation

In his opening remarks, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman demanded an immediate end to Israel's massacre of Palestinians, labeling the campaign for the first time as "genocide." However, this strong language belied the Saudi leadership's complicity in enabling Israel's actions. The summit concluded with vague calls for humanitarian support to Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria and condemned Israeli aggression. Notably absent was any actionable plan to hold Israel accountable.

Egypt's Cynical Role

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, installed by a coalition of U.S., Israeli, and Gulf state interests following the 2013 coup that toppled Egypt's first democratically elected government, refrained from explicitly describing the war on Gaza as genocide. While he denounced the "systematic murder of civilians," his actions painted a different picture. Sisi has consistently prioritized securing U.S., Israeli, and Gulf support for his regime over the welfare of Egyptians or Palestinians. His government has cooperated with Israel to impose a brutal blockade on Gaza, starving the population and denying them essential humanitarian aid.

Voices of Resistance

In contrast to the muted responses from many Arab leaders, some voices at the summit spoke out forcefully against Israeli aggression. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan accused Western nations of providing Israel with "political, economic, military, and moral support" while criticizing the failure of Muslim countries to respond adequately. Erdoğan also highlighted Israel's refusal to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, pointing out that supplies had been stranded in Egypt for months.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim delivered a scathing condemnation of Israel, calling for decisive actions to end its unchecked aggression. He emphasized the need to expel Israel from the United Nations and warned of the broader regional instability caused by Israeli strikes in Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and Syria.

Enabling Genocide: The Role of Arab Autocrats

Writing under the title "*How Arab Autocrats Enabled Israel's Gaza Genocide*," columnist Maged Mansour highlighted the complicity of Arab regimes. According to Mansour, the survival of autocratic states in the Arab world now depends on U.S. and Israeli support, leaving them incapable of challenging Israeli aggression. The mass revolts of the Arab Spring weakened these regimes, forcing them into closer alliances with external powers that prioritize Israel's strategic interests.

Mansour argued that this dynamic has rendered Arab states mere enablers of Israel's massacre of Palestinians and Lebanese civilians. The United States, which has provided over \$17.9 billion in aid to Israel since the Gaza war began on October 8, 2023, has further entrenched the power imbalance. This funding supports Israel's genocidal war, with Arab leaders complicit in the destruction of Gaza by failing to offer meaningful resistance.

Egypt's Dependency on Israel

Egypt, as the most populous Arab state and the only one bordering Gaza, exemplifies the collapse of Arab leadership. Despite its strategic position, Egypt's role in the conflict has been shaped by its dependency on U.S. and Israeli support. Since the 2013 coup, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has cultivated close ties with Sisi, providing political backing and deepening security cooperation. In return, Egypt has facilitated the blockade of Gaza, even allowing Israeli airstrikes in the Sinai Peninsula with Cairo's approval.

This alliance reflects a broader trend: Arab regimes have abandoned their responsibility to defend Palestinian rights. Instead, they prioritize their survival, often suppressing their own citizens with methods that echo Israel's violence against Palestinians.

Western Hypocrisy and the Failure of Muslim Solidarity

Turkey's Erdoğan and Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim both criticized Western nations for their unflinching support of Israel. Erdoğan noted that Western nations have not only provided Israel with military and economic aid but have also given it moral cover for its atrocities. Anwar called for Muslim countries to overcome their internal divisions and respond decisively to the crisis.

However, the summit underscored the failure of Muslim solidarity. Arab autocrats, driven by regime survival, have abandoned any semblance of resistance to Israel's colonial ambitions. Their inaction has emboldened Israel and its Western allies, leaving Palestinians to face genocide without meaningful support.

The U.S. Role in Perpetuating the Crisis

Outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden's unwavering support for Israel was a grim backdrop to the Riyadh summit. Two days after the meeting, Biden hosted Israeli President Isaac Herzog at the White House, reaffirming his "ironclad" commitment to Israel. This endorsement of Israeli aggression underscores the complicity of the U.S. in perpetuating the crisis.

Arab regimes, reliant on U.S. backing for their political survival, have become willing accomplices in Israel's campaign of genocide. This dependence highlights the shameful state of affairs in the Arab world, where despots prioritize their relationships with Western powers over the rights and lives of Palestinians.

Betrayal and Hypocrisy

The Riyadh summit, far from being a turning point, revealed the depth of betrayal and hypocrisy among Arab leaders. Their failure to act decisively against Israel's genocide in Gaza reflects their abandonment of Islamic principles and their people's aspirations for justice.

This betrayal is likely to have long-term consequences for the region. By aligning themselves with Israel and the U.S., Arab despots have alienated their populations and sown the seeds of future instability. The mass slaughter of Palestinians and the complicity of Arab regimes will remain a stain on the history of the Muslim world.

The Riyadh summit was a missed opportunity to confront the genocide in Gaza meaningfully. While leaders like Erdoğan and Anwar Ibrahim voiced strong condemnations, their words were drowned out by the collective inaction of Arab despots. These regimes, entrenched in their dependence on Western powers, have abdicated their responsibility to defend Palestine.

As Palestinians continue to endure unimaginable suffering, the Riyadh summit will be remembered not as a beacon of hope but as a symbol of betrayal and political bankruptcy. The world watches as Arab

leaders fail their people, their faith, and the Palestinian cause, leaving the region vulnerable to further exploitation and violence.

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