Opinion

Guest Voices



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is seen during a meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden in Tel Aviv, Israel, Oct. 18. (OSV News/Reuters/Evelyn Hockstein)



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War crimes around the globe abound. The International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, needs more resources to expose the perpetrators and bring them to justice. A partial listing of global crimes against humanity underscores the monumental tasks before human rights organizations and the court.

Clementine Nkweta-Salami, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator for Sudan, said in a news conference on Nov. 9: "We continue to receive unrelenting and appalling reports of sexual and gender-based violence and forced disappearance, arbitrary detentions and grave violations of human and children rights. What is happening is verging on pure evil." News sources report widespread killings, rapes and destruction of villages.

In Yemen, a Washington Post exclusive report in June 2022 noted that while Russia was bombing a maternity hospital and other civilian targets in Ukraine, thousands of similar strikes have taken place against Yemeni civilians. The headline read, "Saudi-led airstrikes in Yemen have been called war crimes. Many relied on U.S. support."

The article goes on to say:

> Hundreds of thousands have died from the fighting or its indirect consequences, such as hunger, the United Nations says. The devastating air campaign alone — carried out by a Saudi-led coalition — has killed almost 24,000 people, a number that includes combatants and nearly 9,000 civilians, according to conservative estimates by Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) which monitors war zones around the world.

In Israel, the Oct. 7 terror attack by Hamas resulted in gruesome and ghastly atrocities. Hamas' house-to-house slaughter of families, defenseless children and even babies in their cribs and the brutal murders of parents dying while using their bodies to shield their children, demands a reckoning.

> It is vitally important to raise our voices over the possible war crimes that have been committed against innocent people. Under international law, they are entitled to protection from the violence of both Hamas and the Israeli government.

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Leaders like Mohammed Diab Ibrahim A-Masri, also known as El Deif, and Yahya Sinawar, the head of Hamas in Gaza, should be held accountable for the bloodbath they perpetrated on the Israeli people. Like Russian President Vladimir Putin, they should be hunted and haunted for their barbarism and should not rest easy for the rest of their days.

For the past month, we have watched with horror Israel's response directed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his civilian and military leadership. They have been relentlessly bombing Gaza, resulting in the deaths of more than 17,000 Gazans, including more than 7,000 children, according to Gaza authorities. Most of those killed were innocent of the atrocities of Hamas.

On Dec. 10, the world recognizes the 75th anniversary of the United Nations' adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is vitally important for us to raise our voices over the possible war crimes that have been committed against innocent people. Under international law, they are entitled to protection from the violence of both Hamas and the Israeli government.

In Gaza today, Palestinians live in desperation for the essentials — water, food, shelter and medical care. Hunger and disease in Gaza are destroying families and neighborhoods. Hospitals have run out of supplies. Operations are done without anesthesia or pain relief. It is a hellish nightmare.

The Israeli bombing theory of "damage over accuracy" is the modus operandi of the Netanyahu government. Hence, the catastrophic civilian death toll in just one month. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman, Daniel Hagari, said on Oct. 10 that, at least during the initial invasion of Gaza, the emphasis of the IDF was "maximum damage."

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The theory of "damage not accuracy" was employed when Hamas and Israel fought in Gaza in 2008-2009, a conflict that resulted in the deaths of about 1,400 Palestinians and Israelis. A 2009 United Nations report described the Israeli campaign as "a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate,

and terrorize a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and to provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever-increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability."

A Washington Post columnist noted that in 2008 Gabriel Siboni, a former IDF colonel, "argued that the necessary response to militant provocations from Lebanon, Gaza, and Syria were disproportionate strikes that aim only secondarily to hit the enemy's capacity to launch rockets or other attacks. Rather, the goal should be to inflict lasting damage, no matter the civilian consequences, as a future deterrent."

Palestinian American scholar Rashid Khalidi said in 2014, "Let us be frank: this is actually less of a strategic doctrine than an explicit outline of collective punishment and probable war crimes."

Juliette Touma, director of communications for the United Nations Palestinian Refugee Agency, told NPR on Nov. 27 that 108 of her U.N. colleagues had been killed in Gaza since the war began.

The West Bank, where 3 million Palestinians reside, continues to be a land filled with tensions and acts of violence that threaten to break out into a broader and full-scale war. In the weeks since Oct. 7, Israeli settlers and troops have killed more than 200 West Bank Palestinians, according to the Reuters news agency.

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That violence and threat of violence has displaced many West Bank Palestinians from their homes. Settlers' violence against the Palestinians has been increasing since settlers now have their own like-minded representatives in Netanyahu's cabinet.

It is way past time for Israel to cut its ties with Netanyahu. His legacy will be his failure to protect his own people, actions and policies toward the Palestinians that have stoked the hatred that now permeates the region, appointment of racist cabinet members, and his personal criminal activity that has brought shame on his family, party and country.

In addition to the possible war crimes committed by Hamas and their leaders, it is paramount that the International Criminal Court also hold Netanyahu and his cronies responsible for the thousands of lives that are being taken in their indiscriminate

bombings in Gaza.

On Nov. 6, the organization Jewish Voice for Peace led a demonstration calling for a ceasefire and an end to U.S. funding of Israel's bombing of Gaza. A Facebook post from Jewish Voice for Peace described the event: "500 Jews and allies took over the Statue of Liberty, disrupting business as usual to demand a ceasefire in Gaza. We were joined by rabbis, electeds, celebrities, descendants of Holocaust survivors, and children."

In their own powerful and echoing words, "Never again means never again — for anyone."