

THE RACIST REALITY OF REMEMBRANCE DAY | Yves Engler
BATTLE TESTED IN GAZA: BRITAIN'S NEXT DRONES | Mark Curtis
DESTROYING INTERNATIONAL LAW | Jonathan Cook

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WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING December 2024

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ISRAEL
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HOMES
AT NIGHT?**

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ANTI-PALESTINIAN RACISM AT SCHOOL

CASE STUDIES FROM PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Remove that book

An Israel advocacy group pressured a school to remove a young adult novel from its curriculum that follows a Palestinian boy growing up under Israeli occupation in the West Bank.

Why it's racism: excludes Palestinians and their narratives

Take off that scarf

A high school principal in Canada told a Palestinian student to take off their keffiyeh on the school's culture day, labeling it a "sign of war."

Why it's racism: dehumanizing; labels Palestinians as inherently violent

You're suspended

A high school in the U.S. suspended two Somali-American students for saying "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" during a school walkout in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

Why it's racism: defames Palestinian narratives, labelling a call for freedom as a call for genocide

Fire that teacher

A high school history teacher in the U.S. received death threats and was forced to resign after Zionist community members objected to a lesson she taught about Gaza, which was approved by the principal.

Why it's racism: creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation to silence Palestinian narratives

Stop speaking

A school board in Canada hired a Black anti-racism educator, then accused him of calling for violence when he said "free Palestine" during a presentation.

Why it's racism: defames solidarity with Palestinians as inherently violent

SILENCING AND INTIMIDATION ENABLES ONGOING GENOCIDE

Israeli forces have destroyed or damaged 85% of schools in Gaza, left 625,000 students with no access to education, and killed and injured tens of thousands of students and educators.

We want to live

We want to learn

In 2023, Israeli authorities had demolition orders against 57 schools serving 6,550 Palestinian students in the occupied West Bank. Palestinian students also face violence and harassment by Israeli soldiers and settlers, causing some to drop out of school.

SOURCES bit.ly/vp-apr NOV 2024

© 1 3 0 VISUALIZING PALESTINE

INSIGHTS



Screenshot
from the Xtend
web site

Britain is experimenting with new drone technology that Israel's military uses in Gaza. The British army conducted exercises on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire to test a drone made by Israeli tech firm Xtend in December.

Hundreds of Xtend's small drones are being used by Israeli forces in Gaza. They enable soldiers to launch grenades and scan tunnels and buildings without having to risk their own lives.

Xtend's drones are being used for the first time in the war and the company is reported to be collaborating with an Israeli military unit, the Yiftah, to develop "special weapons."

A "warhead has been developed that is mounted on these drones

MARK CURTIS

Battle tested in Gaza: Are these Britain's next drones?

thus transforming them into a weapon (suicide drone)," one report notes.

The Israeli military describes the Yiftah as a "top-secret" unit comprising "a small team of innovative scientists and engineers" that "have been key to our success over the years."

Xtend's drone technology comes complete with a virtual reality headset and hand-held controller to operate the drone. "It's just like a computer game," says Matteo Shapira, Xtend's co-founder.

"It's very easy to operate, and they don't need to know anything about the machine, how it behaves or what it needs to do," he adds.

The company's drones are reported by mainstream Western and Israeli media as enabling Israel to

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target Hamas terrorists in an urban warfare setting. Yet Israel's war in Gaza has been devastating to ordinary Palestinians, including intentionally targeting civilians.

The *Times of Israel* reports that Xtend's technology was initially developed to help the Israeli army shoot down incendiary balloons launched by Palestinian militant groups on the border with Gaza.

Before the current war in the territory, Xtend's biggest client was the US Department of Defense which has bought hundreds of the company's drones, many for use by US special forces.

The UK Ministry of Defence

(MoD) exercises with Xtend's drones are part of its Army Warfighting Experiment (AWE), which is the "flagship experimentation programme for the British army."

The latest AWE, which runs from 2022-24, explores "innovative technologies and tactics to prepare our soldiers for future battlefields," the army says.

Xtend noted that its participation in "exclusive British army experiments and demonstrations" was "an opportunity we deeply appreciated and cherished."

The company said that its "innovative systems" were assessed by the British army's Infantry Trials and Development Unit, adding that Xtend's drones were in the "capable hands" of the Royal Air Force and army.

The MoD's second permanent secretary, Paul Lincoln, was one of those who attended the event, listing Xtend as one of the companies he "met with ...to discuss their defence products."

Earlier this year, Xtend wrote on LinkedIn that it was "honored" to take a significant part in the British army's "AWE annual conclusion event."

It added: "The pinnacle of a year long process was seeing our technology tested in action with British soldiers along with many NATO and ally [sic] countries in complex multi force urban scenarios."

Xtend acknowledges that its staff include active Israeli soldiers. It has written: "We would like to express our appreciation to our UK partners for their collaboration and agility required to work with Israeli companies in these challenging times where many of our employees are still under active reserve duty."

The army conducted an earlier exercise with Xtend's products in May 2023, again on Salisbury Plain. One of those to witness a demonstration of the company's drones was then defence secretary Ben Wallace, among other senior military figures.

Wallace did not appear to publicise the event. But "Xtend was honoured and thankful to have taken part in the invite-only British army exercise," wrote the company's chief business officer, Ido Bar-On.

During the manoeuvres, Xtend's drones "were operated by British

HURWITT'S EYE

MARK HURWITT



INSIGHTS

soldiers testing Xtend's unique operating system and multi-mission capabilities for urban warfare," he added. The company described itself as "working closely with the UK MoD" and is clearly seeking to expand in the UK military market.

Declassified has not been able to establish the full extent of Xtend's relations with the British MoD. In both September 2023 and 2022 the company was invited to the annual London arms fair, one of the biggest in the world.

Xtend, which was founded in 2018, is also advised by General Sir Paul Newton, a former assistant chief of defence staff in the UK who is now a military consultant.

The Gaza war is profitable for

Xtend which has just secured \$40-million in new funding from investors.

Its CEO, Aviv Shapira, said: "Before the war it was difficult to raise money but suddenly everything has opened up. We decided to wait with the fund raising during the war, and the amount of our orders increased greatly."

An MoD spokesperson told us: "We do not hold any procurement contracts with Xtend." **CT**

Mark Curtis is the director of Declassified UK – www.declassifieduk.org – where this article was first published. He is the author of five books and many articles on UK foreign policy.

South African government, were alleged to be of a "genocidal" nature, "committed with the requisite specific intent ... to destroy the Palestinians in Gaza as part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group".

By May 10, South Africa had filed four requests seeking additional provisional measures with modifications to the original provisional measures laid down by the ICJ. The momentum, and frequency of the actions, even gave certain commentators room to wonder: Was Israel's own due process rights regarding judicial equality and the right to be heard compromised? Israel had promised to submit written observations by May 15 to the ICJ when faced with the sudden announcement on May 12 that the court would be holding an oral hearing instead.

These debates have been taking place before the concerted, dedicated, enthusiastic pulverisation of Gaza, and the ongoing killing, terrorisation and displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank. In these cases, due process remains fantasy and distant speculation, especially concerning civilians. With increasing regularity, there is chilling evidence that Israeli units have a programmatic approach to destroying a viable infrastructure and means of living on the strip.

On October 22, the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem expressed horror at the sheer scale "of the crimes Israel is currently committing in the northern Gaza Strip in its campaign to empty it of however many residents are left [...] impossible to describe, not just because hundreds of thousands of people enduring starvation, disease without access to medical care and

► BINOY KAMPMARK

South Africa's genocide memorial to the ICJ

The timing, as with so much in the ongoing wars in Gaza and Lebanon, was most appropriate. The Israeli Knesset had signalled its intent on crippling and banishing the sole agency of humanitarian worth for Palestinian welfare by passing laws criminalising its operations by 92 to 10 on October 28.

The attack on UNRWA also came with a contemporaneous legal effort, this time from South Africa. Pretoria had already made its wishes clear on December 28, 2023 in filing an application in the International Court of Justice alleging "violations by Israel regarding the



Benjamin Netanyahu: Accused

[United Nations] Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide [...] in relation to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip." Acts and omissions by Israel, argued the

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incessant bombardments and gunfire defies comprehension, but because Israel has cut them off from the world.”

In a chilling overview of the exploits of the IDF’s 749 Combat Engineering Battalion written by Younis Tirawi and Sami Vanderlip for *Drop Site News*, a record of systematic elimination of cultural, structural and intellectual life in the Gaza Strip is evident. As members of the battalion’s official D9 company stated: “Our job is to flatten Gaza.” In an operation that saw the destruction of the Al-Azhar University, First Sergeant David Zoldan, operational officer of Company A of the battalion, delights with fellow soldiers on seeing the explosion: “Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined, did you see?!”

Statements of this sort are frequent and easily found up the chain of command. They are also uttered with ease at the highest levels of government. On October 21, Israeli Minister for National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir had told a “settlement” conference held in a re-

stricted military zone that Gaza’s inhabitants would be given the chance to “leave from here to other countries”. His reasoning for this ethnic cleansing has remained biblically consistent: “The Land of Israel is ours.”

In a media statement from its Department of International Relations and Cooperation dated October 28, the South African government announced its filing of a Memorial to the ICJ pertaining to its ongoing case against Israel. The Memorial itself runs into 750 pages, with 4000 pages of supporting exhibits and annexes. (Its December 2023 application had run into 84 pages.) “The problem we have is that we have too much evidence,” remarked South Africa’s representative to The Hague, Ambassador Vusumuzi Madonsela to Al Jazeera.

Zane Dangor, director-general of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, was more practical. Israel might well inflate its dossier of bloody misdeeds,

but some line had to be drawn in the submissions. “The legal team will always say we need more time, there’s more facts coming. But we have to say you have to stop now. You [have] got to focus on what you have.”

While the formal contents of the Memorial remain confidential, the clues are thickly obvious. It contains, for instance, evidence that Israel “has violated the genocide convention by promoting the destruction of Palestinians living in Gaza, physically killing them with an assortment of destructive weapons, depriving them access to humanitarian assistance, causing conditions of life which are aimed at their physical destruction and ignoring and defying several provisional measures of the International Court of Justice, and using starvation as a weapon of war to further Israel’s aims to depopulate Gaza through mass death and forced displacement of Palestinians.”

Despite that comprehensive assortment of alleged crimes, the legal commentariat wonder how far this latest effort will necessarily go in linking the decisions of Israeli officialdom with genocidal intent. That Israel is committing war crimes and violating humanitarian law is nigh impossible to dispute. The threshold in proving genocide, as international jurisprudence has repeatedly shown over the years, is a high one indeed. The *dolus specialis* – that specific intent to destroy in whole or in part the protected group – is essential to prove.

Cathleen Powell of the University of Cape Town, for instance, has her reservations. “If they can find genocidal statements from state officials and show that that directly led

HOME TRUTHS | CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

“We’re taught that heroes look like western soldiers and cops taking out bad guys, when really heroes look like Palestinian journalists risking everything to tell the truth about genocidal atrocities that are backed by western governments while western journalists make propaganda”

INSIGHTS

to a particular programme that led to the destruction on the ground, then that's probably a very strong case." But making that link would be "very difficult."

Dangor has no doubts. "Genocidal acts without intent can be crimes against humanity. But here, the intent is just front and centre." Suffice to say that Israeli lawmakers and

officials, aided by the exploits of the IDF, are making proving such intent an easier prospect with each passing day. **CT**

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► JAKE JOHNSON

Tax dodging by super rich costs half a trillion a year

A study published last month estimates that tax dodging enabled by the United States, the United Kingdom, and other wealthy nations is costing countries around the world nearly half a trillion dollars in revenue each year, underscoring the urgent need for global reforms to prevent rich individuals and large corporations from shirking their obligations.

The new study, conducted by the Tax Justice Network (TJN), finds that "the combined costs of cross-border tax abuse by multinational companies and by individuals with undeclared assets offshore stands at an estimated \$492 billion." Of that total in lost revenue, corporate tax dodging is responsible for more than \$347-billion, according to TJN's calculations.

"For people everywhere, the losses translate into foregone public services, and weakened states at greater risk of falling prey to political extremism," the study reads.



"And in the same way, there is scope for all to benefit from moving tax rule-setting out of the OECD and into a globally inclusive and fully transparent process at the United Nations."

The analysis estimates that just eight countries – the US, Canada, the UK, Japan, Israel, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand – are enabling large-scale tax avoidance by opposing popular global reform efforts. Late last year, those same eight countries were the lonely opponents of the United Nations Gen-

eral Assembly's vote to set in motion the process of establishing a UN tax convention.

According to the new TJN study, those eight countries are responsible for roughly half of the \$492-billion lost per year globally to tax avoidance by the rich and large multinational corporations, despite being home to just 8 percent of the world's population.

"The hurtful eight voted for a world where we all keep losing half a trillion a year to tax-cheating multinational corporations and the super-rich," Alex Cobham, chief executive of the Tax Justice Network, said in a statement Tuesday. "The UK and the US are both among the biggest enablers and the biggest losers of this lose-lose tax system, and their people consistently demand an end to tax abuse, so it's absurd that the US and UK are seeking to preserve it."

"It's perhaps harder to understand why the other handful of blockers, like Australia, Canada, and Japan, who don't play anything like such a damaging role, would be willing to go along with this," Cobham added.

TJN released its study as G20 nations – a group that includes most of the "hurtful eight" – issued a communiqué pledging to "engage cooperatively to ensure that ultra-high-net-worth individuals are effectively taxed." Brazil, which hosted the G20 summit, led the push for language calling for taxation of the global super-rich.

The document drew praise from advocacy groups including the Fight Inequality Alliance, which stressed the need to "transform the rhetoric on taxing the rich into global reality."

The communiqué was released

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amid concerns that the election of far-right billionaire Donald Trump in the US could derail progress toward a global solution to pervasive and costly tax avoidance.

The new TJN study cites Trump's pledge to cut the statutory US corporate tax rate from 21 percent to 15 percent and warns such a move would accelerate the global "race to the bottom" on corporate taxation.

"People in countries around the world are calling in large majorities on their governments to tax multinational corporations properly," Liz Nelson, TJN's director of advocacy

and research, said. "But governments continue to exercise a policy of appeasement on corporate tax."

"We now have data from these governments showing that when they asked multinational corporations to pay less tax, the corporations cheated even more," Nelson added. "It's time governments found the spines their people deserve from their leaders." **CT**

Jake Johnson is a senior editor and staff writer for Common Dreams – www.commondreams.org – where this article first appeared.

those who "have spoken out for the integrity of Remembrance Day and the respect it deserves."

Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre called for the school's principal to be fired, and an elected official stated that Arabic has no place in Remembrance Day ceremonies. Ontario MPP Goldie Ghamari declared, "Remembrance Day is about Canadians. It's not racist to expect taxpayer funded institutions to observe Canadian traditions in Canada's official languages. If I wanted to hear Arabic songs during official government ceremonies I'd move to an Arab-speaking country."

Amidst the brouhaha, someone spraypainted "Hamas High" on a Sir Robert Borden welcome sign.

The racist outburst partly stems from 13 months of Zionist vilification of critics of Israel's holocaust in Gaza. But linguistic chauvinism is part and parcel of the militarism and the martial patriotism Remembrance Day promotes.

During World War I, which spurred Remembrance Day, many non-English publications were censored and public meetings (except for church) held in Ukrainian, Russian, Finnish and other languages were outlawed. Berlin, Ontario, was renamed Kitchener because of anti-German sentiment. Germans, Japanese, Ukrainians and others were interned during both World Wars.

The "othering" of war is not language or "race" specific. It's the xenophobia of "our side." And today "our side" is killing babies in Gaza so a language viewed as antagonistic to Israeli violence is verboten during Remembrance Day. Songs in Ukrainian, on the other hand, are fine as Canada is fighting with that country. Since the Russian invasion many Remembrance Day commem-

► YVES ENGLER

The racist reality of Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day celebrates chauvinistic Anglo imperialism. The reaction to an Arabic peace poem reveals the depth of Canada's colonised minds.

Genocide advocates whipped up a big backlash to a Remembrance Day event at Ottawa's Sir Robert Borden school last month because it included the Arabic peace song *Haza Salam*. The song doesn't mention Palestine, but it's been taken up by opponents of Israel's holocaust in Gaza. Despite some reports, the November 11 ceremony also included Canada's national anthem *O Canada* and the British bugle call *Last Post*.

In response to the inclusion of a language spoken by nearly half a billion people, Ottawa MPP Lisa MacLeod initiated a racist storm. On X she posted a statement noting that



'Hamas High' is scrawled across a sign at a high school in Ottawa.

"today at Sir Robert Borden High School the Remembrance Service included a song in Arabic which did not follow the Royal Canadian Legion protocol and also distressed all of the Jewish Students."

Ottawa's Jewish Federation echoed MacLeod's condemnation, releasing a letter of support for

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orations have included Ukrainian.

Remembrance Day celebrates Anglo-American warfare and imperialism. It commemorates Canadians who have died at war, but not the Afghans or Libyans killed by Canadians in the 2000s, or the Iraqis and Serbians killed in the 1990s, or the Koreans killed in the 1950s, or the Russians, South Africans and others killed earlier. By focusing exclusively on “our” side Remembrance Day reinforces a sense that Canada’s cause is righteous.

If Remembrance Day were genuinely about remembering the horrors of war, Gaza would have been front and centre. Last year I wrote

about how Remembrance Day came a day late as tens of thousands marched across Canada calling for a Gaza ceasefire. A day that marks an armistice agreement and remembers the horrors of war should be an ideal moment to call for the end to the brutal Gaza military campaign. Alas that wasn’t the case. Unfortunately, most official Remembrance Day actions serve as celebrations of martial patriotism. And one of the world’s most widely spoken languages is not welcome. **CT**

Yves Engler is a political activist and author based in Montreal. His website is www.yvesengler.com

agencies have assessed that speeding up the provisions of weapons, ammunition and matériel for Ukraine will do little to change the course of the war in the short term,” the *Times* reports.

Desperate to bolster Ukraine’s standing in the war before the transition of power on January 20, the Biden administration is looking at a range of serious escalations.

“US and European officials are discussing deterrence as a possible security guarantee for Ukraine, such as stockpiling a conventional arsenal sufficient to strike a punishing blow if Russia violates a ceasefire.” The article continues, “Several officials even suggested that Mr. Biden could return nuclear weapons to Ukraine that were taken from it after the fall of the Soviet Union.”

According to some officials who spoke with the *Times*, the administration believes that Russian President Vladimir Putin won’t significantly escalate the war until Trump returns to the Oval Office.

“But the escalation risk of allowing Ukraine to strike Russia with US-supplied weaponry has diminished with the election of Mr. Trump,” adding, “Biden administration officials believe, calculating that Putin of Russia knows he has to wait only two months for the new administration.”

That assessment is based on the belief that Trump and his incoming Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, will take a more favourable stance on Russia. However, Trump proved to be a Russia-hawk during his first administration by ramping up sanctions on Moscow, providing lethal arms

► KYLE ANZALONE

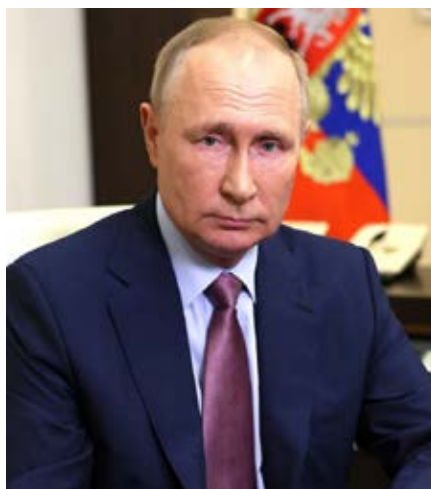
US and Europe consider nukes for Ukraine

According to the *New York Times*, US and European officials have discussed a range of options they believe will deter Russia from taking more Ukrainian territory, including providing Kiev with nuclear weapons. The outlet reports that Western officials believe the Kremlin will not significantly escalate the war before Donald Trump is sworn in as President in January.

Following the election of Trump last month, the US and its NATO allies began taking steps to rush weapons to Ukraine and give Kiev the ability to strike targets inside Russian territory with long-range weapons.

American officials who were briefed on the intelligence com-

Wikimedia



Vladimir Putin: Waiting for Trump?

munity’s assessments told the *Times* that weapons will not alter the challenging situation that Kiev is currently facing. “US spy

INSIGHTS

to Ukraine, and expelling a large number of Russian diplomats from the US.

In September, Putin said he preferred Vice President Kamala Harris to win the White House. “Trump has imposed as many sanctions on Russia as any president has ever imposed before, and if Harris is doing well, perhaps she will refrain from such actions,” he explained.

Much of the American political class has cast Trump and Gabbard

as agents of Russia. However, extensive investigations into Trump’s ties to the Kremlin have come up empty. Additionally, the *Times* reported last week that there was no evidence Gabbard was in any way an asset of Putin. **CT**

Kyle Anzalone is the opinion editor of Antiwar.com, news editor of the Libertarian Institute, and co-host of the Conflicts of Interest webcast.

through 14 hours of labour, she later wondered, was he being paid overtime? His abandoned son was also traumatised by the discovery of who his father really was. According to another former spy cop, Peter Francis, when Lambert was his manager, he advised Francis to wear a condom when sleeping with activists.

These fake relationships were standard practice in the team of spy cops Lambert ran. The officers used similar seduction techniques, built similar falsehoods about their lives and used similar methods for destroying or abandoning the relationships when they were redeployed. It looks like a refined, state-sanctioned grooming operation. As Helen Steel, another woman deceived by a spy cop, remarked, “there weren’t any genuine moments – they were purely manipulative and abusive. it was as if he set out to destroy my sanity.”

► GEORGE MONBIOT

Sexism scandal exposes deceptions of UK spycops

It’s the testimony we’ve long been waiting for. As we go to press, the man whose cruel and disgusting deceptions have come to epitomise Britain’s undercover policing inquiry, the “spy cops” scandal is about to be questioned. Many of us are hoping for answers, not least because his story suggests a closing of ranks across the British establishment. Even if you think you’ve heard it all, some of the details in this column will take your breath away.

Bob Lambert worked for the Metropolitan police’s Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) in the 1980s and 1990s, first as an undercover cop infiltrating environmental and animal rights protests, then as operational controller of the squad, supervising other spy cops doing similar work.

In the course of his undercover assignments, while posing as

a radical activist called Bob Robinson, he deceived four unsuspecting women, innocent of any crime, into starting relationships. He stole his identity from a dead child.

With one of the women, Jacqui, he fathered a child. Two years later, he vanished. She discovered his true identity by chance more than 20 years later, and has yet to recover from the devastating shock.

She says she feels “raped by the state.” The person she loved and trusted was a ghost. “I feel like I’ve got no foundations in my life your first serious relationship, your first child, the first time you give birth – they’re all significant, but for me they’re gone, ruined ... I was not consenting to sleeping with Bob Lambert, I didn’t know who Bob Lambert was.”

When he sat with her as she went

We now know that Lambert and other police spies repeatedly lied in court when they were arraigned as “activists” on minor charges, using their fake names to maintain their cover. They withheld crucial evidence from the trials of genuine activists, whom they had stitched up: the courts were not informed of their role. As a result, many environmental campaigners have now had their convictions overturned.

Both in parliament and by another witness to the inquiry, Lambert has been accused of acting as an agent provocateur and planting an incendiary device in a Debenhams department store in Harrow that caused £340,000 worth

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of damage. Lambert has denied this.

The spy cops, among many other unlawful intrusions, used their relationships to gain access to privileged information: discussions between defendants and their lawyers that are legally confidential. Among the lawyers whose advice was compromised was a young Keir Starmer.

The great majority of the people being spied on were peaceful activists who presented no danger to democracy or human life. Many were involved in campaigning against corporate abuses.

Some of the spying, like Lambert's infiltration of a campaign against McDonald's, looks like policing on behalf of corporate power. But even that was not the worst of it. Police spies were also used to infiltrate the campaign for justice for Stephen Lawrence, the black teenager murdered by racists in 1993, whose case the Met, as a result of institutional racism, failed properly to investigate.

Police spies were allegedly deployed to find "dirt" that could be used to smear Stephen's family. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC, now the Independent Office for Police Conduct) found that Lambert "played a part" in the intelligence gathering by spies inserted into the Lawrence campaign. None of the spy cops have suffered legal consequences, though activities such as identity theft and entering homes without a warrant are illegal. Their pensions remain intact, they have kept their medals and commendations.

At the inquiry, Belinda Harvey, one of the women deceived into an

18-month relationship with Lambert, damned him as a "cruel and manipulative" liar. But the authorities see him differently. In 2008, Lambert received an MBE for services to the police.

After retiring from the police, Lambert reinvented himself as a right-on lecturer on community engagement, Islamophobia and counter-terrorism. He obtained prestigious positions at Exeter, London Metropolitan and St Andrews universities. Astonishingly, he received the London Metropolitan

Wikipedia



Keir Starmer: Accused of cover up

position after being exposed as a police spy. As I have a connection with St Andrews, I joined the campaign calling for the university to take action. But it stonewalled us.

Scandalously, in my view, the university's then principal, Louise Richardson, remarked: "I think hiring people who have had real-world experience in an institution which is teaching counter-terrorism is entirely legitimate ... I'm not going to get involved in what people do privately whoever they are." When the real-world experience a university values consists of deceiving, abusing and destroying innocent lives, you have to wonder what the disqualifications would be.

The issue was resolved only

when Lambert, as the Stephen Lawrence revelations began to emerge, resigned.

Such closing of ranks seems almost ubiquitous. Richard Walton, the commander accused with Lambert of involvement in spying on the Stephen Lawrence campaign, retired just after the IPCC concluded he would have had "a case to answer for discreditable conduct", avoiding potential disciplinary proceedings. Did he shuffle off into obscurity? No.

He authored a report by the dark-money junktank Policy Exchange, calling for stricter penalties for environmental protesters. His recommendations were adopted by the government and incorporated into the draconian 2022 Police Act. So while the spy cops face no consequences, peaceful protesters, on his recommendation, now receive massive prison sentences.

We know this went all the way to the top. The SDS, for which the police spies worked, was funded by the Home Office, and fell under the supervision of several home secretaries.

Despite being a victim of spying himself, Keir Starmer (now Britain's Prime Minister), in his later role as director of public prosecutions, has been accused of presiding over a major cover-up of spy cop activities. To this day, the police refuse to release the files their spies compiled, like the Stasi, on the innocent people they deceived. It is hard to escape the conclusion that official life in this country is rotten to the core. **CT**

George Monbiot is a columnist for the Guardian where this was first published. His website is www.monbiot.com

VIJAY PRASHAD

A bomb that falls on a home at 4 am is guaranteed to kill civilians who are sleeping there. It makes civilians want to flee their homes. Creating the conditions for such flight is the war crime of ethnic cleansing

Why does Israel bomb homes at night?

At 10 pm on the night of October 28, 2024, the Israeli air force struck a five-story building in Beit Lahiya, in the northern area of Gaza. Northern Gaza has been pummelled by the Israelis since October 8, 2023. There has been no respite for the residents of this town, which is north of the Jabaliya refugee camp.

During the early months of the bombing, Sahar (age 42) fled the area with her 11-year-old son and the rest of her family. This was, she told Human Rights Watch, “because of the excessive bombing to civilian houses, which killed entire families.” Asma (32) left Beit Lahiya for the supposedly safe area of al-Mawasi. “We live in a disaster,” she says. “And we are hopeless, starving, and besieged.”

The Abu Nasr family did not leave Beit Lahiya. In fact, large parts of the extended family sought shelter in their family building, thinking that its presence in a residential area might give them some immunity from the Israeli attacks.

On the night of October 28, 2024, there were 300 people living in the 10 apartments in the building. It was congested, but they felt safe.

When the missile struck at 10 pm, it destroyed the stairwell and therefore blocked the ability of any escape from anywhere but the ground floor of the building. Muhammed Abu Nasr (29) lived on the ground floor with his wife and children. They jumped over the perimeter wall and went to stay with a neighbour.

Later, Muhammed told the writer Asil Almanssi: “I didn’t sleep that





whole night, thinking about my parents, my brothers, my nieces, and nephews. How could I have left them and run away? Was I really a coward, a traitor? Thoughts tormented me, and I couldn't tell whether I had done the right thing or not."

But it was the only thing he could have done. To have stayed in a building with a bombed-out stairwell would have been senseless. Families trapped in the building called the Gaza Civil Defense.

But there was nothing that could be done for them till the morning. They packed their bags and waited for dawn when they hoped that they could be rescued from the upper floors of the badly damaged building.

Then, as if they had anticipated it all night long, at 4 am the Israelis struck this residential building once more. This time, they hit the core of the apartments. Muhammed Abu Nasr, now lying in a neighbour's house, heard "an explosion louder than anything I'd ever heard. It felt like an earthquake had shaken the entire area, with the ground trembling violently and parts of the walls in the house I'd taken refuge in collapsing."

It was an enormous bomb. Muhammed heard his family crying for help and screaming that they had dead bodies amongst them. There was nothing to be done. Israeli aircraft filled the skies. Another strike was possible.

When the rescuers began to remove the rubble, they found survivors, wounded with broken legs and punctured lungs. But they also found that more than 100 people from the Abu Nasr family had been killed.

This was a horrendous massacre of a family in a well-known residential area. Carts and strong shoulders carried the wounded to Al-He-lou Hospital, which is a maternity hospital that faced Israeli attacks

in November 2023 but now remains partly functional. It was in the hospital that Asil Almanssi heard Bas-sam Abu Nasr (five), the only survivor from his immediate family, say, over and over, "I want my father." But his father had been killed by the Israelis.

Why at 4 am?

During the Great War (1914–1919), both sides used aircraft to carry bombs that could be dropped on enemy targets, including on residential areas. These aircraft did not have very good navigation devices, but their adversaries also did not have anything beyond searchlights to find them in the sky. To have flown slow bombers in daylight would have exposed them to the swift fighter planes, which is why they flew under cover of darkness at night. This is why bombing runs during the Great War and the Second World War took place at night.

After the Great War, British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin told the House of Commons the truth about the use of aerial bombardment in that era: "The bomber will always get through. The only defence is in [offence], which means that you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourself" (November 10, 1932).

Baldwin's comments in 1932 came seven years after two other European powers (Spain and France) encouraged rogue mercenaries from the United States to bomb the Moroccan town of Chefchaouen in broad daylight.

Spain and France wanted to put down the rebellion led by Abd el-Krim known as the Rif War (1921–1926). The pilots from the United States, who formed the Lafayette Squadron, flew in Breguet 14 bi-plane bombers and carried out 350 bombing runs.

Since the Rif fighters had decent anti-aircraft weapons where they were located, the Lafayette Squadron was instructed to bomb undefended areas such as the city of Chefchaouen and its surrounding villages.

“Our objective,” wrote Captain Paul Rockwell, “was Chefchaouen, the holy city of the Djebala tribesmen.” The city, he noted, “had been bombarded previously, and because of its prestige and sacredness as a holy shrine, an air attack against it was expected to intimidate the Djebalas and be effective in detaching them from the cause of Abdel-Krim.”

In other words, the bombing was not to hit military targets, but to cause psychological distress amongst the Rif fighters. The squadron bombed the city and its surrounding area about five times a day, dropping “over four tonnes of projectiles,” which was a lot for those days. They even bombed a village that had already surrendered. We do not know the civilian death count. It has not been recorded.

“The city looked lovely from the air,” wrote Rockwell, “hugging its high mountain and surrounded with many gardens and green cultivations.”

The city was bombed to send a message to the Rif rebels. This was colonial warfare at its most effective. And because it took place in the colonies, the massacre in Chefchaouen has been forgotten (unlike, for example, the Spanish and German bombing of Guernica – a European town – in 1937, now memorialised in Pablo Picasso’s famous painting).

In the 1970s, the municipal authorities mandated that the walls of the city be painted blue to attract tourists and – some say – to repel mos-

The aircraft that bomb Gaza’s residential areas fly at night because they are able to strike total fear into the population by killing entire families

quitoes; the city, when I visited it a decade ago, is remembered for the blue walls and not the massacre of 1925. We never learn the lessons of history.

The people of Gaza have no anti-aircraft capabilities. They cannot shoot down the Israeli aircraft. At most, they have been able to hit low-flying drones. The aircraft that bomb Gaza’s residential areas do not fly at night because they are afraid of being shot down. They fly at night because they are able to strike total fear in the population by killing entire families in their homes and thereby threatening other families with annihilation.

“Intimidate the Djebalas,” wrote Rockwell, which can easily be updated to “intimidate the Palestinians.”

A bomb that falls on a home at 4 am is guaranteed to kill the civilians who are sleeping there. It makes civilians want to flee their homes. Creating the conditions for such flight is the war crime of ethnic cleansing.

“We live in a disaster,” said Asma, who fled her home but has not left Gaza.

For so many Palestinians, even after this horrendous year of genocide, to leave Gaza is to lose Palestine, to be part of the permanent Nakba (Catastrophe) that was set in motion by the Israelis in 1948. They will not be moved, even by the waves of nighttime bombings that exterminate family after family. By now, almost 1,000 families have been totally killed.

An Al Jazeera investigation notes

that 393 members of the al-Najjar family have been killed, 226 members of the al-Masry family, and 225 of the al-Astal family.

On October 10, 2023, at 8:30 pm, a 2,000 lb. bomb landed on the al-Najjar family home in Deir al-Balah in the center of the Gaza Strip. The bomb killed 21 members of the family, part of the 393 al-Najjar family members killed over the course of the past year.

Suleiman Salman al-Najjar (48) was at the al-Aqsa Martyr’s Hospital that night. He survived the bomb. But his wife, Susanne Subhi Asalam Najjar (40), and four of his children—Farah (23), Nadim (20), Yazan (14), and Safa (age 17 months) – died. He later told Amnesty International that while he was able to recover the body of his son Nadim, with his daughter Safa he could only find a hand.

“Everybody was under the rubble. The house was completely pulverised. The bodies were reduced to shreds. Our lives have been destroyed in a moment. Our family has been destroyed. Something that was unthinkable is now our reality.” **CT**

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WE ARE ALL FRIED



IT'S A PROXY WAR!
TA DAAA!!!



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TRUTH-BOMB
(1/2 MILLION
DEATHS Later)



27/11/24

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► DAVID EDWARDS

Spain's climate catastrophe:

A shocking glimpse into the near future

Spanish floods show how societies will be destroyed if drastic action is not taken

In the 35 years since I first protested for action against climate change on the streets of London, I have often wondered what it is exactly we are trying to avert. Sometimes, notably in the wee small hours, I have tried to imagine how a destabilised climate might one day cause society to collapse. Would the lights just go out? Would supermarkets suddenly be empty of food? Would there simply be no-one to call for help? Would law and order progressively vanish from a newly barbarised world? For a long time, this all seemed like far-distant, dystopian science fiction.

Unfortunately, October's catastrophic floods in Valencia, Spain offer a glimpse of how, in the absence of the kind of drastic action that is currently nowhere on the horizon, human societies will ultimately be dismantled and destroyed.

The Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sanchez, described the floods as the "worst natural weather disaster Spain has witnessed 'this century.'"

But of course, there was nothing straightforwardly 'natural' about what hit Turis, Chiva, Paiporta and other towns in the region. Yes,

high-altitude isolated depressions, known locally as 'cold drops,' are a painful fact of life on Spain's Mediterranean coast, but this 'cold drop' was different.

The town of Turis, for example, received 771.8mm (30.4 inches) of rainfall in 24 hours; the equivalent of a year-and-a-half's rain in one day. Rubén del Campo, the spokesperson for Spain's meteorological agency Aemet, commented: "A relatively strong storm, a powerful downpour like those we see in spring or summer, can bring 40mm or 50mm. This storm was almost 10 times that amount."

Dr Ernesto Rodríguez Camino, a senior state meteorologist and member of the Spanish Meteorological Association, observed: "Events of this type, which used to occur many decades apart, are now becoming more frequent and their destructive capacity is greater."

The floods left at least 223 dead with 32 people missing. Power outages have affected 140,000 people, closing more than 50 roads and most rail

lines. An idea of the scale of the event is also provided by the fact that more than 100,000 cars were damaged or destroyed. These now constitute 100,000 obstructions weighing about 1.5 tons each that take half an hour to be removed by heavy machinery. Moving them all may take months. An estimated 4,500 businesses have been damaged, around 1,800 of them seriously.

Despite his awareness of the severity of the floods, Prime Minister Sanchez has not covered himself in glory. While 7,500 soldiers and 10,000 police officers, trucks, heavy road equipment and Chinook helicopters were deployed, they were desperately slow to arrive. After a week, many residents were reportedly still surviving without electricity and water, and without seeing emergency workers. Streets remained filled with de-





Cars perch precariously on the edge of a bridge after the flooding in Valencia, Spain

bris and increasingly toxic mud.

The sight of elderly couples sleeping outside on balconies without heating, water or light a week after the rains offered a glimpse into the near future. The Spanish authorities have clearly been overwhelmed by the scale of the event. We can imagine how this will become an overwhelming problem as temperatures rise – the lights will go out one day and will stay out.

Widespread anger at the inadequate relief effort culminated in mud, rocks, sticks and bottles being thrown at the Spanish King and Queen, and Sanchez, on a visit to the disaster zone. Two bodyguards were treated for injuries. While the King braved the angry crowd, and the Queen was hit in the face with mud, Sanchez beat a hasty retreat as citizens screamed “Killer!” and

“Son of a bitch!” The PM’s car was repeatedly kicked and hit with sticks that smashed the rear and side windows. Later, more than 100,000 protesters took to the streets in Valencia, clashing with riot police.

Again, this offers a glimpse of how escalating climate disasters devastating communities will fuel extreme, ultimately uncontrollable, anger and violence. People who lose everything, including their loved ones, will be looking to blame local authorities and national governments, not carbon emissions, or fossil fuel companies.

Climate deniers have made much of the fact that Spanish engineers have described how the extreme loss of life was the result of a failure to properly maintain and clear flood channels. This led to blockages in the flow of floodwater which, when

subsequently breached, released a tsunami-like wave of water that tore through residential areas at lower levels where it had not even been raining. But the fact is that nearly a year’s worth of rain fell in just eight hours. Dr Friederike Otto, who leads World Weather Attribution (WWA) at the Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London, commented: “No doubt about it, these explosive downpours were intensified by climate change.”

Dr Linda Speight, lecturer at the University of Oxford’s School of Geography and the Environment (SoGE), said: “Unfortunately, these are no longer rare events. Climate change is changing the structure of our weather systems creating condi-

tions where intense thunderstorms stall over a region leading to record-breaking rainfall – a pattern that we are seeing time and time again.”

Otto adds: “With every fraction of a degree of fossil fuel warming, the atmosphere can hold more moisture, leading to heavier bursts of rainfall. These deadly floods are yet another reminder of how dangerous climate change has already become at just 1.3°C of warming.”

In fact, the European climate agency Copernicus recently reported that our planet this year reached more than 1.5°C of warming compared to the pre-industrial average. The Mediterranean Sea had its warmest surface temperature on record in mid-August, at 28.47 degrees Celsius (83.25 degrees Fahrenheit).

The wider context is deeply alarming: “Fuelled by climate change, the world’s oceans have broken temperature records every single day over the past year, a BBC analysis finds. “Nearly 50 days have smashed existing highs for the time of year by the largest margin in the satellite era.”

An additional factor is that the ground in many parts of eastern and southern Spain is less able to absorb rainwater following severe drought.

The results of Valencia’s floods will also be felt elsewhere. Dr Umair Choksy, senior lecturer in management at the University of Stirling Management School, said: “The severe flooding in Spain could lead to shortages of many products to the UK as Spain is one of the largest exporters of fruits and vegetables to the UK.”

Shoppers have already suffered fruit and vegetable shortages in supermarkets this year in the weeks after storms wrecked Spain’s greenhouses growing food exported to Britain. The *Daily Mirror* reported: “Spain provides a quarter of Britain’s fresh food produce, most

It is not hard to imagine how an escalating stream of climate disasters will one day genuinely threaten the food supply

ly from Almeria, where 4,500 hectares of 13,000 hectares of greenhouses and polytunnels have been damaged by hail and floods. Cold weather in the region in February 2023 hit harvests, and saw many British supermarkets forced to ration customers to two or three items of peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, salad, cauliflower, broccoli and raspberries.”

It is not hard to imagine how an escalating stream of climate disasters will one day genuinely threaten the food supply.

Valencia follows a dizzying list of similar disasters in Europe and globally. Earlier in October, flooding killed 27 people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, causing landslides and major damage to infrastructure. In September, Storm Boris caused 26 deaths and billions of euros in damages in Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Austria and Italy, in what was described as the worst flooding to hit Central Europe for almost 30 years. In June, Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria in southern Germany suffered massive flooding, with some areas receiving a month’s rainfall in 24 hours. In September, in the United States, Hurricane Helene was the deadliest mainland storm in two decades, claiming 233 lives, cutting off power to 4-million people and causing damage estimated at \$87.9-billion.

WWA published an analysis of the ten most deadly extreme weather events of the past 20 years as a re-

sult of which more than 570,000 people died. George Lee, environment correspondent for RTE, Ireland’s national broadcaster, reported: “They concluded unequivocally that, yes, human-caused climate change intensified every single one of those most deadly events.”

Four of these top ten global weather disasters occurred in Europe: “Almost 56,000 people died during the 2010 heatwave in Russia from extreme temperatures made 3,000 to 7,000 more likely by climate change.

“Nearly 54,000 deaths were attributed to the European heat-wave of two years ago. Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Romania, Portugal and the UK were all impacted. Daily temperature peaks were up to 3.6C hotter and 17 times more likely because of climate change.

“Then last year, 2023, yet another European heatwave made it onto the top ten, most deadly list. More than 37,000 people died when mostly the same group of countries as in 2022 were impacted. Portugal and the UK escaped it this time.”

Impossibly, one might think, fossil fuels continue to benefit from record subsidies of \$31-million (£10.3-million) a minute in 2022, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF analysis found the total subsidies for oil, gas and coal in 2022 were \$7-trillion (£5-trillion). That is equivalent to 7 percent of global GDP and almost double what the world spends on education.

The standard pattern of responses in corporate media coverage continues. At the more idiotic end of the spectrum, we have the likes of James Whale in the *Daily Express*: “The flooding in Spain has been a tragedy. But blaming it solely on man-made climate change is short-sighted at best, and dangerous at worst. The climate has always been changing and the planet has changed with it.” (Whale, ‘Climate change not sole reason for disasters,’

Daily Express, November 4, 2024).

Despite the highly credible evidence cited above, one BBC report was absurdly cautious: “The warming climate is also likely to have contributed to the severity of the floods.”

Elsewhere, brief references to climate change do appear, typically towards the middle or end of news reports: “Scientists trying to explain what happened see two likely connections to human-caused climate change. One is that warmer air holds and then dumps more rain. The other is possible changes in the jet stream – the river of air above land that moves weather systems across the globe – that spawn extreme weather.” (Graham Keeley, ‘211 now dead after Europe’s deadliest floods in 57 years,’ *Mail on Sunday*, November 3 2024).

To its credit, the *Guardian* went further in its leader on the floods, titled, ‘The *Guardian* view on climate-linked disasters: Spain’s tragedy will not be the last’: “In Spain, a large majority of the public recognises the threat from climate change and favours policies to address it. There, as in much of the world, catastrophic weather events that used to be regarded as ‘natural disasters’ are now, rightly, seen instead as climate disasters. Policies that support people and places to adapt to heightened risks are urgently needed.”

Jonathan Watts wrote an *Observer* piece titled, ‘Spain’s apocalyptic floods show two undeniable truths: the climate crisis is getting worse and Big Oil is killing us’: “We are living in a time of unwelcome climate superlatives: the hottest two years in the world’s recorded history, the deadliest fire in the US, the biggest fire in Europe, the biggest fire in Canada, the worst drought in the Amazon rainforest.

The list goes on. This is just the start. As long as people pump gases

Queen Letizia’s words – like humanity’s entire stance on climate collapse – were a vacuous public relations non-response

into the atmosphere, such records will be broken with increasing frequency until ‘worst ever’ becomes our default expectation.”

Should we be impressed by Watts’ piece and the *Guardian* leader? In reality, these are the same worthy, toothless analyses we have been reading for the last three decades. The pattern is so familiar, so universal, that it is hard to perceive the true disaster of corporate media coverage.

Imagine if Valencia had been comparably devastated by an ISIS-style terror attack. Imagine if the same attackers had recently devastated Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Austria, Italy, the United States, and numerous other countries.

Yes, reporting would focus on the precise details of the attacks and their impacts. But would the agency responsible be mentioned as an afterthought towards the middle and end of news reports, and almost never mentioned in the headlines?

The terrorists responsible would be front and centre in lurid headlines, as was the case with Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Priority would be given to the blistering denunciations of Western political and military leaders, and their calls for immediate action to counter the threat. The public would be mobilised – each day, every day, for months and years – for ‘WAR!’

Almost none of this appears in corporate media in response to

a rapidly growing climate threat which, as Valencia’s fate shows very well, is infinitely more serious than anything offered by terrorism.

The impact of climate change continues to be presented as a human-interest story, or as a niche scientific issue best covered by the likes of Sir David Attenborough in glossy BBC documentaries.

It is not presented as an immediate, existential threat that dwarfs in importance literally every other subject – even Gaza, even Ukraine, even Trump’s re-election – on the front pages. The disastrous impacts are afforded massive, alarming coverage, but the causes are not.

The strange, fake, otherworldly quality of the ‘mainstream’ response to the crisis was captured in an encounter between a traumatised survivor of the Spanish floods and Spain’s Queen Letizia. The survivor, breathless with grief and despair, said: “They didn’t warn us. They didn’t warn us. That’s why this happened. Many dead. Many dead.”

Queen Letizia responded: “You’re right. You’re right.”

Did this despairing woman who had lost everything really need to have the truth of her experience affirmed by a member of the fabulously privileged Royal Family? Did the Queen have anything material or medical to offer a woman with nothing? Did she have any expertise on any related issue to render her reassurances meaningful?

Queen Letizia’s words, like the royal visit – like humanity’s entire stance on climate collapse – were a benevolent-seeming but vacuous public relations non-response to a desperately real problem that needs real solutions. **CT**

David Edwards is co-editor of Medialens, the UK media watchdog – www.medialens.org – where this article was first published

► JONATHAN COOK

Biden and Starmer are destroying international law to protect genocide

When everything is exposed as a lie, the biggest liars triumph. The forces of darkness rush in to fill the void. That is the future awaiting us as the West continues its support of Israel against genocide court ruling

For more than a year, those calling for an end to Israel's slaughter of civilians in Gaza have been relentlessly vilified – as apologists for Hamas, as antisemites, even as supporters of a genocide against Israel and the wider Jewish people.

These smears have been buttressed by western politicians and the media insisting that Israel is conducting a legitimate, “defensive” war with limited aims, supposedly to eradicate Hamas and free a few dozen remaining Israeli hostages.

The bigger picture has had to be swept from view. That Israel has levelled the infrastructure in Gaza needed to sustain life; bombarded Palestinians wherever they have sought refuge; butchered many tens of thousands of civilians – or more likely hundreds of thousands; and actively starved most of the population by withholding aid.

And, overlooked in all of this, Israel has failed to make a significant impact on Hamas' fighting ability and has almost certainly endangered the lives of the hostages with its indiscriminate bombing campaigns.

Finally, 14 months on, the Inter-

national Criminal Court (ICC) has struck a major blow against Israel's tissue of lies and deceptions – as well as the complicity of western elites.

Judges at the war crimes court approved in November the issuing of arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence minister, Yoav Gallant.

After six months of delays, the ICC has agreed, against a background of unprecedented intimidation, to put the pair on trial at The Hague for crimes against humanity, including the targeting of civilians and the use of starvation as a method of war.

Should either step on the soil of any of the 124 member states, including Britain and all of Europe, that state will be obligated to arrest them and transfer them to The Hague.

The charges laid against Netanyahu and Gallant are likely also to bolster the case being made at the ICC's sister court, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), that Israel's actions in Gaza meet the legal definition of genocide.

What is clear is that the walls are closing in on Israel, as they are for those who have aided and abetted its crimes. Which includes western

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU



political and media establishments.

This is a historic – and therefore dangerous – moment for the court and for the international legal order.

The judges have finally plucked up the courage to take on an ally of Washington – in fact, its most favoured client state – rather than continuing to single out the crimes of African dictators or official enemies of the West.

It is a sign of how grave and indisputable Israel's crimes are, and quite how much the court's own credibility is at stake should it continue to ignore those crimes, that it has decided to act.

The court is caught in an impossible bind.

To have refused to charge Netanyahu and Gallant would have given the court's implicit blessing to Israel's dismantlement, bit by bit, of the laws of war.

It would have confirmed the criticisms of those who say the ICC serves as simply another weapon – a legal one – to be used by the US and Nato against states they dislike.

And it would have licensed other states to cite the Israel exemption as an alibi to commit their own crimes against humanity. The ICC would have doomed itself to irrelevance.

On the other hand, acting against Israel – and thereby against Washington and its European satraps – puts the court directly on a collision course with the West.

It jeopardises the international legal order the court is there to uphold – one developed immediately after the Second World War to prevent the very crimes against humanity that culminated in the Holocaust and the US atomic bombing of Japanese cities.

This is precisely Netanyahu's goal, as Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper reported at the end of November:

"Netanyahu intends to turn the ICC arrest warrant against him into a global motion of no confidence against international law and its institutions."

The likelihood is that Washington will bring the whole edifice tumbling down rather than set a precedent in which it agrees to sacrifice its highly militarised client state, strategically located in the oil-rich Middle East.

Don't expect much pushback from Europe, even from the capitals where the centrists – rather than the nationalists – reign.

The hypocrisy of the European Union, rhetorically committed to the rule of law and the principle of humanitarianism but in practice entirely beholden militarily, economically and ideologically to the imperial hub in Washington, will soon enough be exposed.

They have only ever been interested in pursuing "humanitarianism" when it has served Washington's or their own geostrategic agenda – most recently in using Ukraine as the battlefield in which to fight a proxy war against Russia.

Given the evidence of what Israel has done over the past 14 months – killing hundreds of thousands of civilians, according to the most reliable estimates, and imposing a severe aid blockade – as well as the decla-

Acting against Israel – and thereby against Washington and its European satraps – puts the ICC on a collision course with the West



rations from Israeli leaders of their intention to make Gaza uninhabitable, it is hard to conceive of how the court could not find Netanyahu or Gallant guilty, were they put on trial.

Or at least, it is inconceivable if legal considerations – rather than political ones – are at the forefront of the judges' minds. After all, even a former head of the Israeli military, Moshe Yaalon, admitted at the beginning of this month that it is clear Israel is not defending itself in Gaza but "ethnically cleansing" – to use his words – the enclave.

Which is why the campaign to pollute the case with other concerns began immediately. Netanyahu accused the court of being "anti-semitic" – as he does to every body that tries to hold him or the Israeli army to account for their flagrant violations of the rules of war.

Netanyahu claimed that Israel was not starving the people of Gaza, even as figures released by the United Nations showed that virtually no food had been delivered over the preceding 40 days to large parts of the enclave. The UN warned that

the people there faced “diminishing conditions for survival.”

But according to Netanyahu, the evidence before our eyes is nothing more than a plot to blacken his – and therefore Israel’s – name.

Once again Netanyahu, echoed by his apologists, has imposed a false, binary choice that can only fuel antisemitism. His demand: either back Israel’s genocide in Gaza or expose yourself as a Jew hater.

Palestinians, solidarity activists and human rights organisations are used to this. But now even the judges of the International Criminal Court are being tarred as antisemites. Could there be a quicker path to making antisemitism respectable?

In their own way, western leaders have subtly reiterated Netanyahu’s trivialisation of antisemitism – and by extension, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Rather than staunchly defend the court and the rule of law, they have desperately tried to shore up the existing narrative: that Israel is the

The US and Israel have refused to ratify the Rome Statute, which founded the ICC: they regard themselves as exempt from international law

wronged party, not the tens of thousands of Palestinian children killed and maimed by its bombs, and the two million-plus civilians being starved to death by its aid blockade.

As ever, Britain and the US are the worst offenders.

President Joe Biden impugned the court’s motives, calling the decision to enforce international law against Washington’s client state “outrageous.” A White House spokesperson referred to “process errors” in the court’s ruling but could not specify what these supposed errors were.

The US and Israel have refused to ratify the Rome Statute, which founded the ICC, for one reason only: they regard themselves as exempt from the provisions of international law.

In other words, international law is viewed solely as a vehicle for advancing their interests, not as a limitation on their military behaviour. The ICC’s indictments against Netanyahu and Gallant have upended the premise of a “rules-based international order” in which Washington alone sets the rules.

Early in December, the *Washington Post* said exactly that quiet part out loud, stating that the court had no business holding the “elected leaders of a democratic

country” to account for the crimes against humanity they are accused of committing.

But even if we accept that false premise – is it only dictators who can commit war crimes? – Israel is not a democratic country by any measure. It is an apartheid, settler-colonial state, as human rights groups, including Israeli ones, have been warning for years.

And its genocide is simply the culmination of a decades-long, zero-sum process in which Israel has sought to eradicate the rival national claims of the native Palestinian people to their homeland.

It is in the DNA of settler-colonial states to expel, segregate or exterminate indigenous populations – as the US should know well from its own history.

On the US right, there are calls to invoke the so-called “Hague Invasion Act” of 2002, should Netanyahu or Gallant be put on trial. That law permits Washington to use military force against the court if it charges US personnel with war crimes.

More immediately, bipartisan support appears to be growing in Washington to revive sanctions against senior ICC officials – a form of intimidation designed to subvert due process and which itself is likely to constitute an international crime.

In 2020, Donald Trump imposed draconian sanctions on the ICC after it announced it was investigating the US and Israel for war crimes, committed respectively in Afghanistan and the occupied Palestinian territories

Biden dropped the sanctions a few months later, shortly after entering office, but only in return for the ICC “deprioritising” its investigation of US crimes in Afghanistan.

Trump will be in the Oval Office within weeks. The ICC knows it



KEIR STARMER

is likely to face his full wrath once more.

Already European states are jostling to stay on the right side of Washington and ignore their obligations under the Rome Statute.

France, after initially indicating it would enforce the arrest warrant against Netanyahu, recapitulated, claiming the Israeli prime minister was “immune” from arrest.

Paris echoed the White House in justifying its decision on the entirely discredited grounds that Israel is not a party to the ICC. As has been repeatedly pointed out, the court has ruled it has jurisdiction in the Palestinian territories, where Israel’s crimes are being committed.

Britain has not gone so far yet as to openly defy the court in its response to the arrest warrants. Instead, it offered the most minimal, mealy mouthed backing.

Keir Starmer, Britain’s prime minister, and his foreign secretary, David Lammy, both lawyers, maintained a studious silence as Netanyahu and Biden besmirched the reputation of the court and the standing of international law.

Yvette Cooper, the home secretary who would have to approve an arrest warrant were Netanyahu or Gallant to arrive in the UK, shrugged off responsibility, pretending she suddenly did not understand the most elementary aspects of British law – or her role.

“That’s not a matter for me,” she told broadcasters in a clearly rehearsed response.

Meanwhile, a government spokesperson commented only that Britain would “comply with its legal obligations” – leaving it unclear how it might interpret those obligations were they ever put to the test.

Notably, Herzi Halevi, the head of Israel’s military and high on the

In a jaw-dropping moment, Lammy claimed that Israel had not killed enough Palestinians in Gaza for its actions to qualify as genocide

list of Israeli officials who face a future indictment by the ICC, visited the UK late last month for a meeting with several counterparts from other nations.

Almost certainly, Starmer’s government issued him with “special mission” immunity beforehand, given the risk that an arrest warrant could have been issued at short notice during his visit.

There is a pattern here hard to miss.

Shortly before the ICC announced its arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, Lammy condemned Russia at the UN in clear, unequivocal terms for vetoing a Security Council resolution proposed by the UK to protect civilians in Sudan.

Lammy’s concern is that a civil war there has led to ordinary people being subjected, in his words, to war crimes such as “killing, rape and starvation.”

The question then is why is Lammy not equally exercised by Israel’s “killing, rape and starvation” of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. All of these crimes have been documented in horrifying detail over the past year and are central to the ICC’s case against Netanyahu and Gallant.

Why, similarly, did Lammy have no words of opprobrium – as he did for Russia – when the Biden administration recently vetoed a Security Council resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza to halt the killing of Palestinian civilians and secure the release of the Israeli hostages

It is not just the British govern-

ment’s hypocrisy on show. Lammy and Starmer have had to feign complete ignorance of the most fundamental aspects of international law in denying that Israel is carrying out a genocide in Gaza.

In a jaw-dropping moment a few weeks ago, Lammy claimed that Israel had not killed enough Palestinians in Gaza for its actions to qualify as genocide.

That was doubly mendacious.

Lammy knows that Gaza’s death toll is necessarily a massive undercount. The enclave’s health and governance systems, in utter disarray after more than a year of bombardment, are in no position to record most deaths, even assuming bodies can be unearthed from the rubble and then identified.

But more significantly, no serious lawyer or judge thinks that genocide is determined according to a headcount or a mathematical formula. The Genocide Convention specifically lists forms of genocide – such as the forcible transfer of children from one group to another – that may not entail loss of life.

And as UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has repeatedly observed, the aim of the Genocide Convention is to recognise genocide at the earliest stage possible so that mass slaughter can be averted. And, in this case, so that Israel is deterred from spreading the genocide from Gaza to the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

As she notes: “Genocide is a process, not an act... No Palestinian is safe under Israeli rule.”

The convention is not there, as Lammy implies, simply to serve as a guidance note in assessing retroactively whether a genocide has taken place after the failure to stop it.

It was this stunning misunderstanding of the law by Lammy that

led Albanese to characterise him as a “genocide denier.”

The term could be used just as fairly to describe Starmer.

He recently told the House of Commons that, from his previous work as a human rights lawyer, he could be certain that Israel was not committing genocide in Gaza.

Except, if the evidence from his earlier professional life proves anything at all, it is just how economical he is being with the truth when addressing the destruction of Gaza.

For months, the establishment media have been careful to avoid referencing videos doing the rounds on social media of Starmer readily defining what constitutes genocide in the period before Israel’s slaughter in Gaza began.

One video, from 2014, shows him addressing the International Court of Justice, the ICC’s sister court, to set out what he characterised as the genocidal policies of Serbia in its 1991 siege on the Croatian city of Vukovar, following the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Starmer explained: “Serbian forces carried out a sustained campaign of shelling, systematic expulsion, denial of food, water, electricity, sanitation and medical treatment – bombing, burning, brutal killings and torture, which reduced the city [of Vukovar] to rubble and destroyed its Croat population.”

He clarified why he was calling these acts a genocide rather than an armed conflict. Because, he said, Serbian actions were a “radically disproportionate attack deliberately intended to devastate the town and its civilian population.”

As Starmer well knows, Israel’s crimes in Gaza have been immeasurably worse – and on a far larger scale – than anything suffered by Vukovar. Also unlike Vukovar, in Israel’s case its leaders have not shied away from making clear their



Video from 2014 shows Keir Starmer, now Britain’s prime Minister, addressing the International Criminal Court, where he defined “what constitutes genocide in the period before Israel’s slaughter in Gaza began.”

genocidal intent towards Gaza.

So how, using Starmer’s own definition, does Israel’s slaughter in Gaza not count as genocide?

Similarly, in July 2020, shortly after he became leader of the Labour party, Starmer issued a video to mark Srebrenica Memorial Day – the anniversary of events in 1995 in which 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed and buried in mass graves by Serbian force

Strikingly, Starmer called those deaths a genocide, one that “must never be forgotten.”

If he was so certain the massacre in Srebrenica amounted to

a genocide – one small front in a much larger war – how can Israel’s slaughter in Gaza, on an incomparably greater scale, not also qualify as a genocide?

Starmer added that it was incumbent on the West to “use the agony and the anger that crimes like Srebrenica bring to help us find the courage and conviction to stand up and say, ‘Never again’.”

It hardly needs pointing out that, only three years later, Starmer was unable to find the courage or conviction to stand up to either Israel or the US and say “never again” as the Gaza genocide unfolded.

Starmer and Lammy’s comments should be seen for what they are: an attempt to subvert the rules of war, in line with Israel and Washington’s wishes.

In their repeated genocide denial, the pair have sought to undermine the standing of the International Court of Justice and its large panel of judges, all esteemed jurists of in-

Only three years later, Starmer was unable to find the courage or conviction to stand up to either Israel or the US and say “never again”

ternational law.

The court ruled 11 months ago that a “plausible” case had been made that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza. The situation in the enclave is incalculably worse now.

Starmer and Lammy have treated the ICJ with contempt. And through their evasions and double standards, they are now weakening the standing of the ICC, too.

Starmer’s predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn, has suggested that the British government dare not identify the slaughter in Gaza as a genocide because that “would be admitting their own complicity in one of the greatest crimes of our time.”

Corbyn is right, in part. Doubtless, the ICC’s delay in issuing the arrest warrants reflects its nervousness with where this process it has initiated could ultimately lead.

It will be hard to restrict the charges to Netanyahu and Gallant, or even other Israelis, especially when western leaders, including Biden, Starmer and Lammy, show they deserve to be in the dock alongside them.

Britain has been intimately colluding in Israel’s genocide from the very outset.

It is selling weapons and components vital to the operation of F-35 fighter jets that have been bombing Gaza and killing huge numbers of civilians.

It has been gun-running for Israel too from its Cyprus airbase: the largest number of deliveries of weapons to Israel have been via the RAF.

And from the same airbase, Brit-

The number of experts calling out the genocide in Gaza grows by the day. Even Israeli Holocaust scholars have added their voices

ish surveillance planes secretly fly over Gaza numerous times a day to provide Israel with intelligence – intelligence that most likely has been used to target and destroy infrastructure, making the enclave uninhabitable.

And on top of all that, Starmer and his government have been justifying Israel’s war crimes as “self-defence” and pre-empting the judgment of the ICJ on whether Israel is guilty of genocide.

That goes far beyond genocide denial into the realms of active collusion and participation.

But it is not just about self-preservation. The number of experts calling out the genocide in Gaza grows by the day. Even Israeli Holocaust scholars have added their voices.

One, Omer Bartov, believes not only that there is a genocide unfolding in Gaza but that it is reaching its “final stage.”

Starmer could easily reverse course, using the ICC decision as the moment to declare that Israel has crossed a threshold and that the UK must desist from colluding in the eradication of Gaza.

He has decided not to take that course. He has decided to assist Israel in seeing out its genocide to the bitter end.

In equivocating about whether the UK backs international law, at a

moment when Israel and the US are determined to tear it down brick by brick, Starmer is doing something even graver. He is colluding in the dismantlement of the rule of law and its supporting institutions like the ICC.

There is one of only two possible lessons to be drawn here.

Either that Britain never truly supported international law. Its signing up to the Rome Statute and the ICC was always on the assumption that the court was there to punish others. That it would never actually dare try to restrain countries that belonged to a self-declared club of “western democracies.”

Or that Britain, like the rest of Europe, is not really an independent, sovereign state, but an outpost, a protectorate, of an imperial hub in Washington that dictates our foreign policy. Defiance cannot be contemplated because it would not be tolerated.

Or that both are the case.

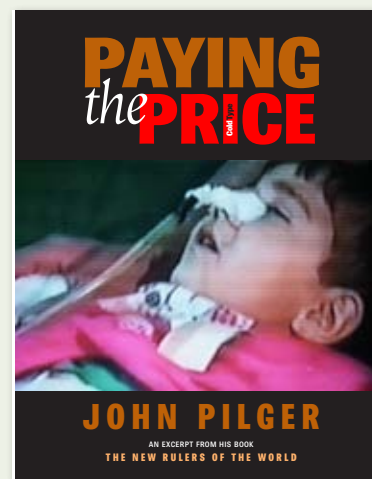
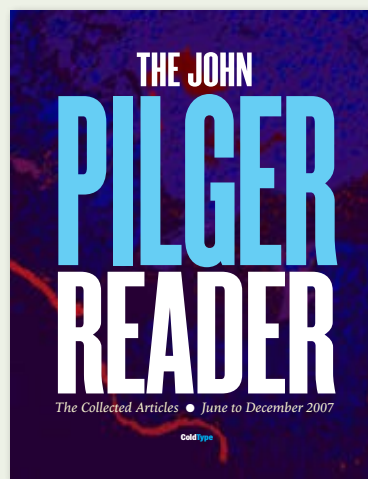
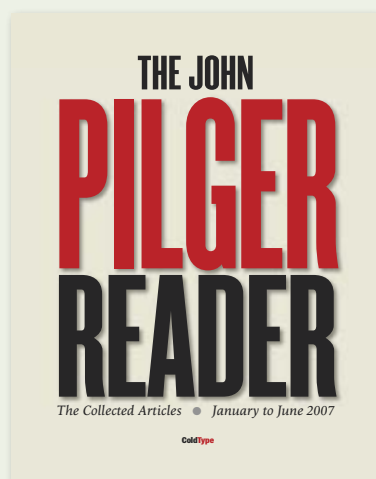
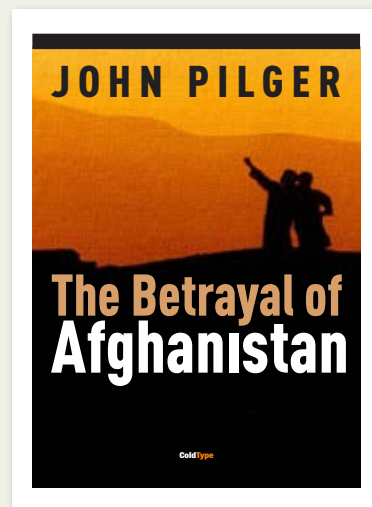
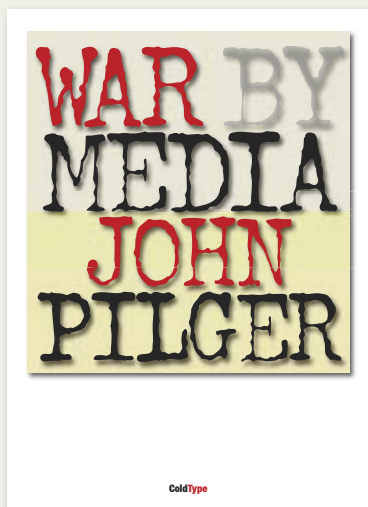
Either way, the truth is that the idea of a British liberal democracy is unravelling before our eyes. When the guardians of the liberal order, of the rule of law and humanitarianism, are unmasked as charlatans – as is the case with both Starmer and Biden – the forces of darkness rush in to fill the void.

When everything is exposed as a lie, the biggest liars triumph. That is the future that awaits us. **CT**

Jonathan Cook is the author of three books on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a winner of the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. More of the author’s writing can be found at www.jonathancook.net

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DENNIS ALTMAN

Israel apartheid resembles America's Jim Crow South

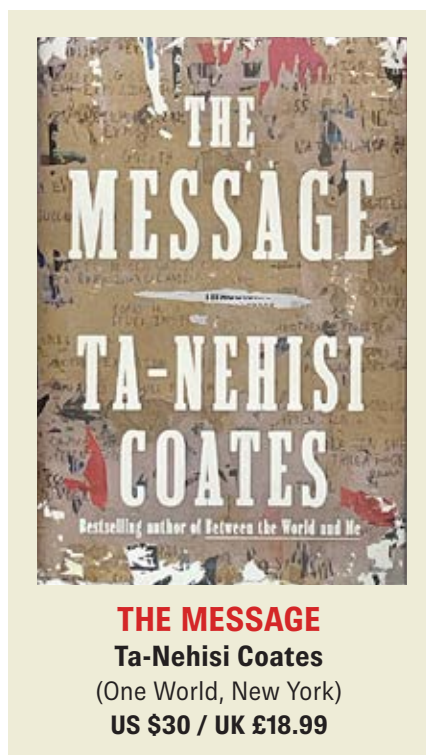
Ta-Nehisi Coates “might persuade ardent defenders of Israel that criticism of its refusal to recognise the claims of Palestinians is not equivalent to antisemitism”

In May 2023, renowned black American writer Ta-Nehisi Coates spent ten days in the West Bank and Israel, where he spent half his time with *Breaking the Silence*, a group of former Israeli soldiers who now oppose the occupation.

Going to Palestine was “a huge shock to me”, he told the *New York Times*. Coming back, he felt, as he told US journalist Peter Beinart, “a responsibility to yell” about what he'd seen – which he describes as apartheid and compares to the segregated Jim Crow South in the United States.

As he was writing his new book, *The Message*, the October 7 Hamas attacks happened, followed by the ongoing war in Gaza. He doesn't cover these events in the book, though he has talked about them in interviews, including one in which he described the decision not to allow a Palestinian state legislator to speak at the Democratic National Convention that nominated Kamala Harris as “deeply inhumane.”

Coates is among the most celebrated and accomplished writers in the US. He is also, importantly, a black writer in a world still dominated by white Americans. He first grabbed attention with a 2014 essay on America and slavery in the *Atlantic*, titled “The Case for Repa-



ration.” Subsequently, he has written five books, including a novel, *The Water Dancer*, set on a Virginia slave plantation. He was even hired to write a Superman movie.

Coates has deliberately cast himself as part of the legacy of black American writing, most notably through lyrical language that echoes the writer and civil rights activ-

ist James Baldwin. After reading his memoir about the experience of being black in America, *Between The World and Me*, fellow writer Toni Morrison said she regarded him as Baldwin's heir.

The Message is a series of three essays directed at Coates' writing students at Howard University. In it, he chronicles three very different journeys. The final essay, about his trip to Israel–Palestine, takes up almost half the book.

His first trip is to Senegal, in search of the origins of Afro-American slavery. In the second, he visits a small town in South Carolina where there have been attempts to ban *Between The World and Me* from being taught in schools. Not surprisingly, all three sections are haunted by his awareness of racism and colonialism. His name, Ta-Nehisi, is a deliberate reference to the ancient Egyptian term for the kingdom of Nubia, sometimes translated as “land of the blacks.”

Coates recognises that Western defence of slavery depended on defining the African as subhuman, just as Western colonialism justified itself with an ideology of racism. In Senegal, he visits the island of Goree, for four centuries the largest slave trading port on the African coast, now a world heritage site.

But like other African-American

writers who have gone to Africa in search of their roots, he recognises that he is an outsider: “We have a right to our imagined traditions, to our imagined places, and those traditions and places are most powerful when we confess that they are imagined.”

These thoughts echo again when Coates struggles to come to terms with Israel, where both Palestinians and Israelis hold deeply felt emotional connections to the land, which makes compromise difficult.

In Chapin, South Carolina, teacher Mary Wood faced calls for her firing for teaching *Between the World and Me*, and pushed back against an attempt to ban her teaching it. *The Message* is frustrating in its lack of detail about the case, but Woods’ battle with the local school board has been widely reported as part of ongoing conflict within the US over censorship of books dealing with racial and sexual injustice. Coates is too focused on the fate of his own book to stand back and analyse the bigger conflict it represents.

America’s culture wars are essentially battles over how to define a national identity – or, as Coates writes, to “privilege the apprehension of national dogmas over the questioning of them.” Our attack on “black armband” history (as named by Geoffrey Blainey in 1993) is paralleled by right-wing American denials of the centrality of slavery to the creation of the US, and debates over “critical race theory.”

Coates’ account of his trip to Palestine has been the most controversial aspect of his book. Significantly, he begins this section with an account of his visit to the World Holocaust Remembrance Center.

His sense of the horrors recorded there makes his account of Israeli occupation and dispossession of Pal-



Photo: Caroline / flickr

Goree Island, off the West Coast of Africa, is a monument to the departure point for millions of victims of the North American slave trade

estinians more poignant. Reflecting on the memorial, Coates writes: “Every time I visit a space of memory dedicated to this particular catastrophe I always come away thinking that it was worse than I thought, worse than I could ever imagine.”

Aware of the racism that surrounds him as a black American, Coates can imagine himself as both Palestinian and Israeli. This generosity of imagination does not prevent critical analysis. His accounts of life in the occupied West Bank underline the reality that Israel has imposed a regime that is effectively based on the subordination and dispossession of Palestinians – and a deliberate attempt, he writes, to deny any possibility of a genuine two-state solution.

Aware of the racism that surrounds him as a black American, Coates can imagine himself as both Palestinian and Israeli

The Israeli lobby is outraged by claims Israel has created an apartheid regime: many see the term as motivated by antisemitism. This is the implicit message of much of the pro-Israeli lobby, as summed up in the demands that Australian universities adopt a particular definition of antisemitism.

The strength of Coates’ analysis is that he minimises neither the reality of antisemitism, nor that of Israel’s domination of Palestinians. Defenders of Israel struggle to accept that once-persecuted people can become the persecutors. Yet, as Coates writes, “There was no ultimate victim, that victims and victimizers were ever flowing.”

In Coates’ view, Israel is not a democracy. To claim otherwise, he believes, is to deny the reality of Israel’s effective control of seven million Palestinians living on the West Bank and Gaza, who are now subject to dispossession and destruction in ways that resemble the worst carnage of World War II.

It is extraordinary that our politicians who can extol the virtues of multiculturalism remain blind to



A British protester displays his "Freedom For Palestine" scarf at the start of London's Al Quds Rally in solidarity with Palestinians

the realities of Israeli occupation, and indeed to the growing assertion of Jewish supremacy over those Israeli residents, around 25 percent of whom are not Jewish.

"Those who claimed Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East were just as likely to claim that America was the oldest democracy in the world," he writes. "And both claims relied on excluding whole swaths of the population."

Coates comes closest to explaining this paradox in his account of a plaque in Jerusalem that bears the name of a former US ambassador and proclaims "the unbreakable bond" between the two nations. This bond, it reads, is based on the shared ideals of the Bible, language that reverberates among many evangelical Christians today.

For millions of Americans, criticism of Israel becomes criticism of the US itself. The strength of the Israeli lobby in the US is enormous. The Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which spent over \$100-million this year, helped at least 318 American politicians win their seats in the recent US elections.

Not surprisingly, Palestinian voices go largely unheard in the US. Coates points to a study that demonstrates over a 50-year period ending in 2019, only 2 percent of opinion pieces discussing Palestine had Palestinian authors. (The study covered four major mainstream publications, including the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.)

Many reviews of *The Message* have been critical. Paul Sehgal in the *New Yorker* described it as "a public offering seemingly designed for private ends, an artefact of deep shame and surprising vanity which reads as if it had been conjured to settle its author's soul." I think the book is stronger than Sehgal suggests.

The Message is written as a conversation with Coates' writing students, and his growing realisation that "becoming a good writer would not be enough."

He acknowledges his own limits: "I had gone to Palestine, like I'd gone to Senegal, in pursuit of my own questions and thus had not

fully seen the people on their own terms."

In fact, though, he did pay attention. The section on Palestine includes conversations with both Palestinians and Israelis, as well as references to the voluminous literature on the conflict. (Unfortunately, he does not include footnotes or a bibliography.) Since the publication of this book, Coates has become an active advocate for Palestinian rights. He recognises he has come late to this debate.

Yes, as his own words suggest, there is egocentrism in *The Message*. But I read it as an honest attempt to think through how a writer can best influence the world when confronted by slaughter and inhumanity. *The Message* is an unashamedly personal book. At times, it reads as if the author were in analysis, working through the privileges and burdens of being a successful writer and intellectual.

At several points, he refers to himself as both a writer and a steward, with an obligation to speak out about injustice to others. He writes of his books as his children, which "leave home, travel, have their own relationships, and leave their own impressions." (He hints that of his five "children," his favourite is his novel, *The Water Dancer*.)

I only wish the ardent defenders of Israel who occupy Australia's parliament could be persuaded to read Coates' book. At least it might persuade them that criticism of Israel's refusal to recognise the claims of Palestinians is not equivalent to antisemitism.

CT

Dennis Altman is Vice Chancellor's Fellow and Professorial Fellow, Institute for Human Security and Social Change, La Trobe University. He is affiliated with the Jewish Council of Australia. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

► NORMAN SOLOMON

If the effects of Biden's foreign policy end up as key factors in nuclear annihilation, historians will not be around to assess his culpability

Omnicide Joe?

President Biden has never wavered from approving huge arms shipments to Israel during more than 13 months of mass murder and deliberate starvation of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Biden's crucial role earned him the name "Genocide Joe."

That nickname might seem shrill, but it's valid. Although Biden will not be brought to justice for serving as a key accomplice to the horrific crimes against humanity that continue in Gaza, the label sticks – and candid historians will condemn him as a direct enabler of genocide.

Biden could also qualify for another nickname: "Omnicide Joe."

In contrast to the Genocide Joe sobriquet, which events have already proven apt, Omnicide Joe is a bit anticipatory. That's inevitable, because if the cascading effects of his foreign policy end up as key factors in nuclear annihilation, historians will not be around to assess his culpability for omnicide – defined as "the destruction of all life or all human life."

That definition scarcely overstates what scientists tell us would result from an exchange of nuclear weapons. Researchers have discovered that "nuclear winter" would quickly set in across the globe, blotting out sunlight and wiping out ag-

riculture, with a human survival rate of perhaps 1 or 2 percent.

With everything – literally – at stake, you might think that averting thermonuclear war between the world's two nuclear superpowers, Russia and the United States, would be high on a president's to-do list. But that's hardly been the case with Biden since he first pulled up a chair at the Oval Office desk.

In fact, Biden has done a lot during the first years of this decade to inflame the realistic fears of nuclear war. His immediate predecessor Donald Trump pulled the US out of two vital treaties – Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces and Open Skies – and Biden did nothing to reinstate them. Likewise, Trump killed the Iran nuclear deal negotiated during the Obama administration, and Biden let it stay dead.

Instead of fulfilling his 2020 campaign promise to adopt a US policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons, two years ago Biden signed off on the Nuclear Posture Review policy document that explicitly declares the opposite. Last year, under the euphemism of "modernization," the US government spent \$51-billion – more than every other nuclear-armed country combined – updating and

sustaining its nuclear arsenal, gaining profligate momentum in a process that's set to continue for decades.

Before and after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022, Biden showed a distinct lack of interest in actual diplomacy to prevent the war or to end it. Three days before the invasion, writing in the *Financial Times*, Jeffrey Sachs pointed out: "Biden has said repeatedly that the US is open to diplomacy with Russia, but on the issue that Moscow has most emphasised – NATO enlargement – there has been no American diplomacy at all. [Russian President Vladimir] Putin has repeatedly demanded that the US forswear NATO's enlargement into Ukraine, while Biden has repeatedly asserted that membership of the alliance is Ukraine's choice."

While Russia's invasion and horrible war in Ukraine should be condemned, Biden has compounded Putin's crimes by giving much higher





priority to Washington's cold-war mania than to negotiation for peace – or to mitigation of escalating risks of nuclear war.

From the outset, Biden scarcely acknowledged that the survival of humanity was put at higher risk by the Ukraine war. In his first State of the Union speech, a week after the invasion, Biden devoted much of his oratory to the Ukraine conflict without saying a word about the heightened danger that it might trigger the use of nuclear weapons.

During the next three months, the White House posted more than 60 presidential statements, documents and communiques about the war in Ukraine. They all shared with his State of the Union address a stunning characteristic – the complete absence of any mention of nuclear weapons or nuclear war dangers – although experts gauged those dangers as being the worst they'd been since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

With occasional muted references to not wanting a US military clash with nuclear-armed Russia, during the last 33 months the Biden administration has said it did not want to cross its own red lines – and then has repeatedly proceeded to do so.

Superhawk John Bolton, a former national security advisor to President Trump, summarised the process on CNN while bemoaning that Biden's reckless escalation hasn't been even more reckless: "It's been one long public debate after another, going back to 'Shall we supply ATACMS [ballistic missiles] to the Ukrainians at all?' First it's no, then there's a debate, then there's yes. 'Should we supply the Ukrainians Abrams tanks?' First it's no, then there's a long debate, then it's yes. 'Should we supply the Ukrainians with F-16s?' First it's no, then there's a long debate, and it's yes. Now, 'Can we allow the Ukrainians to use ATACMS inside Russia?' After a long debate, now it's yes."

Heralded or reviled, Biden's supposed restraint during the Ukraine war has faded, with more and more dangerous escalation in its place.

Biden's recent green light for Ukraine to launch longer-range missiles into Russia is another jump toward nuclear warfare. As a Quincy Institute analyst wrote, "the stakes, and escalatory risks, have steadily crept up." In an ominous direction, "this needlessly escalatory step has put Russia and NATO one step closer to a direct confrontation – the window to avert catastrophic miscalculation is now that much narrower."

Like Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken as well as the Democratic and Republican phalanx of Ukraine war cheerleaders on Capitol Hill, Bolton doesn't mention that polling shows strong support among Ukrainian people for negotiations to

put a stop to the war. "An average of 52 percent of Ukrainians would like to see their country negotiate an end to the war as soon as possible" Gallup reported, compared to only 38 percent who say "their country should keep fighting until victory."

Biden and other war boosters have continued to scorn, as capitulation and accommodation to aggression, what so much of the Ukrainian population now says it wants – a negotiated settlement. Instead, top administration officials and laptop-warrior pundits in the press corps are eager to tout their own mettle by insisting that Ukrainians and Russians must keep killing and dying.

Elites in Washington continue to posture as courageous defenders of freedom with military escalation in Ukraine, where hundreds of thousands have already died. Meanwhile, dangers of nuclear war increase. In mid-November, Putin "lowered the threshold for a nuclear strike in response to a broader range of conventional attacks," Reuters reported, "and Moscow said Ukraine had struck deep inside Russia with US-made ATACMS missiles.... Russia had been warning the West for months that if Washington allowed Ukraine to fire US, British and French missiles deep into Russia, Moscow would consider those NATO members to be directly involved in the war in Ukraine."

For President Biden, the verdict of Genocide Joe is already in. But if, despite pleas for sanity, he turns out to fully deserve the name Omnicide Joe, none of us will be around to read about it.

CT

Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His latest book, War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine, was published in paperback this fall.

Where are the new Trump fact checkers?

Why countering Trump's falsehoods is more urgent than ever

During this year's presidential election campaign, I was puzzled and increasingly troubled that the issue of truth-telling – and the spectacular lack of it from one candidate – wasn't getting the sort of focus or emphasis in the news coverage it should have received. We heard or read about Donald Trump's specific false statements just about every day (because they happened just about every day). But we didn't often hear about the deeper questions those falsehoods raised and continue to raise: What will it mean to have a president of the United States who has no regard for the truth and often no idea what it is? What will it do to public life if a president's words can't be trusted, no matter what he's talking about? What are the possible consequences if a president consistently ignores or distorts proven facts, and how much will those distortions shape his policy decisions and actions?

For obvious reasons those questions became more significant, not less, with Trump's victory. His habitual disregard for the truth isn't just an old story from a past presidency, but today's and tomorrow's news for the next four years. So, journalists, opinion-makers, and anyone else whose voice reaches the

public need to keep raising the issue in the weeks leading up to Trump's second inauguration and after he takes office. That means not just calling out individual falsehoods but connecting the dots, reminding us of his overall record and what it should tell us about the next phase of American public life. Neil Brown, president of the Poynter Institute and a co-founder of the fact-checking website PolitiFact, got it right in a fundraising email two days after the election when he reminded supporters that "facts are the foundation of our reality." Checking facts, he went on, "is time-consuming but essential... There is no off switch on the dial of misinformation."

For the most part, we have no way of knowing which of Trump's false statements are conscious lies – when he's saying something he knows isn't true – and when he believes his own words because they fit into the made-up world he's concocted in the insulated bubble of his mind. But that distinction hardly matters when it comes to what kind of president he'll be. A chronic liar or chronically delusional, either one is a dangerous person to have in the White House for the next four years. That makes it essential to keep a spotlight not just on

specific factual issues as they crop up in the news, but on the broader credibility question as well, tracking the misinformation Trump and his crew will almost certainly spew out and, where possible, countering its influence on policy decisions and official actions.

Perhaps the most immediate and urgent need for that kind of fact-checking will be on immigration policy, where Donald Trump has consistently misrepresented essential facts for many years. The sheer volume of those falsehoods is breathtaking. A recent report from the Marshall Project, a nonprofit investigative news site, documented 12,000 false statements of his on that issue alone – no, that's not a misprint, twelve thousand untrue statements! – during his years in the public arena. I searched but found no indication that Trump has ever backed down from any of them or acknowledged that anything he said on the subject was untrue. Corroborating that impression, Anna Flagg, one of the coauthors of the Marshall Project paper, wrote in response to an email inquiry that she is "personally not aware of Trump correcting any of these statements."

Far from correcting such falsehoods, he has often repeated them even after they were thoroughly and conclusively debunked. One of



MADE-UP WORLD: “Donald Trump has consistently misrepresented essential facts for many years. The sheer volume of those falsehoods is breathtaking”

many examples was his claim in a late September blog post that “13,000 convicted murderers entered our Country during [Kamala Harris’s] three and a half year period as Border Czar – Also currently in our Country because of her are 15,811 migrants convicted of rape and sexual assault.” Journalists quickly established that those numbers, listed on a chart prepared by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), were, in fact, a count of people who had entered the country over a more than 40-year time span, including Donald Trump’s four years as president. That airtight refutation didn’t stop him from repeating the same

false allegation a month later, when he declared in an interview with the podcaster Joe Rogan that “other countries are allowed to empty their prisons into our country with murderers, we had 13,099 murderers dropped in our country over the last three years.”

Nor were those murderers able to “freely and openly roam our Country,” as Trump claimed in yet another post. The list of convicted murderers, a DHS spokesperson told CNN, included “many who are under the jurisdiction or currently incarcerated

ated by federal, state or local law enforcement partners.” (Confusingly, the DHS chart lists all 13,099 as “undetained,” but that means only that they weren’t in the custody of the US immigration agency, not that they weren’t in state or federal prisons.)

Another example came during Trump’s September 10th debate with Kamala Harris, when, speaking about Haitian immigrants in Ohio, he alleged that “in Springfield, they’re eating the dogs. The people that came in. They’re eating the cats. They’re eating – they’re eating the pets of the people that live there” – a story police and local officials had already declared

to be untrue. Trump also regularly exaggerates the number of Haitians actually in Springfield, as when he told listeners to the Rogan podcast that “32,000 migrants that don’t speak the language” had been “dropped” there. The actual estimate is 10,000-12,000.

Reminding us of the facts when it comes to those and numerous other distortions is crucially important now that Trump will again be in a position not just to bluster about immigration but to execute policies that will affect huge numbers of men, women, and children.

Starting now, fact-checkers should do everything they can to make Americans aware of the actual facts – such as the strong likelihood that the mass deportations he’s vowed to launch “on day one” of his presidency will upend the lives of many people who are not illegal immigrants but are in the US legally (a category that includes almost all of the Haitians in Springfield that Trump wants sent “back to their country”).

In that effort, truth-tellers should also monitor statements by advisers who have their own records of incendiary anti-immigrant rhetoric – particularly, Tom Homan, Trump’s prospective “border czar,” and Stephen Miller, one of the principal architects of the sweeping ban on Muslim immigrants that Trump imposed early in his first term, who is slated to return to the White House as deputy chief of staff.

Along with spreading the truth about immigration, fact-checkers monitoring Trump and his team should do what they can to correct counterfactual statements on other important issues the new administration will be dealing with.

Climate change is one example of a crucial issue where Trump has regularly minimised the risk, espoused policies (“drill, baby, drill”) that will increase the danger, and

Climate change is one example of a crucial issue where Trump has regularly minimised the risk, espoused policies that will increase danger

misrepresented scientific evidence (as in his assertion that “the ocean will rise 1/8 of an inch over the next 200 to 300 years,” a figure thousands of times less than the 10 to 12-inch rise over 30 years predicted by the US government’s Interagency Task Force on Sea Level Change).

Fact-checking will also be highly relevant on a looming subject that has potentially significant implications not for government policy but for public trust in the American legal and judicial system: the end, permanent or temporary, of criminal proceedings against Donald Trump himself.

Barring unforeseen surprises, it appears certain that the cases against him will either be dropped or put on indefinite hold, probably before he even takes office. When that happens, he will undoubtedly insist that he’s been completely exonerated, did nothing wrong, and was unjustly prosecuted for political reasons.

Presumably, that claim will be challenged, but it’s another case where fact-checkers should be at work reminding the public of what he’s been accused of doing, detail by detail, and recalling what the evidence has shown us about Trump’s past actions and the true origins of those cases. More broadly and looking further ahead, fact-checking – not just labelling particular statements false as they occur, but systematically keeping track of and

reporting on the cumulative record of Trump’s misstatements – should be a top priority during the new administration. A possible model is the *Washington Post*’s project during Trump’s first presidency, when its staffers maintained a database of his untruths.

The *Post*’s final tally was 30,573 false or misleading claims during his time in the White House – an average of 21 untruths a day for four years! If the *Post* and other publications do something similar this time around, I hope they will periodically publish their findings, both as front-page stories and perhaps a front-page box every week or two with the totals and notable examples during the preceding interval.

One more suggestion for journalists: while tracking Trump’s false statements in the coming weeks and months, don’t just seek comments from him or his mouthpieces, but follow up on factual questions with other Republican politicians. Whenever possible – at confirmation hearings, say (if Trump doesn’t succeed in bypassing that check-and-balance procedure) – reporters should press congressional Republicans to respond to his falsehoods and declare on the record what they believe is true.

For example: “Senator, do you believe that 13,000 murderers from other countries were admitted to this country during the Biden administration and are now walking around free in American cities and towns?” And if the senator or representative dodges the question, as many undoubtedly will, follow it up: “Senator, are you aware that those murderers came over a period of 40 years, not just the last four, and that quite a few of them are in prison, not ‘walking around free’?” You get the idea.

If and when a Republican politician does actually acknowledge a Trump falsehood, the reporter

shouldn't let it go at that, but ask a further set of questions: "Have you told people who voted for you and your party that this story isn't true and what the actual facts are? Do you and other members of your party have any obligation to act against the spread of such false beliefs so that what your supporters think will be based on verified facts and not the president's false information?"

It's almost impossible to believe that any ongoing fact-checking effort will change Trump's style or make his public discourse any more truthful. Nor will it convince his die-hard supporters, who will continue to trust his statements no matter what the evidence shows.

But there must be people out there who voted for him but are still open-minded enough to be convinced by the actual facts. Presumably, more of those people will accept more of those facts when they hear them not from Trump's opponents or the

With only a few honourable exceptions, Republican politicians' loyalty to Trump has consistently outweighed any loyalty to the truth

news media but from their side of the political divide, from Republican office holders or others they believe represent their views. So, it will be critical for fact-checkers to keep the pressure on elected officials and others who have some credibility with Trump's constituents and challenge them to publicly correct the falsehoods that we can confidently expect will continue pouring out from his White House.

The record of that group up to now does not inspire much hope. With only a few honourable exceptions, Republican politicians' loyalty to Trump has consistently outweighed any loyalty to the truth.

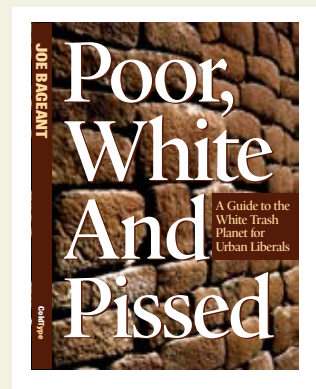
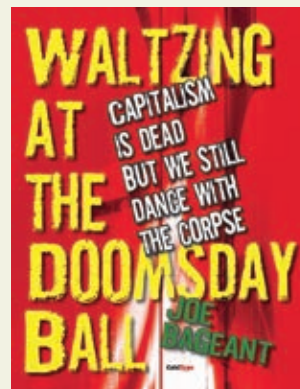
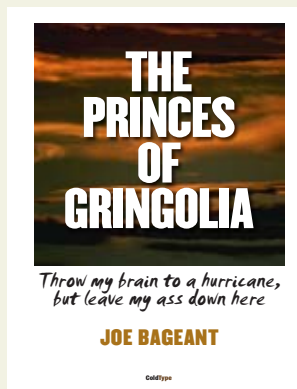
But now, when his conscious and

unconscious falsehoods are about to be combined with presidential powers and so will pose potentially unfathomable dangers for American public life, reversing the balance between those conflicting loyalties is more urgent than in the last eight years or perhaps ever in our history. Confronting lies and correcting untruths will be essential in meeting that threat – and I hope fact-checkers and truth tellers will rise to the challenge. **CT**

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READ THE BEST OF JOE BAGEANT

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Are corporate titans worth the billions they suck in?

Is the labour of corporate CEOs really hundreds of times more valuable than the labour of other leaders?

In the span of just a few weeks, two enterprises that have become institutional fixtures on the American scene – Chrysler, the Big Three automaker, and the Ford Foundation, the philanthropic pace-setter – have named new top executives.

Neither of the two has any experience in the industry he now labours.

Robert Nardelli, the new Chrysler CEO, has never before worked for a car company. He comes out of General Electric and a brief, unhappy stint at Home Depot. Luis Ubiñas, the new Ford Foundation president, has never before run a nonprofit. He spent the last 18 years at McKinsey & Company, the consulting firm, working mostly with the high-tech sector.

No matter. In the United States today, you don't need to have experience in the work of an enterprise to lead it. You just need to be a leader. You need to have demonstrated a capacity to innovate and inspire, analyse and imagine. If you have these leadership skills, you are considered able to perform successfully as a leader almost anywhere. A general can become a school superintendent. A media entrepreneur can become a mayor. A credit card executive can run a computer company.

Leadership, in short, has become a marketable skill set. We have academic centres that teach leadership,

headhunters who search for it. Leadership skills, and leadership skills alone, can make you an eminently hot commodity in the job market.

But this leadership market operates in a curious fashion. It has no "going rate." Some people with leadership skills in our contemporary United States – those who sit atop America's business enterprises – are capturing far more compensation for their labours than those in other fields who appear to hold the same skill set.

We have just helped complete the 14th annual edition of *Executive Excess*, the Institute for Policy Studies analysis that typically concentrates on the pay gap between America's top corporate executives and our nation's workers. This time around, we took a somewhat different approach. We didn't just compare CEO and worker compensation. We compared America's business lead-

ers with leaders elsewhere in American society, leaders in sectors ranging from nonprofits and the military to the federal executive and legislative branches.

What did we find? The pay gap between business leaders today and their leadership counterparts in other walks of American life is now running wider – often phenomenally wider – than the pay gap a generation ago between business leaders and average American workers.

Back around 1980, big-time corporate CEOs in the United States took home just over 40 times the pay of average American workers. Today's average American CEO from a Fortune 500 company makes 364 times an average worker's pay and over 70 times the pay of a four-star Army general.

Another example of our contemporary leadership pay gap: Last year, the top 20 earners in the most lucrative corner of America's business sector, the private equity and hedge fund world, pocketed 680 times more in rewards for their labours than the nation's 20 highest-paid leaders of nonprofit institutions pocketed for theirs – and 3,315 times more than the top 20 officials of the federal executive branch, an august group that includes the President of the United States.

The gaps become even more pro-

**Today's average
American CEO
from a Fortune 500
company makes
364 times an
average worker's pay**



found when we look at the leaders of Congress, an institution whose pay policies have down through the years regularly fuelled public outrage. Last year, the pay for the 20 highest-ranking leaders in Congress, taken together, totalled less than the personal earnings of the corporate CEO who ranked 348th in the Associated Press's compensation survey.

Once upon a time, we didn't have this sort of leadership pay gap in the United States. Indeed, into the 1970s, typical big-time CEOs made only modestly more than Presidents of the United States.

One big reason why: steeply graduated federal income tax rates.

Throughout the 1950s, the Eisenhower years, the top marginal tax rate on income over \$400,000 hovered at 91 percent. In the 1960s and 1970s, that top rate never dropped below 70 percent on income over \$200,000.

These tax rates sent corporate boards a powerful cultural message. If they were paying their top executives over several hundred thousand dollars a year, they were paying too much. And corporations by and large heeded that message. CEO paychecks didn't start soaring into the compensation stratosphere until the early

1980s, with the coming of the Reagan Revolution.

In 1981, Ronald Reagan's first year in office, the top federal marginal rate on America's highest incomes dropped to 50 percent, then fell again five years later to 28 percent. The top rate has bounced around, within a narrow window, ever since and now stands at 35 percent, just half the top rate in place during the Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations.

These top rates, to be sure, don't reflect what high-earners actually pay in taxes, once they exploit all the loopholes they can find. In 2005, the most recent year with IRS data available, the highest earn-

ing 0.01 percent of tax filers, all 13,776 of them, reported an average \$27.3-million in income. They paid just 20.9 percent of that in federal income tax.

Fifty years earlier, the nation's most affluent made much less in income and paid a far higher tax rate. We have available, for 1955, published IRS data for the 13,983 highest-income returns, a group that almost exactly matches the total of 13,776 returns that made up the top 0.01 percent in 2005. These top 13,983 returns in 1955 averaged, in 2005 dollars, only \$1.8-million in income. Nearly half of that, 47.4 percent, went to federal income tax.

Today's much lower top tax rates may not have directly "caused" the executive pay cascade of the past quarter-century. But these lower rates, history seems to show, definitely opened the floodgates.

Should we be worried about our current colossal pay gaps between business leaders and those we hold responsible for protecting our national security, providing essential public services, and crafting the laws that govern us? We certainly should. As a society, we are paying an enormous cost, an incredibly draining cost, for tolerating the sky-high price of business leadership.

Our leadership pay gaps are siphoning off talent from public service and creating a nonstop revolving door between government and the business world that breeds conflict of interest and corruption and distorts our democracy. Our pay gaps are discouraging individuals with leadership talent from entering less lucrative fields where their skills could make an important contribution to our common well-being.

But these gaps have perhaps an even more damaging impact. The higher business leadership pay rises, the louder the demands for higher leadership pay in non-business sectors. In 2005, the most cur-

As a society, we are paying an enormous cost, an incredibly draining cost, for tolerating the sky-high price of business leadership

rent year with data, the 20 highest-paid nonprofit leaders in the United States averaged nearly \$1-million each in compensation, \$965,698 to be exact. High paychecks in business are clearly working to raise leadership salaries elsewhere as well – and increasing the internal pay gaps between leaders and workers in non-business sectors. And that's not good.

Modern enterprises, be they in business or non-business sectors, work best when they flatten top-down hierarchies and endeavour to tap the wisdom and experience of people actually doing the work of the enterprise, the people closest to customers and clients or to the production process. All employees in an enterprise, management science tells us, have important contributions to make.

But compensation policies that concentrate rewards at the top proclaim the exact opposite. These pay policies assume that chief executives add hundreds, even thousands of times more value to our enterprises than average workers. These policies discourage the contribution of average employees. They foster defective, not effective, enterprises.

In the years before his 2005 death at the age of 95, Peter Drucker, the father of modern management science, advocated for a significantly narrower gap between enterprise executives and workers. An enterprise's pay differential between top and bottom, Drucker believed, real-

ly ought never stretch much beyond 20-to-1. Any executive pay appreciably above that ratio would only nurture habits and cultures that high-performing and productive enterprises should avoid.

Drucker's long-standing interest in pay ratios suggests a course of action worth exploring today. The government can't dictate what corporations pay their top executives. But the government can certainly stop rewarding corporations that pay their top execs enormously more than their workers.

In Congress, Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) is promoting a reform that would cap the amount of executive compensation corporations are permitted to deduct off their taxes to 25 times the pay of a company's lowest-paid worker.

Other reformers are talking about taking a similar approach to government procurement, by denying contracts to corporations that pay their top executives over 25 or 50 or even 100 times what their workers earn. We already as a nation deny contracts to companies whose discriminatory employment practices increase racial or gender inequality. Why should we let our tax dollars go to companies that increase – through top-heavy reward structures – economic inequality?

We don't yet have a Congress willing to seriously debate proposals like these. We don't yet have a President willing to revisit the top tax rates we place on our nation's highest incomes. We do have a leadership pay gap. Now we need leadership to end it. **CT**

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**READ THE BEST OF
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► HEIDI MATTHEWS

Universities should not silence speech on Palestine

They should be places where we oppose unlawful killing, maiming and destruction, wherever this violence occurs

The International Criminal Court (ICC) recently issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

A pre-trial chamber of the ICC found that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant intentionally “deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including food, water, and medicine and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity.”

This is not the first attempt to seek legal accountability for Israel’s actions in the Gaza Strip. In December 2023, South Africa brought a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of committing genocide. In January of this year, the ICJ found there was a “real and imminent risk” that Israel was committing – or would commit – acts of genocide in Gaza.

Nine months later, a United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry reported: “Israel has implemented a concerted policy to destroy the health-care system of Gaza. Israeli security forces have deliberately killed, wounded, arrested, detained, mistreated and

tortured medical personnel and targeted medical vehicles, constituting the war crimes of wilful killing and mistreatment and the crime against humanity of extermination.”

As the world witnesses the ongoing destruction of Gaza, universities in the West have become critical sites of examination, debate and protest. They have also become sites of suppression that shrink, rather than facilitate, the open exchange and analysis of ideas.

Universities are indispensable to supporting the free inquiry needed to do the work of addressing atrocity crimes. However, Western universities are increasingly prioritising ideas of neutrality over a principled commitment to free speech and the pursuit of truth.

In an essay on education and neoliberalism, Canadian-American cultural studies scholar Henry Giroux emphasized the importance of the university’s role in leading social change. He said the university is: “one of the few public spaces left where students can learn the power of questioning authority, recover the ideals of engaged citizenship, reaffirm the importance of the public good, and expand their capacities to make a difference.”

Understanding – and ultimate-

ly preventing – genocide and other atrocity crimes requires an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates insights from a multitude of areas of expertise including law, history, politics, hard and applied sciences, psychology, journalism and others. Universities are crucial to supporting the evidence-based research needed to do this essential work.

“The chances for truth to prevail in public,” as Hannah Arendt argued, are “greatly improved by the mere existence” of universities and “by the organization of independent, supposedly disinterested scholars associated with them.”

Academic freedom should always be highly valued and steadfastly protected. As the Canadian Association of University Teachers stated in November 2023, “academic freedom, like all expressive freedoms, is particularly vulnerable during periods of war, conflict, and social unrest.”

Unfortunately, many have responded to political and donor pressure by repressing discussions of Palestine in the classroom and on campus grounds. These moves curtail the academic freedom of scholars working on Palestine.

When universities become less free, the health of our democracies declines.

The importance of student protest Over the past year, students

across North America, Europe and elsewhere established encampments on campuses to bring attention to Israel's crimes and to call on their institutions to divest from companies and industries associated with Israel's assault on Gaza and occupation of Palestinian land.

However, many encampments were violently dismantled, with universities collaborating with authorities to shut down dissent and protest on campus.

Some universities have targeted students and faculty who support Palestinian freedom with surveillance, reprisals and expulsions. They have enacted a range of new policies designed to discourage or otherwise police speech on campus, which disproportionately target speech on Palestine. Such actions violate the expressive and assembly rights of students and faculty and transform the university into places where people are fearful of speaking out.

In October, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, Gina Romero, criticised these policies and practices, urging universities to change course. Romero observed that the "brutal repression of the university-based protest movement is posing a profound threat to democratic systems and institutions."

Teaching Palestinian history on campuses is essential work, especially as schools and universities in Gaza are facing scholasticide. Scholasticide refers to the "systemic obliteration of education through the arrest, detention or killing of teachers, students and staff and the destruction of educational

infrastructure."

Histories of the Nakba – the violent displacement of over 750,000 Palestinians during the founding of Israel – have been actively denied in Israel and in Western education and public discourse.

The destruction of education is a method of genocide, as education is essential to the continuation of the Palestinian people as a distinct national and cultural group. This destructive erasure is underscored in a recent report by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese.



Pro-Palestine demonstration in Montreal

Instead of providing spaces for knowledge and discussion related to Palestine, Western universities are increasingly asserting that they have a responsibility to remain "neutral" regarding so-called controversial geopolitical issues. However, such commitments to neutrality are, in practice, often false.

Institutional neutrality serves to flatten politics and silence scholarly debate. It obscures the fact that virtually every activity conducted in universities is political, from decisions regarding who is permitted to enrol to which research gets funding to policies on holding events and

putting up posters. Small and large decisions by university administrators inevitably involve political choices.

Claiming to remain apolitical in effect relieves universities of their responsibility to support the freedom of scholars to document, discuss and educate about political violence. Individual faculty members and students wishing to do so must navigate a bureaucracy of political suppression on campus.

Activism is a form of education and argumentation. Campus activism has long been central to both instigating and consolidating social progress. Restricting dissent on campus is a classic authoritarian tactic.

Universities should be places where we oppose unlawful killing, maiming and destruction, wherever this violence occurs. Universities should be spaces where Palestine is no longer treated as an exception. They should be places that support displaced students and

faculty and work with Palestinian colleagues to rebuild institutions of learning in Gaza. Finally, universities should be places where students and scholars can freely examine and debate the political, legal and social dimensions of Israel's actions in Gaza and throughout the Palestinian territory, Lebanon and the broader region.

CT

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Photo: KMo Foto / Via Flickr

► CHRIS HEDGES

Organised oblivion

Gaza is destroyed. It will not, at least for the Palestinians, be rebuilt
Those who lived there will spend their lives, like survivors
of the Armenian genocide, desperately trying to protect memory

I am in The Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center next to the St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in Manhattan, New York. I am holding a bound, hand-written memoir, which includes poetry, drawings, and scrapbooked images, by Zaven Seiraidarian, a survivor of the Armenian genocide. The front cover of the book, one of six volumes, reads *Bloody Journal*. The other volumes have titles such as *Drops of Springtime*, *Tears* and *The Wooden Spoon*.

“My name will remain immortal on the earth,” the author writes. “I will speak about myself and tell more.”

The centre houses hundreds of documents, letters, hand-drawn maps of villages that have disappeared, sepia photographs, poems, drawings and histories – much of it untranslated – on the customs, traditions and notable families of lost Armenian communities.

Jesse Arlen, the director of the centre, looks forlornly at the volume in my hand.

“No one has probably read it, looked at it or even knew it was here,” he says.

He opens a box and hands me a hand drawn map by Hareton Saksoorian of Havav village in Palu, where Armenians in 1915 were massacred or expelled. Saksoorian drew

the map from memory after he escaped. The drawings of Armenian homes have the tiny, inked in names of the long dead.

This will be the fate of the Palestinians in Gaza. They too will soon battle to preserve memory, to defy an indifferent world that stood by as they were slaughtered. They too will doggedly seek to preserve scraps of their existence. They too will write memoirs, histories and poems, draw maps of villages, refugee camps and cities that have been obliterated, set down painful stories of butchery, carnage and loss. They too will name and condemn their killers, lament the extermination of families, including thousands of children, and struggle to preserve a vanished world. But time is a cruel master.

Intellectual and emotional life for those who are cast out of their homeland is defined by the crucible of exile, what the Palestinian scholar Edward Said told me is “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place.” Said’s book *Out of Place* is a record of this lost world.

The Armenian poet Armen Anush was raised in an orphanage in Aleppo, Syria. He captures the life sentence of those who survive geno-

cide in his poem *Sacred Obsession*.

He writes:

*Country of light, you visit me
every night in my sleep.
Every night, exalted, as a
venerable goddess,
You bring fresh sensations and
hopes to my exiled soul.
Every night you ease the
waverings of my path.
Every night you reveal the
boundless deserts,
The open eyes of the dead, the
crying of children in the distance,
The crackle and red flame of the
countless burned bodies,
And the unsheltered caravan,
always unsure, always faltering.
Every night the same hellish,
deathly scene –
The tired Euphrates washing the
blood off the savaged corpses,
The waves making merry with
the rays of the sun,
And relieving the burden of tis
useless, weary weight.
The same humid, black wells of
charred bodies,
The same thick smoke enveloping
the whole of the Syrian desert.
The same voices from the depths,
the same moans, soft and sunless,
And the same brutal, ruthless
barbarity of the Turkish mob.*

The poem ends, however, with a plea not that these nighttime terrors end, but that *they come to me every*



THE CARNAGE BEGINS: Damage following an Israeli airstrike on the El-Remal area in Gaza City on October 9, 2023

*night, that the flame of your heroes
always accompany my days.*

“The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting,” Milan Kundera reminds us.

It is better to endure crippling trauma than to forget. Once we forget, once memories are purged – the goal of all genocidal killers – we are enslaved to lies and myths, severed from our individual, cultural and national identities. We no longer know who we are.

“It takes so little, so infinitely lit-

tle, for a person to cross the border beyond which everything loses meaning: love, convictions, faith, history,” Kundera writes in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. “Human life – and herein lies its secret – takes place in the immediate proximity of that border, even in direct contact with it; it is not miles away, but a fraction of an inch.”

Those who have crossed that border return to us as prophets, prophets no one wants to hear.

The ancient Greeks believed that as the souls of the departed were being ferried to Hades they were

forced to drink the water from the River Lethe to erase memory. The destruction of memory is the final obliteration of being, the last act of mortality. Memory is the struggle to stay the boatman’s hand.

The genocide in Gaza mirrors the physical annihilation of Armenian Christians by the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Turks, who feared a nationalist revolt like the one that had convulsed the Balkans, drove nearly all of the two million Armenians out of Turkey. Men and women were usually separated. The men were often immediately mur-

dered or sent to death camps, such as those at Ras-Ul-Ain – in 1916 over 80,000 Armenians were slaughtered there – and Deir-el-Zor in the Syrian desert. At least a million were forced on death marches – not unlike the Palestinians in Gaza who have been forcibly displaced by Israel, up to a dozen times – into the deserts of what are now Syria and Iraq. There, hundreds of thousands were slaughtered or died of starvation, exposure and disease. Corpses littered the desert. By 1923, an estimated 1.2 million Armenians were dead. Orphanages throughout the Middle East were flooded with some 200,000 destitute Armenian children.

The doomed resistance by several Armenian villages in the mountains along the coast of present-day Turkey and Syria that chose not to obey the deportation order was captured in Franz Werfel's novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, a Polish-German literary critic who survived the Holocaust, said it was widely read in the Warsaw ghetto, which mounted a doomed uprising of its own in April 1943.

In 2000, when he was 98-years-old, I interviewed the writer and singer Hagop H. Asadourian, one of the last survivors of the Armenian genocide. He was born in the village of Chomaklou in eastern Turkey and deported, along with the rest of his village, in 1915. His mother and four of his sisters died of typhus in the Syrian desert. It would be 39 years before he reunited with his only surviving sister, who he was separated from one night near the Dead Sea as they fled with a ragged band of Armenian orphans from Syria to Jerusalem.

He told me he wrote to give a voice to the 331 people with whom he trudged into Syria in September

Those who carry out genocide seek total annihilation. Nothing is to remain. Especially memory

1915, only 29 of whom survived.

"You can never really write what happened anyway," Asadourian said. "It is too ghoulish. I still fight with myself to remember it as it was. You write because you have to. It all wells up inside of you. It is like a hole that fills constantly with water and no amount of bailing will empty it. This is why I continue."

He stopped to collect himself before continuing.

"When it came time to bury my mother, I had to get two other small boys to help me carry her body up to a well where they were dumping the corpses," he said. "We did this so the jackals would not eat them. The stench was terrible. There were swarms of black flies buzzing over the opening. We pushed her in feet first, and the other boys, to escape the smell, ran down the hill. I stayed. I had to watch. I saw her head, as she fell, bang on one side of the well and then the other before she disappeared. At the time, I did not feel anything at all."

He halted, visibly shaken.

"What kind of a son is that?" he asked hoarsely.

He eventually found his way to an orphanage in Jerusalem.

"These things dig into you, not only once, but throughout life, throughout life, through these days," he told an interviewer from the USC Shoah Foundation. "I am 98-years-old. And today, to this day, I cannot forget any of this. I forget what I saw yesterday maybe, but I could not forget these things. And yet, we have to beg nations to recognise genocide. I lost 11 members of my family and I have to beg people

to believe me. That's what hurts you most. It's a terrible world, a terrible experience."

His 14 books were a fight against erasure, but when I spoke with him he admitted that the work of the Turkish army was now almost complete. His last book was *The Smoldering Generation*, which he said was "about the inevitable loss of our culture."

The present is something in which the dead hold no shares.

"No one takes the place of those who are gone," he said, seated in front of a picture window that looked out on his garden in Tenafly, New Jersey. "Your children do not understand you in this country. You cannot blame them."

The world of the Armenians in eastern Turkey, first mentioned by the Greeks and Persians in 6 BC, has, like Gaza, whose history spans 4,000 years, all but disappeared. The contributions of Armenian culture are forgotten. It was Armenian monks, for example, who rescued works by ancient Greek writers such as Philo and Eusebius, from oblivion.

I stumbled on the ruins of Armenian villages when I worked as a reporter in southeastern Turkey. Like Palestinian villages destroyed by Israel, these villages did not appear on maps.

Those who carry out genocide seek total annihilation. Nothing is to remain. Especially memory.

This will be our next battle. We must not forget.

CT

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Inconvenient truths

This civilisation is built upon the practice of continuously hiding inconvenient truths out of sight and out of mind: An entire empire held together by compartmentalisation and avoidance.

Inconvenient truths are hidden from our minds using propaganda, indoctrination, censorship, algorithm manipulation, and other forms of narrative control used to manipulate the way we think about our world.

They are also hidden by the manipulation of material reality. We're choking the developing world with plastics as we ship the mountains of garbage the west produces off to poorer countries, for example. If nations had to keep the waste they produce and consume within their own borders, western civilisation would either force its corporations to stop offloading their costs of industry onto the environment or find itself buried in garbage. We ship our trash away, out of sight and out of mind, to hide the contradictions and abuses that are built into our capitalist society so we can pretend everything's going fine.

Inconvenient truths are hidden when laws are passed to force the homeless to relocate away from rich neighbourhoods and other places where they are not wanted, or force them all into "tent cities" as Donald Trump wants to do. There are never any plans to give these people homes or solve the underlying problems which create poverty and homelessness; there are only plans to hide the symptoms of the injustices and abuses that are woven into the fabric of the civilisation in which we live.

Inconvenient truths are hidden when we condemn the past use of slavery in our own countries while outsourcing immense amounts of wage slavery to the global south, extracting labour and resources from impoverished nations at extortionate and increasingly unfair rates. The impoverishment, relentless toil and terrible working conditions of these foreign workers are kept out of sight and mind while we gorge on cheap goods and toss our garbage back in their faces.

Inconvenient truths are being hidden by how much more comfortable our rulers are with using violent

force in faraway nations compared to here at home. In the western world you might have to worry about being assaulted by a police officer or a SWAT team smashing in your door and killing your dog if you are suspected of selling drugs, but you don't have to worry about your home being bombed or your children being executed by military snipers while playing in the streets. Because foreign nations are out of sight and out of mind, the managers of the western empire think nothing of raining fire down upon them to promote their strategic interests.

We walk around in this perverse dystopia and laugh and joke and act as though everything is fine, but it isn't. People are suffering and dying at an unimaginable scale because of the systems which allow us to live this way. Western civilisation is like a castle on a mountain made from human corpses and weeping

mothers and starving children. Everyone in the castle pretends that the mountain is not there, but it forms the foundation of our society. We try not to think about it too hard. It's not just the propagandists who lie to us. We lie to ourselves. It's always been this way. The well-to-do have always hidden themselves from the suffering of their subjects. Palaces throughout the ages have been islands of paradise amid oceans of human suffering caused by the mon-

archs who lived in them. Wealthy neighbourhoods are segregated from the lives of the poor whose backs they are built upon.

That's the western world right now. That's what we are. That's what we're doing. This is a civilisation made of deceitful thoughts, deceitful words, and deceitful deeds. Everything about it is fraudulent.

The truth can't stay hidden forever, though. There's only so long we can keep this up. Someday we're not going to be able to keep flailing around looking in every direction except at reality. Truth will make itself heard.

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