

THE WORLD DEMANDS A REFORMED UNITED NATIONS

By Dr. Rais Hussin

Of all the institutions and agencies of the League of Nations to have survived the ghastly end of World War I in 1919, only the International Labour Organization (ILO) can prove itself worthy of being retained. On issues verging on international peace and security, not excluding international humanitarian laws and genocide – one of which is in motion in Gaza – the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is rendered hapless, although the world has witnessed others in Myanmar, Darfur, Rwanda and countless others before. Why?

Whenever a binding resolution has to be passed by the UNSC, the veto power of its five permanent members is frequently employed to shield their allies, even in cases where these allies are engaged in acts of ethnic cleansing, aimed at either partially or entirely eradicating another population. The hot-button issue today is Gaza where ongoing conflicts have triggered countless terror-stricken campaigns. As things stand, the situation risks further escalation, such as Israel's bombings targeting 1.7 million Gazans, all of whom are concentrated in Rafah.

Since the verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on January 26, in which the judges voted by 14 to two, declaring Israel's involvement in a plausible genocide and the US being complicitous, the situation has gone from bad to worse. It was none other than the former UN ambassador of the US during the Barack Obama administration who admitted what the world has long known and opposed that Gaza is facing a triple

Defense Forces (IDF), deliberate choking off of at least 500 food trucks that are needed to keep the victims fed and now mass starvation.

Malaysia has spoken of the strategic and moral necessity of reforming the UNSC. Instead of allowing each of the five permanent members – China, France, Russia, the UK and the US – to wield their veto power to protect their allies that have gone rogue in murdering tens of thousands without even wanting to countenance a second ceasefire, a permanent alteration of this formula is necessary.

Firstly, for a veto power to work more effectively to prevent an issue from degenerating into the worst spectre of a killing spree by one state against the other, at least three vetoes are needed by the five permanent members to block a UNSC resolution. Secondly, it's essential that the UN General Assembly, representing the 197-member states, also has the authority to approve decisions made by the UNSC with a simple majority vote.

Without these urgent reforms, the world risks careening into further disasters, as the ongoing genocide, reminiscent of a blood feud between Tel Aviv and the Palestinians, persists unchecked. This relentless assault threatens to strip them of their identity and their rights to have their separate state, perpetuating cross-generational scars.

By accusing the UN Relief World Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza of unproven allegations of aiding and abetting the aggression of October 7, 2023, Israel has choked off the funds and logistical abilities of UNRWA to keep the besieged Gazans in Rafah from having any wide scale life support. The decision of Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway to restore the aid, having found no element of foul play, is unable to avert the onset of a complex humanitarian emergency.

This crisis has been made more complicated by the incestuous relationship of the Israeli lobby, which has extended its reach beyond the US to other member states of the UNSC, with the exception of Russia and China. The world demands immediate



reforms of the UNSC that extend to the UN General Assembly since the crisis in the Middle East has stoked tensions of a serious collapse of the international system.

The proliferation of conflicts in Ukraine, essentially a proxy conflict involving the G7 and the European Union (EU), has led the 32 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to utilise Ukraine as a red herring to gang up against Russia. The impact of this conflict alone since February 24, 2022, has increased the prices of food, fuel, fertiliser and animal fodder.

The conflict in Gaza has drawn the Houthis in Yemen into the fray, prompting their involvement to disrupt maritime commerce from the Suez Canal through the Red Sea. Not surprisingly, the cost of the maritime insurance has shot up from 0.7% to 7%. Ships that want to lower their security premiums have also had to avoid the route completely.

In turn, these vessels have had to circumnavigate half of the African coastline in the west and south, passing Cape Cod in South Africa, before making their way into the Indian Ocean, the Straits of Malacca and the south and east China Sea. The duration of such travels has been increased by two weeks. These complications have had the most severe disruption on the global supply chain between the East and West.

While the EU can use the land corridor of Central Asia to reach China, this route would significantly increase the cost of goods by up to 300%. More importantly, the EU's reluctance to engage with China to resolve various issues has hindered the expansion of their trade relations. The world is deprived of relying on China as a powerful locomotive to spur the post-pandemic comeback or the economic rebound.

Since 2021, Sino Asean trade has exceeded the size of the Sino-EU trade for the first time, a trajectory that has continued to remain stern and steady. However, when the immediate comes in the way of the urgent, the former should be adopted. The deadly statistics of the constant pounding of Gaza by Israel have led to all 36 hospitals being destroyed too.

Water and fuel have also been choked off to intentionally leave the Gazans, Muslims and Christians alike, in a diabolical shape.

With half of the 2.3 million population being between the ages of five and 14 at a time when they need their physical nourishment, malnutrition has also set in to stunt the cognitive development of the young Gazans. Two hundred and eighty-one journalists who have tried to write about the war have been killed by the IDF within the first three months of the conflict, making it the worst death toll on journalists since World War I and II combined.

More than 100 UN personnel have also been killed, a threshold that has never been breached since the UN was first formed to ensure peace and security. In light of the immediate disaster that is unfolding across the board, Malaysia's proposal deserves a hearing and systematic deliberations by all quarters of the world. It should not and must not be debated at the UN Reforms Day in September 2024. All would then be too little too late to redeem whatever is left of the UN.

As things are, the rules-based order continues to function in sheer calumny. Despite claims made by the West, there is essentially no functioning order at all. The lack of the simplest rules and mores to prevent the international community from falling through the bottom will only lead to a world marked by total might against the rights of all to seek basic security and the right to a fair and meaningful existence. ■



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