Not all deaths count

Ultimately, Palestinians are outsiders to West

Betrayed at crossroads of history, forced to compare

Palestinians in Rafah mourn their loved ones killed in the Israeli bombardment.
● HATEM ALI/AP

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PERSPECTIVE
EXCLUSIVE

War casualties are usually reported using prepositions such as "about," "around," "some," "near," and "over" that approximate numbers. This is especially true for printed publications, where, by the time the reader stumbles upon that sentence, the number has definitely risen.

I'm personally of the opinion that we should do away with these prepositions and let the readers become comfortable with reading "as of writing this piece". The reason is simple: people cannot be reduced to numbers, more so if they are civilians who have just been denied of the right to live and give meaning to somebody's life.

So, as of writing this piece, 20,915 people have lost their lives in the Gaza Strip at the hands of Israel, directly or indirectly, in a bid to avenge the deaths of 1,139 in Israel, killed during Hamas's surprise attack on October 7, 2023. Even though they were killed by dumb bombs that may well have had "to whom it may concern" written on them, these people had names and

families, learned valuable lessons, harbored hopes and dreams, and demonstrated a partially realized potential to change the lives of others for the better.

This is not the only war in the 21st century — a relatively peaceful century — that left a lot of casualties in its wake. What this war had in common with its contemporary wars is that the United States was heavily involved in all of them in one capacity or another. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Ukraine, and Palestine have seen devastating wars. These countries will never be the same; how can they be when their innocent civilians and brilliant minds were either killed, scarred for life, or displaced? This recklessness in starting new wars comes from a country that, domestically, believes in the sanctity of life. Much internal strife in the US stems from the collective significance that Americans place on

minimizing American casualties. But in practice, we clearly see that the US is as war-hungry as a country can be. Cries of war can still be heard the loudest in Republican debates. In the 21st century, the Democratic Party inherited some wars and provoked some others. So, overall, they have been just as eager to fulfill their country's role as a self-appointed sheriff of the world.

Americans are quick to take personal offense to small-scale conflicts and the loss of lives elsewhere. So far, so good. However, when they take action, they lose sight of what was once their justification for entering a conflict — the loss of lives and violation of human rights — and commit the same abominations, only multiple times worse. The disproportionate force they bring to any war turns them from heroes to villains in no time.

As much as it probably hurts an American to hear this, this is not a strange sentiment to have for the peoples whose lives were seemingly "saved" by the US.

Gaza ultimate test of human rights

War is plain terrible in nature. It's understandable but still unforgivable for a shell-shocked soldier to commit war crimes. War crimes get less and less understandable and more and more unforgivable the higher up we go in the chain of command because officers, commanders, and commanders-in-chief are supposed to be further and further removed from the horrors of war and focused on pre-determined goals and rules of engagement.

It's becoming more and more apparent that American commanders-in-chief are able to claim a moral high ground only when they are the opposite party to ultimate evils like the Nazis or Daesh (ISIS). But hey, who can't? That's why, before going to every war since the Second World War, American media heavily propagate the idea that the leader of the other side is "the next Adolph Hitler".

No war in recent history has questioned the true intent behind propagating exclusive ownership of humanitarian "Western" values as much as the ongoing Gaza war has. The world is getting wise to the fact that all the American and European talk about defending human rights is merely a façade just by looking at this war. The US hammered the final nail in that coffin by vetoing a watered-down UNSC resolution that called for a humanitarian cease-fire in the Gaza war on December 8, 2023, and pushed to drop all talk of a cease-fire in the next UNSC resolution on Gaza, which is essentially a different tactic that achieves the same result.

More, however, can be gained from comparing similarities and differences between the Israeli war

on the Gaza Strip and other wars of the 21st century.

To make the comparison more feasible, one need not look further than the Ukraine War to find the most similarities. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza are still ongoing. Both began during the presidency of Joe Biden in the US. The US purportedly took the side of the defenders — even though it provoked the Ukraine War by persuading Russia's neighboring country to join NATO, and Israel's subsequent disproportionate response to Hamas's October 7 attack dwarfed Israeli casualties to the point that it's now called "the Gaza War". Washington has sent both Ukraine and Israel massive arm shipments and stood in the way of achieving cease-fires, prolonging the wars and killing more people.

While the US barely managed to evade the responsibilities of the Ukraine War — which allowed it to gradually abandon the Ukrainians scot-free to do what they should have done in the first place: talk it out with the Russians — it is being repeatedly slammed around the world for its inexcusable support of Israeli brutalities in Gaza.

Not even consistent in words

It's already known around the world that when push comes to shove, whether it be in domestic politics or foreign policies, the United States will only think about its own national interests, not about righting any wrongs or rectifying its mistakes of the past. However, the fact that the same US administration can't react the same way to the loss of lives in Ukraine and Palestine is not doing Washington's reputation any favors.

An Israeli soldier rests his head on an artillery gun barrel of a tank as troops take position near the Gaza barrier on October 9, 2023.
● AFP