

A critique of Offensive Realism Palestinians also (probably) human!

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OPINION

This piece delves into the Israeli genocide in Gaza and examines the various dimensions of structural injustice happening there. This injustice is explored in four areas: legal, political, moral, and judicial, with a particular emphasis on the concept of epistemic injustice, where the voices of victims are ignored and reality is distorted. By critiquing views such as Aggressive Realism, Mirdamadi argues that protesting genocide is not only a moral obligation but also a necessity for understanding the complexities of the contemporary world. We call upon the media, universities, and the general public to take responsibility by exposing the truth and breaking the silence surrounding this humanitarian catastrophe. Remaining silent in the face of crime is, in itself, a form of crime.

The Israeli genocide in Gaza and Palestine is not only a blatant violation of human rights but also an instance of structural injustice in various dimensions. This injustice can be examined in four areas:

1. Legal injustice: Systematic violation of international laws through the killing of civilians, attacks on hospitals and schools, and deliberate deprivation of access to water, food, and medicine is legal injustice.

2. Political injustice: The inability of institutions such as the Human Rights Council to hold emergency meetings and Israel's disregard for the orders of the International Court of Justice is political injustice.

3. Moral injustice: Global silence in the face of the killing of children and civilians, which amounts to passive complicity is moral injustice.

4. Judicial injustice: The lack of legal prosecution of those responsible for Israel's war crimes, despite the presence of extensive documented evidence is judicial injustice.

However, beyond non-epistemic injustice, epistemic injustice has also occurred in the Gaza genocide. Epistemic injustice, as a more subtle and profound form



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of oppression, requires special attention but has been widely overlooked in genocide studies and Palestine research. This concept refers to the disregard for individuals' agency in producing and transmitting knowledge and plays a key role in denying the Gaza genocide.

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Then-Defense Minister of Israel Yoav Gallant referred to Palestinians as "human-like animals" and ordered a complete siege of Gaza. 4. Similarity to historical genocides: UN experts have compared Israel's actions to the Guatemalan genocide (1980), in which the



A young girl walks through the rubble in Jabalya, Gaza, as displaced families return to their destroyed homes following the cease-fire between Israel and Hamas.

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Necessity of protesting Palestinian genocide

Some, citing Aggressive Realism in international relations, believe that aligning with powerful countries like Israel and the US is in Iran's national interest. This theory claims that in an anarchic global system, countries must increase their power at any cost to survive. From this perspective, supporting Palestine, as a powerless group, is deemed irrational. However, this approach sacrifices moral and legal principles for short-term interests. For instance, justifying genocide based on national interests opens the door to violating human rights anywhere in the world. Aggressive Realism overlooks the complexities of international relations. Aligning with major powers does not necessarily lead to security and may result in depen-

denial and loss of independence. This viewpoint ignores global public opinion. Support for Palestinian rights is increasing in many countries, and silence in the face of genocide can lead to moral isolation. Therefore, protesting the Israeli

genocide is not only a moral obligation but also a necessity based on understanding the complexities of the contemporary world.

Dimensions, examples of epistemic injustice: Epistemic injustice occurs in two main forms:

1. Testimonial injustice: When an individual's or group's testimony is ignored due to preconceptions based on identity (race, gender, religion, etc.).

For example, Palestinian reports of killings in Gaza are downplayed by Western media, while Israel's narrative is reflected without challenge.

In a letter from 230 media experts to the BBC, it was pointed out that the network uses neutral phrases such as "killed in clashes" without mentioning the main perpetrator, the Israeli army.

2. Hermeneutical injustice: This injustice, which is deeper than testimonial injustice, occurs when a group, due to oppression, lacks the linguistic or conceptual tools to express their experiences. As a historical example, before the concept of sexual harassment emerged, female victims could not accurately describe the violence.

epistemic injustice is testimonial smothering. Self-censorship by victims due to fear of mistrust or political consequences is an example of testimonial smothering. For instance, journalists in Gaza are forced to withhold full reports of atrocities due to Israel's strict control over information.

Legal definition, reality of Gaza genocide

But has genocide really occurred in Gaza? Yes. According to the "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" (1948), genocide includes intentional acts to destroy, in whole or in part, a group. As we go over some of the signs, hopefully, it becomes clear that Israel's actions in Gaza fit this definition, and therefore, genocide has occurred:

1. Killing of civilians: Over 70% of those killed are women and children.

2. Imposing deadly conditions: Israel has deprived the people of Gaza of water, electricity, and medicine and destroyed or damaged 92% of Gaza's homes and 95% of its schools by January 2025.

3. Statements by Israeli officials:

government, backed by the US, killed tens of thousands of Maya people. Thus, all material and immaterial elements of genocide have occurred in Gaza.

Denial of genocide to perpetuate dominance

Denial of genocide has three key functions:

Beyond non-epistemic injustice, epistemic injustice has also occurred in the Gaza genocide. Epistemic injustice, as a more subtle and profound form of oppression, requires special attention but has been widely overlooked in genocide studies and Palestine research. This concept refers to the disregard for individuals' agency in producing and transmitting knowledge and plays a key role in denying the Gaza genocide.

1. Distortion of reality: Media outlets like the BBC, by using neutral language (such as "clashes" instead of "genocide"), conceal Israel's agency.

2. Legitimization: Denial provides a basis for continued violence. For example, the attack on Gaza's Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in October 2023 was initially denied, then justified with a false narrative of the existence of a "military base".

3. Silencing victims: The killing of over 200 journalists in Gaza and exerting pressure on networks like Al Jazeera and Haaretz are examples of silencing witnesses.

Role of int'l community

Organizations like the Red Cross, by remaining silent in the face of Gaza's siege, have contributed to testimonial smothering.

The International Criminal Court has yet to take practical action to prosecute those responsible for the genocide.

We have a moral and epistemic responsibility to confront genocide. Each individual and institution is responsible for epistemic injustice:

1. Media outlets should reflect the narratives of victims without using biased language.

2. Universities and intellectuals should conduct independent research to critique the claims of genocide deniers.

3. The general public can break the cycle of silence by sharing credible information and pressuring governing institutions.

Remaining silent in the face of genocide is not neutrality; rather, it's complicity with the mechanisms of dominance. History has shown that inaction in the face of crime paves the way for its repetition.

In conclusion, the Israeli genocide in Gaza is not only a human tragedy but also a laboratory for examining the deep connection between knowledge and power. Denying this catastrophe, by distorting reality and silencing victims, institutionalizes injustice. Our moral duty is to break the silence by exposing the truth and restoring agency to the victims. We must not forget that silence in the face of crime is, in itself, a form of crime.

The article first appeared in Persian on Din Online.



A man looks at the rubble of buildings destroyed during the Israeli war on Gaza, amid a cease-fire, in Rafah, the southern Gaza Strip, on February 4, 2025.

• HATEM KHALED/REUTERS