

Brazil's Lula Compares Netanyahu to Hitler: How Fascist Is Israel's War on Palestinians?

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Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva stirred controversy when he [said](#),

"What is happening in the Gaza Strip and with the Palestinian people did not exist at any other historical moment. Or rather, it did: when Hitler decided to kill the Jews."

He continued,

"It is not a war between soldiers and soldiers. It is a war between a well equipped army on the one hand and women and children on the other."

Lula is not the first world leader to compare Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to Hitler over his actions in Gaza — Turkish President [Tayyip Erdogan](#) made the same comparison.

Since Hitler murdered six million Jews, the comparison is hurtful. It could also be rejected on grounds of scale. Hitler not only killed all those European Jews, he also killed 6 million Poles. And consider [Ukraine](#):

"of the 41.7 million people living in Ukrainian Soviet Republic before the war, only 27.4 million were alive in Ukraine in 1945. Official data says that at least 8 million Ukrainians lost their lives: 5.5 - 6 million civilians, and more than 2.5 million natives of Ukraine were killed at the front. The data varies between 8 to 14 million killed, however, only 6 million have been identified."

While Netanyahu's policies are not like those of Nazi Germany in almost any respect if we

consider absolute numbers and consider the scale of killing, Lula is not completely in error if we consider more qualitative aspects of history and look to European fascism as a whole and not just the German National Socialists (who were peculiar in many ways).

First: Keeping People Stateless on the Basis of Ethnicity

For instance, the Fascists stripped citizenship from millions of people and made them stateless, without the rights that come from a direct relationship to a state of their own. Chief Justice Earl Warren defined citizenship as “the right to have rights.”

Hitler [took citizenship](#) from German Jews but also from the Roma and from persons of African heritage.

Netanyahu keeps 5.5 million Palestinians in the occupied territories stateless and without citizenship. So his policies in this narrow regard are similar to those of the National Socialists in the 1930s. In essence, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are living under something like the Nuremberg Laws. Their establishments and homes are attacked by militant Israeli squatters with impunity in a sort of rolling Kristallnacht.

Note that by Israeli law, Israeli squatters in the occupied Palestinian territories have all the citizenship rights of other Israelis. So the lack of rights on the West Bank is not territorial. It is by ethnicity.

Netanyahu has boasted about derailing the Oslo Peace Accords and presents himself as the only one who can prevent a Palestinian state from being established. He reiterated his opposition to any international diplomatic track that leads to a Palestinian state [just this weekend](#).

Second: Deprivation of Basic Individual Rights

Another feature of Fascism, underlined by Robert Paxton, is the elimination of individual rights. Israel’s regime over the occupied, stateless Palestinians fully demonstrates this feature. Palestinians can be arrested under “administrative detention” without charge or trial or habeas corpus and held for months or years. We have seen a treatment of detained Palestinians in Gaza that constitutes war crimes. It is alleged that forms of torture are practiced.

Third: Total War

Netanyahu’s Gaza campaign has demonstrated a reckless disregard for the lives of innocent noncombatants, who make up nearly all of the nearly 30,000 people so far killed, and who have been deprived of domiciles and sufficient food and potable water by the Israeli military.

Total war was adopted as a military strategy by fascist states, according to historian Alan Kramer. One academic [summarized](#) his argument:

“Kramer indicated a very interesting question regarding the specificity of the kind of war implemented by fascist regimes during the thirties and the forties, characterized by its genocidal nature and opened, according to him, with the colonial war launched by Italy in Abyssinia [Ethiopia] in 1935. Kramer underlined that the specificity of this particular way of waging war typical of fascism would define itself by the final

elimination of the «distinction between combatants and non-combatants», pointing how in the six years of this conflict between 350.000 and 760.000 Ethiopians were killed, victims of an asymmetric war based on the overwhelming use of air force, chemical weapons and politics of collective terror against any sign of real or imagined resistance.”

The fascist way of war eliminates the distinction between combatants and non-combatants and wreaks mass death on the latter to achieve military aims. There doesn't seem much doubt that Netanyahu is waging total war on Gaza and Israel's President Isaac Herzog and a whole plethora of Israeli officials have repeatedly insisted that there are no innocent civilians in Gaza. This, even though half of Gaza's population consists children.

Total war easily leads to genocide, of course, which is why the International Court of Justice has found it at least plausible that Netanyahu is waging a genocide in Gaza, attempting to destroy a people in part or in whole because of who they are.

So, no, Netanyahu is not a Hitler. But, yes, his policies bear a strong resemblance to those of inter-war Fascism.

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