

DURBAN II: US, Australia, Canada, Israel, the Netherlands boycott United Nations Anti-racism Conference

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Durban II no-shows won't be missed

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The Durban II conference on racism will most likely be a very interesting event, both for what is said and what is not said.

Recently, a number of countries that are still in denial about their history of racism, namely Israel, the United States, Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands, have announced that they will be boycotting the UN anti-racism conference.

The Durban Review Conference is being held at the UN European headquarters in Geneva from April 20 to 24 to evaluate progress toward the goals set by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa in 2001.

The US and Israeli delegations walked out of the 2001 Durban conference when the nations of the Global South began to voice their candid views on racism, colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and Zionism. The US and Israeli delegates were particularly incensed at the defense of the rights of the Palestinian people and the almost unanimous condemnation of Zionism as racism.

So this year, the United States and Israel have decided that they will not attend the conference and have even convinced some of their allies to join them in the boycott.

Officials of some of the countries that will be boycotting the conference have even felt compelled to resort to the "blame the victim" strategy, accusing the delegates of the Global South of anti-Semitism. However, any logical person can tell that there is a very big difference between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

The countries that have decided to boycott the conference have a checkered past.

Israel was actually established through ethnic cleansing. The Zionists drove about 800,000 Palestinians out of their homeland in 1948 and are still denying them the right of return. And Israel is still committing war crimes, human rights violations, and racist acts against the

Palestinians, as was exemplified in the recent Gaza war.

The British conquered Australia and disenfranchised the Australian Aborigines, killing every single indigenous person on the island Tasmania in the process. And the Australian Aborigines are still fighting the Australian government for the right to their homeland.

The European settlers of Canada also dispossessed the indigenous people, and the First Nations of Canada are still fighting for their rights.

The Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company colonized Indonesia and Surinam, earning huge profits from those territories, but the Netherlands has never paid reparations to the people of its former colonies. And it still possesses the Netherlands Antilles.

In addition, the Netherlands was a major player in the transatlantic slave trade but has never paid reparations to African nations or Africans in the Americas.

The United States also committed numerous acts of genocide against the Native Americans over the years.

In 1811, Tecumseh, a leader of the Shawnee nation, commented on the genocide committed against the Native American people, saying:

“Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mohican, the Pokanoket, and many other once powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and the oppression of the white man, as snow before a summer sun.

“Will we let ourselves be destroyed in our turn without a struggle, give up our homes, our country bequeathed to us by the Great Spirit, the graves of our dead and everything that is dear and sacred to us? I know you will cry with me, ‘Never! Never!’”

And the U.S. government still refuses to pay reparations to African nations and African Americans for the crimes against humanity committed during the Middle Passage and the era of slavery.

Since all these issues will probably be brought up at the Durban II conference, the United States, Israel, Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands all decided to boycott the gathering.

Of course, all the citizens of these countries are not racist, but they still must do a lot to redress these issues and deal with the institutionalized racism in their countries.

Unfortunately, delegates from these countries will not be participating in the great debate in Geneva.

But perhaps this is better, since the delegates from the nations of the Global South will be able to express their views freely without having to worry about delegations from countries with a history of oppression and racism trying to stifle their voices.

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