

The Fires in Gaza Are the Fires in Los Angeles?

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

Earlier on Wednesday, January 8th, I saw a prominent Zionist commentator and Twitter/X User post,

“Has Greta Thunberg taken her keffiyeh off to address the fires in LA yet or are there too many Jews living here for her to be concerned?”

*The weird implications about a mythical antisemitic malice that climate activist **Greta Thunberg** has to supposedly fuel her anti-genocide and ecocide beliefs aside, the post is equally embarrassing in its lack of understanding about the exacerbators of Los Angeles’ most destructive fires in the metropolitan area’s history.*

Sadly, the disconnect that this post showcases is representative of many people and institutions, not only in explicitly pro-Israel spaces but also in the environmental movement. The US military is the [#1 institutional polluter](#) in the world. Cities across the country have been sacrificed by the local and federal prioritization of militarism and policing. Our endless wars have pushed forward the climate crisis, and now its catastrophic results are once again terrifyingly visible inside the belly of the beast.

For decades, the military-industrial complex has been destroying ecosystems, cities, and nations across the SWANA region for the sake of dominance in the oil industry. For 15 months, the US-Israeli bombing unleashed on Gaza has released [insane amounts](#) of fossil fuel into the atmosphere while poisoning the soil with each shell.

Israel [recently detonated an “earthquake bomb.”](#)

The genocide in Gaza [has devastated the ecosystem](#) and will make agricultural survival in any eventual rebuilding effort extremely difficult.

The war in Ukraine has resulted in explosions of the Nordstream pipeline. Bases around the world, expanded for meaningless escalation with China, have resulted in soil contaminated [with toxic PFAS chemicals](#), harming the soil. Biodiversity is at risk globally.

Forest fires are a natural part of California’s ecosystem. They are needed to survive. The long-time development in inevitable natural burn zones, combined with the suppression of these natural cycles for the sake of billionaire Malibu homes, has not helped this situation at all. This disregard for a balanced ecosystem has historically and continuously come [at the expense](#) of middle and working-class neighborhoods in LA vulnerable to preventable fires. The threat to LA is only further magnified by the [extra dry air](#) and [almost 100mph wind speeds](#) created by the war economy’s climate crisis.



Smoke from the Kenneth Fire (Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

This local neglect of the natural environment comes from a similar place as the Jewish National Fund's [planting of non-native pine trees](#) across Palestine, often above bulldozed Palestinian villages, at the expense of crucial biodiversity. In both instances, the interests of the war economy that prioritizes those in power are what remain above respect for Indigenous caretaking practices and life. And the results in both cases are catastrophic. Amidst a world that has gone through imperialist ecocidal war for decades, the world's biodiversity, much of which is in sovereign Indigenous land, has been decimated.

This climate-sacrificial militarism isn't just on the international stage either. In Atlanta, the proposed "Cop City" police training facility is supposed to be built on the Weelaunee Forest: sacred indigenous land also described as [the "lungs" of the city](#). Not only does the forest provide crucial air quality, but it also acts as flooding protection. Recently, Appalachia and Atlanta suffered extreme flooding. Cop City will only make this worse as the forest is destroyed. Those prioritizing these military training facilities and exchange programs with Israeli Occupation Forces are doing so at the expense of the city itself. LA's Mayor, **Karen Bass**, [recently proposed](#) allocating an extra \$123 million to the police while cutting the budget of the fire department [by \\$23 million](#). Now, the city is burning uncontrollably, and the fire department can only attempt to save residents.

This was avoidable. The flooding in Appalachia is avoidable. Future devastating flooding in a post-cop city Atlanta, NYC, and the entire coastal region is avoidable. Did anyone really

think that we could continue to wage ecocide across the world without it coming back to us? Or prioritize militarism at home that trains with our genocidal proxy above human services? The fires in Gaza are the fires in LA. They are brought about by the same institutions and are fixable through overlapping measures. The former was intentional, and the latter is a ricochet. Both are devastating, heartbreaking, terrifying, and infuriating.



The Sunset Fire viewed from a rooftop in West Hollywood (Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

Climate organizations [are warning](#) about what the fires in LA represent. Some amount of federal funding left over from our shiny new nearly \$1 trillion military budget will be allocated to helping the people of L.A. But the same organizations releasing these statements and the same politicians allocating emergency funds are the ones fanning the flames. Either by the silence that deliberately or neglectfully hides the crisis or warmongering that actively drives it further.

So no, Greta Thunberg should not “take off her keffiyeh” to talk about the fires. The only way to fight the fires is through the understanding that should come with wearing one.

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Featured image: The Palisades Fire viewed from the shoreline (From the Public Domain)

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