

Tall Tales and Murderous Restraint: Blinken on Gaza and Israel. Meaningless Statements on Control and Protection of Civilians

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The role of the US State Department regarding Israel's continued obliteration of Gaza is becoming increasingly clear. As the actions of the Israeli Defence Forces continue, the Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, is full of meaningless statements about restraint and control, the protection of civilians, the imperatives of humanitarianism in war. As the war continues, so do those statements.

As the new year began, an official from the White House [expressed satisfaction](#) at what appeared "to be the start of the gradual shift to lower-intensity operations in the north that we have been encouraging". But the revised Israeli approach did not "reflect any changes in the south". The monstrous death toll, in short, would continue to rise.

As Washington feigns a reproachful attitude to the IDF's grossly lethal tactics, claiming success in restraining them, another, failing front is also being pursued in the Arab world and beyond. As Israel's great defender, the US is attempting to hold back fury and consternation as the dirty deeds by their favourite ally in the Middle East are being executed.

Blinken's latest round of travelling has the flavour of swinging by tetchy neighbours to see how they are faring in the sea of blood and acrimony. The itinerary includes Istanbul, Crete, Amman, Doha, Abu Dhabi, Al-'Ula, Tel Aviv, the West Bank, Manama and Cairo. The State Department's [media release](#) on January 4 outlines the obsolete agenda any sensible diplomat would do best to discard.

"Throughout his trip, the Secretary will underscore the importance of protecting civilian

lives in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza; securing the release of all remaining hostages; our shared commitment to facilitating the increased, sustained delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza and the resumption of essential services; and ensuring that Palestinians are not forcibly displaced in Gaza.”

So far, Palestinians are being massacred by the IDF in Gaza, forcibly deprived of life-saving humanitarian assistance and essential services in a sustained act of strangulation while being forcibly displaced. They are being oppressed, harassed and murdered by vigilante Israeli settlers in the West Bank, even as the army looks the other way.

It follows that Blinken is telling tall stories and hoping that legs carry them far. They are also being told as [proceedings](#) before the International Court of Justice instituted by South Africa commence to determine whether Israel’s conduct in Gaza satisfies the definition of genocide in international law.

The strategy becomes clearer in the second part of the disingenuous traveller’s agenda. Blinken “will also discuss urgent mechanisms to stem violence, calm rhetoric, and reduce regional tensions, including deterring Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea and avoiding escalation in Lebanon.”

The Houthi attacks and the increasingly violent situation in Lebanon serve as golden distractions for Washington, since they give the Biden administration room to simultaneously claim to be preventing a widening of the conflict while permitting Israel’s butchery to continue.

Corking the conflict, however, is not proving such a success. The war is widening, even if reporting on the subject remains sketchy in the negligently lazy news outlets of the Anglosphere. In addition to the bold moves of the Houthis and escalating violence on the border between Israel and Lebanon come ongoing, harrying efforts from the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. An Al-Mayadeen [report](#) on January 7 took note of an announcement from the group, also known as the Iraqi al-Najuba Movement, that it had fired an al-Arqab long-range cruise missile at Haifa “in support of our people in Gaza and in response to the massacres committed by the usurping entity against Palestinian civilians, including children, women, and the elderly.”

A spokesperson for the Iraqi Resistance, Hussein al-Moussawi, was bullish in [claiming](#) that the group had the capacity to strike targets beyond Haifa. Conditions to develop the group’s weapons had also been “favourable”.

In a separate statement, the Islamic Resistance also revealed that its fighters had targeted an Israeli base on the occupied Golan Heights, using drones. To this can be added drone attacks on the US army base of Qasrok, located in the countryside of Hasakah in northeastern Syria, and the Ain al-Asad airbase in western Iraq. The base continues to host US forces.

Perhaps the greatest canard of all in this briefest of trips by Blinken is the continued, now absurd claim, that Washington is committed “to working with partners to set the conditions necessary for peace in the Middle East, which includes comprehensive, tangible steps towards the realization of a future Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, with both living in peace and security.”

In his remarks to President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah, Blinken [showed](#) the hardened ignorance that will ensure the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will continue in some form. In his mind, a “reformed” Palestinian Authority will take over the reins of a ruined Gaza (“effective responsibility”) whatever the residents of Gaza think.

Palestinians will never, given current conditions, be permitted sovereignty and anything remotely resembling a thriving, viable state. Israel, whose very existence is based on predation, dispossession and war, will never permit a Palestinian entity to be given equal standing at the diplomatic or security table. The US, in the tatty drag of an independent broker, will go along with the pantomime, promoting, as Blinken is, a sham, counterfeit form of autonomy, one forever subject to conditions, demarcations and restraints. And one thing is almost certain about any future rump Palestinian entity: it will be deprived of any right to defend itself.

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Featured image: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meet in Ramallah, West Bank on January 10, 2024. [Palestinian Presidency – Anadolu Agency]

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