

# What Did You Do During the Gaza Genocide? “They Feel entitled to Commit these Crimes”

Will Netanyahu, Gallant, Gantz, Smotrich, Ben-Gvir, Biden, Blinken, Austin, Nuland, Clinton (both) appear before Nuremberg trials?

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*We owe a debt to Elie Wiesel, Leon Uris and all the historians, writers and filmmakers who produced thousands of books and films about the Nazi holocaust of the Jews, as well as some who documented the extermination of the Roma, homosexuals, communists, mentally handicapped and others in almost equal numbers. Even the fictionalized stories helped to sensitize us all to the horrors of genocide (a word coined in 1943 by the eminent Polish Jewish lawyer Rafael Lemkin to refer to the elimination of at least a quarter of the world’s Armenians, before he or anyone else knew of the Nazi horrors).*

This is a great service, because their work removed all excuse for ignorance toward genocidal acts, among both the general public and the political elite. They helped, either directly or indirectly, to indict and prosecute many who participated in the holocaust and to cast everlasting shame upon those who looked the other way.

Lemkin and other eminent, hardworking and resourceful individuals and institutions also contributed to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, a major component of international law now shared by the 153 nations that are its signatories. Among other provisions, the convention requires its signatories to take action to stop genocidal acts when they occur, partly overriding national sovereignty.

This in turn gave rise to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, which espoused the duty of governments and other institutions to intervene in situations of genocidal activity. That doctrine has been abused and discredited by powerful nations, sometimes using it as a pretext to intervene for their own purposes, but it is nonetheless a testament to the

pervasive awareness of genocide and the sensitivity to it, both public and official.

One effect of this awareness is the shame cast upon those who looked away or “didn’t want to get involved” during the Nazi holocaust and subsequent genocides, including Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and others. “Where were you?” “Why didn’t you do something?” These are questions that no one wants to be asked, least of all public officials.

This makes it all the more difficult to understand how such awareness has failed to stop the Gaza genocide. It is by far the most widely covered genocide in history, replete with mass torture, glorification of the deaths of innocents, mass hysteria among the perpetrators, endorsement by government officials, and racism of the most extreme kind, all on video, social media and every other imaginable form of communication. The perpetrators are essentially crying to the world, “Watch us. We can do the unthinkable if we want to”. The utter cruelty is not just horrifying; it’s incomprehensible. If you’re really that evil, why would you say so in such a loud voice?

The answer, of course, is that they feel entitled to commit these crimes, and they believe that no one can or will stop them. In fact, they expect and demand complicity for their deeds, and they are getting it from the very powers – primarily the US – who backed the Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But this begs the question. We can easily understand what motivates Netanyahu and his government, and why they deserve life in prison, but why not the Biden administration and US government and war industry, as well? Do they think there will be no price to pay? Do they think there will be no Nuremberg trials?

The answer is yes, of course they do. In fact, they have everything to gain, if for no other reason than that offshore Gaza waters hold an estimated 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas. Their participation in the orgy of death assures them of a share in the spoils.

But what of the rest of us? Will we share in the spoils? Most of us, to our credit, would not want to and will not get a chance to do so in any case. Will Netanyahu, Gallant, Gantz, Smotrich, Ben-Gvir, Biden, Blinken, Austin, Nuland, Clinton (both) and others complicit in the greatest genocide of our century appear before Nuremberg trials?

That will at least partly on whether the rest of us escape the question, “What were you doing during the Gaza genocide?”

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*Featured image: The UN says nearly 1.9 million people have now been displaced in Gaza. [AbdelHakim Abu Riash/Al Jazeera]*

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