

Bernie Sanders sheds crocodile tears for Gaza while backing Israeli bombing

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As worldwide anger mounts over the US-backed genocide conducted by Israel against the Palestinian people, the *Guardian* published an opinion article on Wednesday by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders feigning concern over the conditions in Gaza while endorsing the entire political framework of US support for the illegal Israeli occupation.

“Israel has the right to defend itself and destroy Hamas terrorists who attacked them,” Sanders wrote, echoing the official position of imperialist politicians and generals. He was careful never to use the term “genocide” or “war crimes” or “ceasefire,” placing primary emphasis on the October 7 “barbaric attack against civilians in Israel,” which, he says, “began this war.”

Starting with the headline “Gaza needs a humanitarian pause, then we need a vision of where we go from here,” Sanders adopts a vague and passive style to disguise the totally criminal character of the first three weeks of the Israeli onslaught against Gaza. The people of Gaza are “facing catastrophe,” he writes. “8,000 people have been killed” while more “have been displaced from their homes.”

This is a deliberate political distortion. The people of Gaza are not tragic casualties of a natural disaster who “have been killed” by some unforeseen occurrence. The Israeli government murdered them with the backing of all the imperialist governments on Earth. The Biden administration declared “there are no red lines” and that “Israel owes no one a justification,” giving the green light to genocide. Israel has intentionally struck hospitals, schools and refugee centers to carry out an ethnic cleansing policy, the very type of crime that the US has invoked (or concocted) as the justification to carry out its own wars in the past.

Sanders is a longtime Zionist and supporter of the

state of Israel who told pro-Palestinian protesters to “shut up” at a Vermont town hall during the 2014 Israeli invasion of Gaza. That year, when at least 2,000 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli military, Sanders supported a Senate resolution that declared Israel was “defending itself against unprovoked rocket attacks from the Hamas terrorist organization.” Within 48 hours of penning his *Guardian* op-ed, Sanders’ office called the police to arrest a group of protesters from the Democratic Socialists of America who had entered his office in Washington D.C. demanding he call for a ceasefire.

In his *Guardian* op-ed, Sanders raises concerns about the brutality of the Israeli campaign in Gaza and the extremely provocative violence by Israeli settlers in the West Bank but only to give himself political cover. He is an experienced bourgeois politician of the social democratic variety who is keenly aware of his role in tamping down social divisions to prop up the Democratic Party and US imperialism (as he did in both his presidential campaigns, in 2016 and 2020). He speaks as a gatekeeper, using whatever remains of his credibility to convince young people to accept the US-Israeli “narrative” that Israel’s actions are, in the end, entirely justified.

While using the passive voice to describe the crimes of the Israelis, he goes out of his way to denounce the crimes of Hamas, lending credence to crudely false propaganda claims that Hamas intentionally murdered babies:

The Hamas attack was unspeakable. Over 1,300 innocent men, women and children killed. About 240 Israelis and Americans taken hostage, including young children and

grandparents. Hundreds of Israeli youth were gunned down in cold blood at a music festival, babies and older people were brutally murdered in their homes. And let's remember that Hamas did not primarily target the military. They intentionally targeted innocent civilians. Their attack was designed to provoke a response. In that they succeeded. ... The people of Israel were horrified and outraged by this attack. Understandably, many wanted to strike back forcefully.

Hamas, Sanders says, is "an authoritarian terrorist organization," which "has ruled by force, stockpiling arms and war material, taxing the desperately poor population." The words would just as well apply to the state of Israel and the ruling Likud party, founded by right-wing terrorist Menachem Begin.

Much of this description would also apply to the Biden administration, which Sanders has endorsed and which is demanding \$105 billion for Israel and the neo-Nazi-sympathizing regime in Ukraine.

Sanders said Hamas "advances a fundamentalist ideology which treats women as second-class citizens and threatens to kill people who are gay." He can look across the aisle and find many Republican senators who share that outlook, to say nothing of the fascists who make up a sizeable portion of the House majority and comprise Donald Trump's most fervent political base.

Sanders indicts Hamas for "repressing dissent and stealing from Gazans not just the basic materials of life they need, but the dream of a better future."

But the primary government responsible for the devastating conditions facing the people of Gaza is the government of the United States, headed by President Joe Biden, whom Sanders is fervently supporting for reelection. The US government has supported Israeli blockades and the recent cutting off of electricity, internet and healthcare for the entire population of Gaza, in violation of the principles established in the Nuremberg Tribunal that tried top Nazi war criminals after World War II.

Hamas' social policies certainly have nothing to do with socialism, but Sanders' statements are political cover for the Israeli government, since he says nothing

about the fact that Arab Israelis are officially "second-class citizens" under Israeli law, to say nothing of the apartheid conditions in Gaza and the West Bank.

To cover his support for Israel's genocidal capitalist government, Sanders puts forward a few modest proposals for the Israeli government that he knows have no chance of ever coming to pass. He suggests that the fascist Netanyahu and his right-wing cabinet of criminals "promise that Palestinians displaced in the fighting will have the absolute right to safely return to their homes" and that Israel commit to "broader peace talks."

Sanders and nearly all his co-thinkers in the Democratic Socialists of America "Squad" in the House have supported the Israeli war crimes against Gaza. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has also endorsed Biden, told CNN last month that it was "absolutely legitimate" to vote to fund the Israeli military, saying, "I do believe that Hamas has to be dealt with."

Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez & Co. are nothing more than cogs in the political and propaganda machine of American imperialism, as it ramps up its military operations in a global war that extends from Ukraine to the Middle East and, imminently, to the Far East.



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