

Six Pacific states line up with US-Israel against UN vote for Gaza ceasefire

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A recent United Nations General Assembly vote on a motion calling for an “immediate, durable and sustainable humanitarian truce” in Gaza highlighted the American and Israeli international isolation from the world’s population. Most governments sought to head off the growing public hostility to the genocidal assault on the Palestinian people by voting for or abstaining on the motion.

Of the 12 nation states that directly lined up with the US and Israel to vote “no,” six were small Pacific states with a median population of just 80,000 people. Four of these—Nauru, Palau, Marshall Islands and Micronesia—are impoverished micro-states, with the latter three functioning as colonies of the United States in all but name. The other two governments with larger populations that aligned with Washington and Tel Aviv—Papua New Guinea and Fiji—again demonstrated their abject subservience to imperialism.

The three-page October 27 UN General Assembly truce resolution also demanded that “all parties immediately and fully comply with their obligations under international law,” with “immediate, continuous, sufficient and unhindered provision of essential goods and services to civilians throughout the Gaza Strip, including but not limited to water, food, medical supplies, fuel and electricity.”

The final vote was 120 in favour, 45 abstentions, and 14 against. The entire procedure represented a fraud against the Palestinian people, bringing to mind Lenin’s characterisation of the League of Nations, the UN’s pre-World War II predecessor, as a “thieves’ kitchen.”

The UN resolution committed those in favour to nothing. The states voting “yes” included multiple capitalist regimes in the Middle East, including Egypt and Jordan, that for decades have actively collaborated with Israel in suppressing the Palestinian struggle. Likewise, several of those who abstained on the General Assembly vote are long-standing allies of the US and Israel and have lent active support to the attack on Gaza—including Britain, Germany, Australia and Canada.

That all said, the “no” vote on the truce resolution had an

especially provocative character, demonstrating blatant disregard for basic precepts of international law by the US and Israel, together with their flunkies.

Washington relied on bought-and-paid-for Pacific mini-states in order to cobble together a double-digit “no” vote within the 179-member UN General Assembly.

Palau, Marshall Islands and Micronesia are American-dominated island territories north of Papua New Guinea. These archipelagos were historically colonised by multiple powers, including Spain, Germany and Japan. After World War II, the US seized them from Japan and held them for decades as administrators of a so-called UN trusteeship.

American authorities ran roughshod over the rights of the indigenous populations. In Marshall Islands, for example, between 1946 and 1958 the US detonated 67 nuclear devices for testing purposes. Residents became unwitting medical experiment subjects when American military authorities commissioned studies to measure the impact of nuclear fallout. Nuclear-contaminated earth from testing sites in Nevada was also shipped to the archipelago and dumped there.

The three north Oceania states each received nominal independence beginning in the late 1970s, but remain bound by a so-called Compact of Free Association with the US. This arrangement involves Washington funnelling cash to the states’ ruling elites each year, in return for the US being legally responsible for defence and national security, with the American military enjoying untrammelled access to the islands and sea territories. These operations serve to complement the main US bases in the Pacific Ocean, in Hawaii and Guam. Their importance to Washington has only increased as it attempts to militarily encircle China.

An additional quid pro quo between the US and Palau, Marshall Islands and Micronesia involves foreign relations and UN votes. The Pacific states function as US proxies, including by defending Israeli government and military operations against the Palestinians. For years, the three governments have lined up alongside Washington and Tel Aviv to oppose even the mildest censure of Israel, or any

tepid suggestion that the Palestinians have rights.

Last July a *Jerusalem Post* journalist travelled to these north Pacific states to investigate this record of countries, which “most Israelis have trouble finding on a map.” The report explained: “It is their close ties with Washington that are the deciding factor. On my visit to Palau, one senior official bluntly told me, ‘We vote with Israel because that’s what America does.’ It’s that simple.”

In the southwest Pacific, Nauru’s nominal independence is similarly bogus. It has a population of less than 20,000 people. In the 20th century, British and Australian corporations ruthlessly stripped the island of its valuable phosphate reserves. More than 80 percent of the state remains uninhabitable due to the legacy of strip mining. More recently, the Nauruan ruling elite has accepted cash to illegally imprison asylum seekers on behalf of successive Australian governments. Nauru’s votes in the UN reflect its ruling elite’s mercenary relationship with Canberra and allied imperialist powers.

The more populous Papua New Guinea (PNG) (with a population over 10 million) and Fiji (around 1 million) have not always lined up alongside the US and Israel in the UN.

Their vote on the proposed Gaza ceasefire reflected increasingly close ties with Washington, amid a US campaign to minimise China’s influence in the southwest Pacific. Previous PNG and Fijian governments have welcomed expanded Chinese trade and investment, promoting a “look north” foreign policy. They sought to manoeuvre for advantage between Beijing on the one hand and US and Australian imperialism on the other. Recently-installed administrations in both countries, however, have revised this stance.

PNG Prime Minister James Marape, who took office last year, signed a Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US in May. It will significantly expand American military operations in the country by allowing “uninhibited access” to strategic military and civilian locations, including ports and airports. This is aimed against China, with Washington preparing to wage a war of aggression against its Asian rival.

Marape also sought to curry favour with the US, as well as evangelical Christians within PNG, by personally opening an embassy in Jerusalem last September. The prime minister said that Jerusalem was the “universal capital of the nation and people of Israel,” while saying nothing about Israel’s illegal occupation of East Jerusalem since 1967. Marape declared that Israeli investors were welcome to land in a “special economic zone” in PNG, adding that his government would support Israel on votes at the UN.

These moves have been widely opposed within PNG. Students have staged multiple protests over the military agreement with the US. Numerous social media posts have

condemned the government for its opposition to a ceasefire in Gaza, accusing Marape of acting as a puppet. One Facebook post read: “Papua New Guinea a FAKE Christian Nation has voted AGAINST peace in Israel. Someone needs to be held responsible for NOT protecting civilians and humanitarian obligations.”

In Fiji, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka issued a statement explaining the country’s UN vote that amplified Israeli propaganda points. It falsely declared: “Israel’s primary target is Hamas, not the Palestinian population... They have established safe zones to help Gazan citizens relocate out of harm’s way.”

Rabuka, who came to office last December, has reoriented Fijian foreign policy closer in line with US and Australian interests. In June he indicated he would review and consider terminating a policing agreement with Beijing that was signed in 2011, allowing Chinese officers to be deployed to the country.

The UN vote triggered a crisis within his unstable coalition government. Deputy prime minister and National Federation Party leader Biman Prasad declared his opposition, and called for a cessation of violence in Gaza to allow the provision of humanitarian aid. Rifts within the Fijian ruling elite were also expressed by former military strongman Frank Bainimarama. He warned of a heightened security risk for hundreds of Fijian troops serving in so-called UN peacekeeping operations in several Middle Eastern countries.

Many ordinary Fijians are outraged at their government’s complicity in the Gaza genocide. After days of heated online discussion, students at the University of the South Pacific planned to hold a demonstration last Saturday in support of the Palestinian people. The government immediately banned it. Home Affairs Minister Pio Tikoduadua declared that his priority was “the security of the nation,” adding: “You can see what’s happening on social media. You don’t have to add fuel to the fire.”

The blatantly anti-democratic suppression of the student rally reflects the government’s fragility and nervousness. As throughout the world, in Fiji and other Pacific states a chasm separates the reaction of the population to the Israeli genocide—marked by horror and revulsion—and that of the ruling elite, which is cynically indifferent if not openly enthusiastic for the bloody operation.



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