

New York Times writer forced to resign after opposing Israeli genocide in Gaza

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A prominent staff writer for the *New York Times* was forced to resign last Friday after signing an open letter condemning Israel's ongoing genocide of the Palestinians now taking place in Gaza.

Jazmine Hughes, who has written for the *Times* since 2015 and won numerous awards, violated the newspapers' policies on public protest by signing the letter, according to *New York Times Magazine* editor Jake Silverstein.

"This policy, which I fully support, is an important part of our commitment to independence," Silverstein wrote. "She and I discussed that her desire to stake out this kind of public position and join in public protests isn't compatible with being a journalist at The Times, and we both came to the conclusion that she should resign."

The open letter signed by Hughes was published on October 26 by the Writers Against the War on Gaza (WAWOG), an organization that describes itself as "an ad hoc coalition committed to solidarity and the horizon of liberation for the Palestinian people. Drawing together writers, editors, and other culture workers, WAWOG hopes to provide ongoing infrastructure for cultural organizing in response to the war. This project is modeled on American Writers Against the Vietnam War, an organization founded in 1965."

The letter begins, "Israel's war against Gaza is an attempt to conduct genocide against the Palestinian people." It continues,

We come together as writers, journalists, academics, artists, and other culture workers to express our solidarity with the people of Palestine. We stand with their anticolonial struggle for freedom and for self-determination, and with their right to resist occupation. We stand firmly by Gaza's people, victims of a genocidal war the United States government continues to fund and arm with military aid—a crisis compounded by the illegal settlement and dispossession of the West Bank and the subjugation

of Palestinians within the state of Israel.

The letter has been signed by hundreds of journalists and writers.

While Hughes' resignation has been portrayed by Silverstein as a mutual agreement, there can be no doubt that coercion was involved. There is no possibility that the *New York Times*, which functions as an organ of the US state and of the ruling class which it represents, could tolerate such views within its ranks. The entire US political establishment, encompassing both capitalist parties, has declared its unequivocal support for Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinian people.

The *Times* is itself complicit in this world-historic crime. The protest letter cited an October 14 op-ed by the paper's Editorial Board entitled "Israel Can Defend Itself and Uphold Its Values" which, while weakly calling upon the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to attempt to "minimize" civilian casualties, declared that the Israeli regime deserved the unequivocal support of the United States and its allies in prosecuting its war against the people of Gaza.

At the same time, the *Times* systematically downplays the war atrocities of the Israeli military. While it cannot avoid reporting on the massive scale of death and suffering being inflicted on Gaza, it employs a crude sleight of hand in its coverage.

Reporting on the Israeli bombing of the densely populated al-Maghazi refugee camp on November 5 that killed at least 51 people, the *Times* passively described "an explosion" that "appeared to have killed and wounded many people." The *Times* presents as though it were an accident what was an intentional Israeli airstrike—almost certainly carried out with an American-supplied bomb—which destroyed the defenseless refugee camp.

Such are the depths that the *Times* editors will plumb in their slavish defense of imperialist interests. The "newspaper of record" has a long and filthy history of covering up the most savage crimes of imperialism. Just in the last 30 years,

it has used its pages to campaign for every one of the criminal wars launched by American imperialism, most infamously in 2003 when it promoted, without question, the lying claims of the Bush administration that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The millions of dead in Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, among others, is an unanswerable indictment of the corrupt bourgeois press in the US, epitomized by the *Times*.

The notion that Hughes was forced out in the interests of maintaining the newspaper's "objectivity" represents the most depraved hypocrisy.

In this regard, the role of the *Times Magazine*'s editor-in-chief, Silverstein, is worth dwelling on. Silverstein staked his reputation on the August 2019 release of the 1619 Project, which aimed at telling the "untold story" of American history by presenting "anti-black racism" as the driving force of American history. It denied the progressive character of both the American Revolution, characterizing it as a counterrevolution aimed at defending slavery, and the Civil War, casting the Union's destruction of slavery in the war as the opportunistic maneuverings of racist whites.

When the falsifications of the 1619 Project were subjected to devastating criticism, first by the *World Socialist Web Site*, then followed by many principled historians and academics, Silverstein moved to secretly edit the already published Project, abandoning its main claim and namesake, that the year 1619—the year when the first slaves arrived in the American colonies—represented the true founding of the United States. Such is his commitment to principled journalism.

As for Silverstein's claims that Hughes violated some policy against "public advocacy," the 1619 Project was itself relentlessly promoted as "advocacy journalism" and even "protest journalism." The message is clear: advocacy will be encouraged, even showered with money and awards, so long as it coincides with the political aims of the Democratic Party. But when journalists cross the line and challenge American imperialism, they can expect the ax to drop.

Indeed, the suppression by Silverstein and the *Times* Editorial Board of journalists who speak the truth about the ongoing genocide in Gaza by Israel, backed by the Biden administration and the governments of all the imperialist powers, exposes the lie that the views put forward by the 1619 Project represented any sort of radical, oppositional view, let alone a threat to the establishment. In reality, these racist politics represent the worldview of an affluent upper-middle class layer that is totally subordinated to the interests of American imperialism.

The US state and its mouthpieces in the corporate press, along with its bribed academics, claim that the use of the term genocide is hyperbolic and "incendiary." In fact, it is

the only accurate term to describe what is occurring in Gaza.

The Israeli war of annihilation against the Palestinians has killed more than 10,000 people in Gaza in just one month. Wide swathes of the Gaza Strip, among the most impoverished areas in the world, have been reduced to rubble. The Israeli siege has cut off access to fuel, food, clean water and medical supplies, reducing the population of 2.3 million—nearly half of them children—to apocalyptic levels of deprivation.

The far-right Zionist regime of the criminal Netanyahu and his fascist cronies has utilized the October 7 military action led by Hamas—a desperate effort by an oppressed people to break out of the open-air prison known as Gaza—to set into motion its plans for the mass murder and permanent expulsion of the Palestinian population.

A leaked document from the Israeli Intelligence Ministry, dated October 13 last month, recommended the mass expulsion of the Gazan population into the Sinai desert to be imprisoned in concentration camps. The Israeli regime's war aims are clear: this is their "Final Solution to the Palestinian Question." Changing what needs to be changed, a similar document could have been drawn up by Hitler's SS.

However, there exists one crucial difference in this regard. While the Nazi regime planned and carried out the extermination of European Jewry under the utmost secrecy, the genocide of Palestine is unfolding before the eyes of the entire world.

Tens of millions of workers and young people around the world are not only recoiling in shock and horror from what they see, they are outraged and determined to halt the unfolding genocide. A genuine mass movement is developing. What is necessary is for this emerging movement to turn to the working class, the only social force capable of stopping the war, and to arm themselves with the only political program capable of defeating imperialism. That is the program of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties.



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