

Award-winning novelist Arundhati Roy denounces “brazen slaughter” and “crimes against humanity” in Gaza

David Walsh
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Internationally acclaimed Indian author Arundhati Roy, winner of the Booker Prize for Fiction for her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), has issued a strongly worded statement condemning the homicidal Israeli assault on the Gazan population.

Roy's own present situation is bound up with the furious attacks underway on democratic rights in every capitalist country. She delivered her message on Gaza to the Munich Literature Festival by video November 16 because she currently faces sinister and reactionary charges brought by the ultra-right BJP government in India for remarks she made *in 2010* in regard to Kashmiri self-determination. As the WSWS has noted, this flagrant attack “on free speech is part of the Modi government's ever-escalating assault on basic democratic rights and non-stop campaign of Hindu communalist incitement.”

Roy's comments are worth citing at length. They speak to the revulsion felt by hundreds of millions at the savagery of the Israeli destruction of Gaza. This rampage of murder and ethnic cleansing has the full backing of the US, British, French, German and Italian governments, along with the major media of all the Western countries.

Roy first observed that she could not “appear on a public platform, no, not even in Germany where I know views like mine are virtually banned, without adding my voice to the millions of people—Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Communist, atheist, agnostic—that are marching on the streets all over the world, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.”

She went on, “If we allow this brazen slaughter to continue, even as it is livestreamed into the most private recesses of our personal lives, we are complicit in it. Something in our moral selves will be altered forever. Are we going to simply stand by and watch while hospitals are bombed, a million people displaced and dead children in

thousands pulled out from under the rubble? Are we going to once again watch a whole people being dehumanised to the point where their annihilation does not matter?”

In other words, as Roy's comments make clear, far from reflecting some surge in antisemitism, the current outrage at Israeli genocide reflects deep-seated popular sentiment that traces its origins in part precisely to horror at the Nazi crimes and the Holocaust.

The Indian author continued, noting that the Israeli occupation “of the West Bank and the siege of Gaza are crimes against humanity. The US and other countries who bankroll the occupation are party to the crime. The horror we are witnessing right now, the unconscionable slaughter of civilians by Hamas as well as by Israel are a consequence of the siege and occupation.”

Rejecting the hypocritical attempt to equate the events of October 7 with the subsequent Israeli onslaught, Roy correctly noted that it was “the occupation that is breeding this monstrosity. It is doing violence to both perpetrators and victims. The victims are dead. The perpetrators will have to live with what they have done. So will their children. For generations.”

She called for a political solution “in which both Israelis and Palestinians live together or side by side in dignity, with equal rights. The world must intervene. The occupation must end. Palestinians must have a viable homeland.”

Alluding to the exposure of the claims by Washington and its accomplices in crime that they intervene in various parts of the globe in the name of democratic and human rights, Roy added that “the moral architecture of western liberalism” was always hypocritical, but “even that provided some sort of shelter. That shelter is disappearing before our eyes.”

She concluded her Munich address: “So please—for the

sake of Palestine and Israel, for the sake of the living and in the name of the dead, for the sake of the hostages being held by Hamas and the Palestinians in Israel's prisons—for the sake of all of humanity—cease fire now."

Such a statement will inevitably bring down upon Roy charges of "antisemitism," of "supporting Hamas," of aiding and abetting "terrorism" and so forth. But such desperate, stupid, fascistic voices are increasingly isolated and disbelieved.

Earlier this month, Tunisian tennis player Ons Jabeur made a moving statement after her victory in a match in Cancun, Mexico, as part of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Finals.

Currently ranked sixth in the world, Jabeur, 29, occasionally breaking down in tears, told the crowd that she was "very happy with the win, but I haven't been happy lately."

"The situation in the world," she went on, "doesn't make me happy ... It's very tough seeing children and babies dying every day. It's heartbreaking. I have decided to donate part of my prize money to help the Palestinians. I can't be happy with this win. It is not a political message, it is humanity. I want peace in this world. That's it."

The crowd applauded her message. In a post-match press conference, the Tunisian tennis player returned to the theme of the "horrible" photos and videos from Gaza. In fact, she told reporters, "I try to stay off social media as much as I can, but it's very tough." Looking at the images "doesn't let me sleep or recover very well." She added, "The worst thing is I feel hopeless, I feel like I cannot do anything."

On November 20, rap star Cardi B asserted on social media that she would no longer support Joe Biden over his funding of the wars in Ukraine and Israel. The *Guardian* pointed out that the singer "memorably helped promote Biden's candidacy as he successfully ran for the White House in 2020."

"I'm endorsing no presidents no more," she warned. "Joe Biden is talking about, 'Yeah, we can fund two wars,' ... talking about, 'Yeah, we got it, we're the greatest nation.' No ... we're not. We don't got it, and we're going through some s--- right now. So say it!"

She added: "We are really, really, really f---- right now. No, we cannot fund these ... wars."

She also denounced New York City Mayor Eric Adams for \$120 million in budget cuts to schools, libraries and sanitation. "And a \$5m budget cut in sanitation ... We are gonna be drowning in ... rats."

In its piece *Guardian* Cardi pointed the NBC poll released November 19 revealed that "Biden's approval rating has declined to 40%, the lowest level of his presidency. And the survey showed that strong majorities of all voters disapprove of his handling of foreign policy. The steepest declines of support came among voters aged 18 to 34 – 70% said they did not approve of Biden's handling of the war in Gaza."

Mona Chalabi, journalist and illustrator, is the latest figure to criticize the *New York Times*, to which she contributes as a freelance writer, for its indifference to the Palestinian suffering in Gaza.

The *Washington Post* noted November 17 that Chalabi, a 2023 Pulitzer Prize winner, has been active in interviews and social media posts "saying she believes the *Times* coverage of the war has favored the Israeli perspective over the Palestinian. She also took aim at the Pulitzers, saying she felt as if the plight of Palestinian journalists and civilians was overlooked during speeches."

On November 16, according to the *Post*, Chalabi, of Iraqi descent, announced on Instagram, "where she has more than 468,000 followers, that she donated the \$15,000 that came with her Pulitzer win to a Palestinian journalists group to help fight what she sees as an 'asymmetry' that elevates Israeli voices over Palestinian ones in the media."

At the October 19 Pulitzer ceremony, "after hearing presenters mention the 'Israel-Gaza war,' she raised an objection, reports the *Post*. "I don't think it's the 'Israel-Gaza war.' I think it's the 'Israel-Palestine war,'" Chalabi told the audience. "And no one in this room is willing to mention the 'P-word,' and I think it's really important. I'm sorry, I know I'm not supposed to make speeches here, but it felt important."

Chalabi added that she felt the plight of journalists in Gaza was being neglected. As of November 16, 37 Palestinian media workers had been killed, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. "Some forms of protest are being permitted and some are not," Chalabi said.



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