

Sri Lankan filmmaker Prasanna Vithanage denounces Israeli genocide in Gaza

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International award-winning Sri Lankan filmmaker Prasanna Vithanage recently spoke with the World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) about Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Vithanage, a socially conscious artist, has directed several important films exploring the consequences of the three-decade long anti-Tamil communal war in Sri Lanka that was brought to a bloody end in May 2009 with the military defeat of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The most powerful of these are Purahanda Kaluwara (Death on a Full Moon Day [1997]), Ira Mediyama (August Sun [2003]) and Oba Nethuwa Oba Ekka (With You, Without You [2012]), a trilogy that deals with the human cost of the Sri Lankan government's war against the LTTE.

Vithanage is a regular reader of the WSWS and is fully aware and supportive of its Marxist analyses of critical international events, including its coverage of the Gaza genocide.

We publish below his statement opposing the Gaza genocide:

There are reports about the staggering loss of Palestinian lives, including women and children, so we already know the statistics. Ground reports show, however, that the human catastrophe in Gaza could be far worse than these figures indicate. But even with the limited reporting we are able to grasp the situation. It is heartbreaking, powerful and testing of our humanity. It is a litmus test of our humanity.

Today this war has exposed the whole camp, including the Democratic Party and US President Joe Biden who claim to be advocating for freedom and democracy.

At the same time, it has exposed those who claimed to be “leftists” and “progressive.” It has revealed their

impotence and their blindness to reality. These “leftists” totally ignore the origins of the Palestinian issue and see the problem merely through the October 7 incident.

Comrade David North in his brilliant lecture at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on October 24 provides a farsighted Marxist and historical analysis of this issue. Anyone who seriously wants to know the history of this issue should carefully study this lecture.

The US, UK and other imperialist powers cynically rejected granting asylum to the Jews fleeing from the Holocaust during the Second World War. Exploiting this situation, the British imperialists then paved the way for the establishment of Israel in 1948 through the forcible expulsion of Palestine's existing Arab population. Zionism is thus a chauvinist ideology.

I wonder about those people making a big noise about the October 7 event while keeping their lips sealed to the fact that over half a million Arabs were forcibly evicted when the Israeli state was formed in 1948. Those evicted were reduced to refugees inside Palestine, on the one hand, and in Lebanon and elsewhere on the other.

Let me give one example of the cruel nature and intention of the fascistic leaders who founded Israel from a documentary that I saw. In the documentary David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Zionist movement, explains how to “resolve” the Palestine question. He declares: “Old Palestinians are quickly dying, and young people forget it. In that way, the problem can be resolved.”

Israel was formed illegally and in an inhumane way. It was a colonial settlement, which poured as many Jews as possible into that state to change its demographic patterns. Likewise, here in Sri Lanka, Colombo governments have settled majority Sinhalese

people in the North and the East, where minority Tamils used to be dominant, to provoke ethnic friction.

The US, along with the other imperialist powers and the UN, collaborated in the Zionist's ethnic-cleansing project which reduced the Arabic people to refugees. The aim of Zionism is a Palestine without Arabic people. And what has happened since 1948 has been the reduction in Palestinian-owned land, with war after war pushing the Palestinians into smaller and smaller strips of land. The whole project and basis of Zionism was ethnic cleansing. We must unconditionally denounce Zionism.

I think a so-called two-state solution [an independent Israel and independent Palestine], which is preached by the imperialist powers, is a fraud. Anyone with some knowledge of the history of this issue knows it was the US that strongly opposed this "solution," using its veto power in the UN.

I strongly believe Israel must withdraw from the occupied West Bank and that granting the Palestinians the rights to their lands must be an integrated part of a genuine solution. Without accepting these fundamental rights, nobody can even talk about democracy or human rights. I also strongly believe that the International Committee of the Fourth International is providing the only genuine viable solution to this crisis: A United Socialist Republic of Arab and Israeli workers with the support of the international working class.

It is true that the Israeli state holds elections, but these elections are only for the Israelis. While the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank are denied their right to life, democracy in Israel is a hoax.

Those people supporting Israel's genocidal war base themselves on the blatant lies being promoted by the pro-Zionist media and publications owned by Rupert Murdoch.

The corporate media never tell the people that there is ethnic cleansing in Gaza, instead there are endless lies invented to justify Israel's bombing of hospitals, schools and even refugee camps. One of those lies was that Hamas used Al-Shifa hospital as a shield for its underground military infrastructure. Despite this being proved to be a blatant lie, it was heavily promoted by all the media to justify Israel's attacks.

This war has also exposed the fraudulent nature of the Indian government's posturing as the world's biggest

democracy. It has totally lined up behind the Israeli state. The Sri Lankan government took a similar position, blaming Hamas' terrorism for the conflict. In the end, they both stand behind the interests of imperialism while trying to exploit the war for their national and ethnic purposes: in Sri Lanka against the Tamils and Muslims, and in India against the Muslims.

I strongly denounce the state-sponsored witch hunting and persecutions in many countries against all those artists and activists who have come forward to oppose Israel's genocide. I note that Susan Sarandon was dropped by UTA, her talent agency, because of her remarks about the war. This is ridiculous.

As an artist I am deeply shocked about the killing of innocent people in their thousands but if people do not know the history and motivations behind this war, their humanity alone will not stop this war.

Artists and millions of people around the world who have come forward to protest the Gaza genocide must have a clear political program and a perspective. There is a significant basis to build a powerful anti-war movement as millions come forward against this war. I remember the pseudo-left and post-modernists telling us that there is no working class, but this is the only social force that can effectively stop the war.



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