

Israel's murder of Palestinian author Dr. Refaat al-Ar'eer sparks global outrage

Jacob Crosse
9 December 2023

The December 6 targeted assassination of gifted English teacher, author, translator and Palestinian rights advocate Dr. Refaat al-Ar'eer in Gaza by the US-backed Israel Defense Forces has provoked mass outrage across the globe. Dr. al-Ar'eer, a professor at the Islamic University in Gaza, which has since been destroyed by the IDF, is one of over 17,400 Palestinians who have been murdered by the IDF in the last two months.

The assassination of al-Ar'eer is one of the more heinous atrocities carried out by the Israeli government as part of its campaign to suppress all those who speak out against the genocide. According to human rights group Euro-Med Monitor, al-Ar'eer, along with his brother, sister and four of their children, was killed on Wednesday when an Israeli airstrike "surgically targeted the apartment" in Gaza where he was staying.

A gifted and beloved academic, "the voice of Gaza" inspired thousands of Palestinians to learn English, read Shakespeare and see the humanity in Jewish people, in spite of the occupation. Prior to his killing, al-Ar'eer edited two books, *Gaza Writes Back* and *Gaza Unsilenced*, and contributed to several others, including 2022's *Light in Gaza: Writing Born of Fire*. A regular contributor to Palestinian and left-wing news sites, including *Electronic Intifada*, al-Ar'eer also co-founded the organization We Are Not Numbers, following Israel's 2014 military campaign "Operation Protective Edge" in order to help young Palestinians who survived not only cope but explain to the world the story of military occupation.

"Refaat in Gaza" was one of many Palestinians, including photojournalist Motaz Azaiza and filmmaker Bisan Owda, who have become known to workers and

youth all over the world for posting on-the-ground updates from Gaza that not only cut through the lies of the capitalist press, but also expose the reality of Israel's war crimes.

Refaat's final posts on X/Twitter include a poem written last month and a statement condemning the role of the Biden administration and the Democratic Party in the slaughter. Collectively, as of this writing, these posts have garnered over 35 million "views" and been "retweeted" over 145,000 times, a reflection of the mass grief and anger al-Ar'eer's assassination has provoked.

It has become clear that the IDF is deliberately killing Palestinian journalists and academics as part of its genocidal operations.

Four days before Dr. al-Ar'eer was killed, Professor Sufian Tayeh, a leading researcher in physical and applied mathematics and the president of the Islamic University of Gaza, where al-Ar'eer taught, was killed, along with his family, in an Israeli airstrike.

Al-Ar'eer's and Tayeh's murders followed the end of the misnamed "humanitarian pause" and coincided with the release of a joint report on an October 13 Israeli military strike that killed Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah and injured six others. The joint report by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Reuters and Agence France-Presse concluded that the strike was the result of deliberate Israeli tank fire. As of December 8, the Committee to Protect Journalists has confirmed the deaths of 63 journalists, overwhelmingly Palestinian, since October 7.

While millions of people around the world are mourning the killing of al-Ar'eer, "the Voice of Gaza," the mainstream Western press, including the *New York*

Times, *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*—more than 36 hours after his death was made public—have yet to write an article. Their silence on his assassination and the targeted killing of Palestinian journalists, healthcare workers and academics over the last two months exposes them as nothing more than stenographers for the US government and its policy of genocide against the Palestinians.

The assassination of al-Ar'eer, carried out by the fascistic regime of Benjamin Netanyahu, with the direct complicity of the Biden administration and the NATO powers, is not only a war crime, but a serious warning to opponents of genocide around the world. Terrified of the global mass movement against the war and unable to stampede public opinion with ahistorical lies that Zionism is synonymous with Judaism and the efforts of capitalist governments to criminalize anti-war opposition as “antisemitic,” the Israeli ruling class, “America’s strongest ally in the Middle East,” is resorting to murdering its political opponents and even those who provide objective reporting.

The murderous rampage by the Israeli government, backed by US imperialism, is a warning to workers and youth around the world: under conditions of mass opposition to inequality, war and genocide, capitalist governments are increasingly adopting genocide and the targeted assassination of unarmed political opponents and their family members as state policy.

The killing of al-Ar'eer represents an escalation in the global attack on democratic rights, which has been spearheaded by the United States, with its prosecution of courageous WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, currently imprisoned in UK’s Belmarsh Prison awaiting extradition. Similar measures to those employed against al-Ar'eer and Assange are being discussed at the highest levels of government in Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, Rome and Tel Aviv for suppressing domestic political opposition. These authoritarian measures have the support of the entire political establishment in the US and internationally.

The crimes committed by the US and its Zionist ally are a harbinger of even worse ones to come. At the same time, the adoption of genocide and targeted assassination against the Palestinians by Israel and its imperialist allies underscores the futility of appeals to these very governments and politicians.

For over two months, millions of people around the

world have taken to the streets and school campuses to demand an end to the genocide and for society’s resources to be redirected to improving social conditions, not enriching war profiteers. In the US, Biden and the Democratic Party have rejected these calls, downplayed the Palestinian death toll, whitewashed IDF war crimes, and passed multiple resolutions declaring their fulsome support for the Zionist project.

Under conditions of a growing strike wave, and unable to reverse the decline of American capitalism in relation to its competitors, particularly China, the US ruling class is using the Gaza genocide as a springboard to future war crimes and attacks on democratic rights.

The bourgeoisie the world over is encouraging the growth of fascistic and far-right forces to be used as bludgeons against the growing mass anti-war movement.

The growing anti-war movement must not be oriented toward appealing to the war criminals. Rather, it must be based on the mobilization of the international working class, the only social force capable of stopping the war and overthrowing the capitalist system, the source of war, poverty and fascism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact