

Actors reading out South African indictment of Israeli genocide viewed 13 million times

David Walsh
14 January 2024

The Palestine Festival of Literature posted several videos Saturday in which 29 actors read out portions of the South African government's formal complaint against the state of Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The complaint charges the murderous onslaught of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) with being “genocidal in character” because it is being carried out with the “specific intent,” in violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention, “to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.”

In the course of little more than a day, the videos have been viewed by some 13 million people.

The list of artists, some of whom are also writers, directors or musicians, includes British performers Khalid Abdalla, Steve Coogan, Charles Dance, Stephen Dillane, Paapa Essiedu, Lena Headey, Tobias Menzies, Maxine Peake, Maisie Richardson Sellers and Harriet Walter. Ten actors and artists from the US are also participating: Kathleen Chalfant, Cynthia Nixon, Indya Moore, Tunde Adebimpe, Gbenga Akinnagbe, Susan Sarandon, Alia Shawkat, Wallace Shawn and Morgan Spector.

The other readers are Palestinian actor Adam Bakri, Irish actor Liam Cunningham, Scottish actor and filmmaker Peter Mullan, Nigerian-born British poet, playwright and performer Inua Ellams, Egyptian filmmaker and actress Aida El-Kashef, Ethiopian-American writer Maaza Mengiste, Iranian-American actress and singer Sepideh Moafi, Dutch actress and singer Carice van Houten and South African journalist, novelist and editor Zukiswa Wanner.

As the WWSW has noted, “the ICJ complaint is 84 pages of densely-spaced text, with 574 footnotes, nearly each citing to a longer and more detailed report or document. It presents a devastating, overwhelming

case.”

The South African complaint, as of the end of December, reported the deaths of “in excess of 21,110 named Palestinians, including over 7,729 children—with over 7,780 others missing, presumed dead under the rubble.” On top of these deaths, “over 55,243 other Palestinians” have been injured, with many of these injuries involving amputations or permanent disfigurement.

The complaint continues, “Israel has also laid waste to vast areas of Gaza, including entire neighborhoods, and has damaged or destroyed in excess of 355,000 Palestinian homes.”

In a section entitled, “Destruction of Palestinian life in Gaza,” the South African complaint documents Israel's targeted and systematic destruction of courts, libraries, universities, museums, historic structures, religious sites, schools, buildings housing records and historical artifacts and even graveyards.

The complaint also documents Israel's obstruction of “essential food, water, medicine, fuel, shelter and other humanitarian assistance for the besieged and blockaded Palestinian people,” citing warnings by experts that “silent, slow deaths caused by hunger and thirst risk surpassing those violent deaths already caused by Israeli bombs and missiles.”

It takes nothing away from the 29 actors' sincerity to point out, that despite the devastating material contained in the South African complaint and its having been endorsed by at least 60 countries, including the entire Organization of Islamic Countries, the complaint will not have the slightest impact on Israel's genocidal conduct, or its wholehearted backing from the US and the other great powers. Both the Netanyahu and Biden administrations have dismissed the damning report out of hand.

The US media has essentially followed suit. The various news pieces refer to the genocide accusation, but almost none of them include any of the factual material, the undeniable proofs offered by the South African complaint.

For this reason, the actors' reading is actually one of the few means by which many of those viewing it have learned of the complaint's contents.

The responses of various viewers on X/Twitter are worth citing:

The is the BRAVEST, humanitarian thing that Hollywood actors have ever done This is 1 MILLION times more meaningful than celebrities singing "Imagine."

Fascinating! It's powerful when celebrities use their platform to bring attention to important global issues.

Brave actors doing what coward journalists should have done.

Case should also be filed against America current invasion of Yemen.

I think the case brought by South Africa is strong and does not need to be spoken by famous actors. However I tremendously admire the integrity of these people to stand up for what they believe despite the risk to their careers.

This was amazing. Hearing the words all over again, but by the actors, was a surreal experience.

Incredibly moving.

This really made me cry, finally celebrities with backbone, this is exactly what is needed.

I applaud every one of these actors for this amazing read.

Well done to all the artists involved.

So much respect to these artists for using their crafted voices and name recognition to communicate these harrowing, important truths.

an immediate halt to Israel's operations in Gaza, but the immediate arrest of the entire Israeli government, together with their accomplices and co-conspirators in Washington and the other imperialist capitals. Each day that passes while these war criminals remain at large is a scandal and an indictment of the entire capitalist social order and all of its institutions worldwide.

However, nobody familiar with the history of the UN, itself implicated in countless bloody wars of imperialist aggression over the last three-quarters of a century, will place any confidence in its procedures to bring about an end to Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza, let alone to prosecute the war criminals in Washington and Tel Aviv. Lenin's description of the UN's predecessor, the League of Nations, as a "thieves' kitchen" is no less true of the UN today.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

As the WSWS has pointed out:

There is certainly enough factual evidence described in the complaint to warrant not only