

Tony Blair adds ethnic cleansing in Gaza to his list of crimes

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Twenty-two years after lying about Iraqi President Saddam Hussein possessing weapons of mass destruction to justify US President George W. Bush's war on Iraq in 2003, former UK Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair has given his imprimatur to plans to ethnically cleanse Gaza advanced by US President Donald Trump.

The US/UK's unprovoked war of aggression and the subsequent occupation of Iraq cost the lives of more than 600,000 Iraqi civilians, according to the UK medical journal *The Lancet*, and many estimates are higher. By April 2007, 1.9 million Iraqis were displaced within the country and over 2.2 million were refugees abroad. Once one of the most advanced Arab economies due to its oil, after the invasion Iraq's GDP contracted by 50 percent, its currency dived, unemployment and poverty soared.

The 2016 Chilcot report, summarising the findings of a public inquiry into Britain's role in the war, concluded that Blair had deliberately blurred lines between what he believed and what he knew to justify the invasion. In 2017, Britain's High Court was forced to block a bid by a former chief of the Iraqi Army's staff to bring a private prosecution against Blair for committing a "crime of aggression" by invading Iraq in 2003.

Last week, this unindicted war criminal went to the White House to brief Trump on proposals, initiated by Israeli businessmen and drawn up with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), the Gaza Humanitarian Fund (GHF) and his own Tony Blair Institute (TBI), for a "post-war" Gaza.

Trump gave Israel's fascist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the green light to destroy Gaza by bombardment, starvation and disease and remove the Palestinians from the enclave and now wants to reap the spoils.

Blair's post-premiership career prepared him well for this new crime. He used his years since leaving Downing Street to hobnob with the Middle East's autocrats in his role as Middle East Envoy for the United Nations, European Union, United States and Russia from 2007-2015, a position gifted to him by Bush in return for services rendered. Under his watch, the two-state solution became a dead letter and he became persona non-grata in Ramallah, the Palestinian Authority's (PA) headquarters in the West Bank, because of his naked bias towards Israel.

Afterwards, taking advantage of these contacts, he set up his own consultancy business, the Tony Blair Institute (TBI), becoming the go-to man for the world's kleptocrats and dictators.

Blair's visit to the White House came just weeks after his TBI first denied any involvement and then sought to minimise its role in the plans for the redevelopment of Gaza as the "riviera of the Middle East", cleansed of its Palestinian citizens, drawn up by the BCG and GHF. Its two staffers attending meetings were "essentially only in listening mode", TBI said.

This lie has collapsed. The BCC, TBI, GHF plan is being prepared for implementation by the Israeli offensive against Gaza City, home to one million people, almost half of the Strip's population, who are to be killed or rounded up into a concentration camp prior to expulsion.

The plan is titled, "The Great Trust: From a Demolished Iranian Proxy to a Prosperous Abrahamic Ally", where "Great" is an acronym for "Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation". It is not only a massive speculative venture seeking to profit from ethnic cleansing and genocide, but a critical component of the drive by US imperialism to dominate the Middle East.

It envisages a manufacturing zone, offshore oil and gas development, and a luxury coastal tourist business, with an infrastructure corridor connecting to a new port, airport and other ports in the region. This would serve as the terminus for a transportation route to the Middle East and India, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)—aimed at rivalling China's Belt and Road Initiative—which is expected to yield a financial bonanza for its investors.

These profits are premised upon the supposedly "temporary relocation" of the entirety of Gaza's remaining 2.1 million population during the reconstruction period, either through "voluntary relocation programs" to "temporary housing options" within Gaza or moving to other countries. Few are in fact expected to ever return, with suggested host countries including Indonesia, South Sudan, Somaliland, Libya and Ethiopia.

For 38 slides of Gaza project, see www.washingtonpost.co

Needless to say, the Palestinians themselves will have no say in the venture, with the US and Israel establishing direct de facto control of Gaza. This is described as a form of “multilateral custodianship” that could “evolve into a formal multilateral trusteeship” with Israel maintaining “overarching rights to meet its security needs”, ideally with Arab and other countries investing in the Trust. The Trust would govern Gaza “until a reformed and deradicalized Palestinian Polity is ready to step in its shoes” as a front regime, with “the Trust retaining some plenary powers.”

Accompanying Blair at the White House to discuss this plan was Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner who manages billions of dollars of investment with the Gulf petro-monarchs—business interests furthered when he served as Middle East envoy during the first Trump administration.

Blair and Kushner are said to have been collaborating for months on the future of Gaza following Trump’s proposal in February to take a “long-term ownership position” over Gaza, with the US moving to “take it over and develop it” as a luxury beach resort and relocate the population to a “good, fresh, beautiful piece of land” or “numerous pieces of land”.

Blair has also worked with Steve Witkoff, Trump’s billionaire Middle East envoy, meeting with him at the White House in July on the same day that Netanyahu met Trump. He has held a series of meetings in Israel and the Gulf over the last few months, including with PA President Mahmoud Abbas in July.

Trump reportedly brought in Ron Dermer, Netanyahu’s closest advisor and Minister of Strategic Affairs, to discuss the plans. As Israel’s then ambassador to the US, Dermer along with Kushner played a key role in negotiating the 2020 Abraham Accords that saw Israel normalise relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

Dermer and Blair worked together in the past, reportedly discussing with the UAE a post-war plan for Gaza during the Biden administration. Both are critics of the PA and support Netanyahu’s opposition to either Abbas’s Fatah-dominated PA or Hamas controlling post-war Gaza, as he seeks to annex the West Bank.

While Blair’s record shows that no criminal enterprise is too much for Britain’s former prime minister, the present Labour prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer, is his ardent admirer, disciple and fellow war criminal. Starmer fully supports Netanyahu’s genocide of the Palestinians as part of US imperialism’s broader plans to assert its control over the resource-rich Middle East—targeting China above all—from which Britain hopes to profit. The British government supplies Israel with weaponry, conducts near daily reconnaissance flights from its base in Cyprus to provide intelligence for the Israel Defense Forces and provides political and diplomatic support for Israel at the United Nations.

Last December, Starmer appointed one of Blair’s senior

officials as Britain’s new envoy to the PA, which still functions as Israel’s subcontractor in policing the Palestinians in the West Bank. Sir Michael Barber, who headed Blair’s Downing Street delivery unit—afterwards working for the Boston Consulting Group and becoming a partner in the McKinsey consulting group—will help the PA with its “vital reform agenda to strengthen its delivery capacity and improve service provision.”

At the same time, Starmer is moving to crush all opposition to Israel’s war on Gaza and building up a police state in defence of war, genocide and austerity. The police have arrested hundreds of people under the Terrorism Act for the “crime” of sitting peacefully in Parliament Square, London holding a sign reading, “I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action”—the anti-genocide group proscribed as a terrorist organisation because of its peaceful protests at arms factories and military installations.

That Starmer is in power today is entirely the political responsibility of former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who was catapulted into the leadership in 2015 by hundreds of thousands of Labour Party members anxious to see the back of the hated Blairite right-wing. While Corbyn lamented the “disastrous decision” to invade Iraq that had left a “stain” on Labour, he did not once demand that Blair and his cabinet be expelled from the party.

He opposed any fight to mobilise the working class against his Blairite opponents, who smeared him and his supporters as antisemites for opposing Israel’s suppression of the Palestinians. He instead capitulated to them at every turn, even as they drove many of his supporters out of the party, and ultimately himself. Without the temporary reprieve granted by Corbyn, Labour would have never recovered from the crimes it committed during the Blair years and would not be in a position to escalate and deepen its criminal agenda today.



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