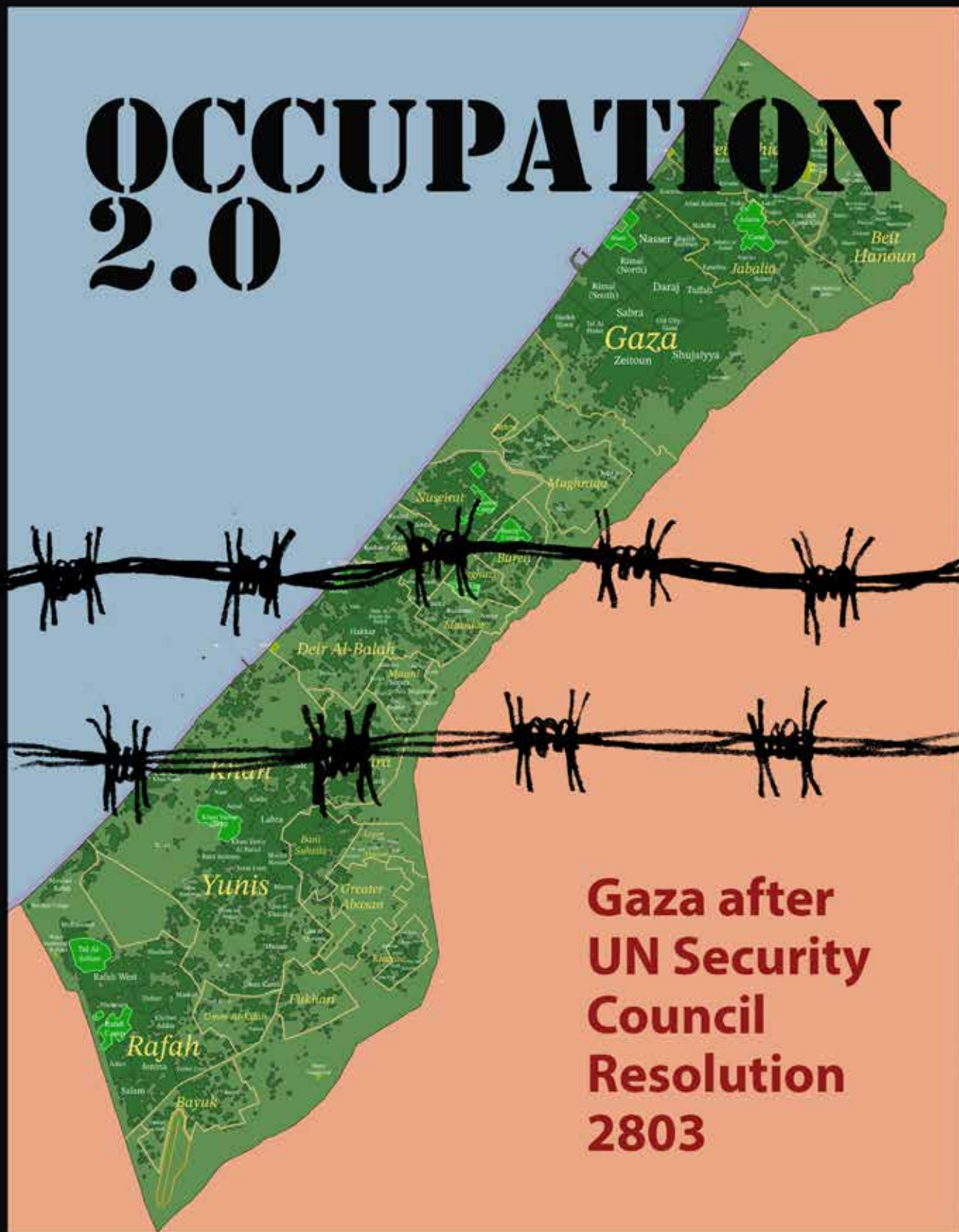


THIRD WORLD RESURGENCE

www.twn.my

OCCUPATION 2.0



Gaza after UN Security Council Resolution 2803

Third World
RESURGENCE

www.twn.my

No 365 2025/4 e-ISSN 2948-4766



Jaber Jehad Badwan (CC BY-SA 4.0)

The UN Security Council has effectively placed a devastated Gaza under US control, adding another level of foreign domination atop the Israeli occupation.

10

ECOLOGY

- 2 Deserting the Delta – *Obiora Ikoku*

HEALTH & SAFETY

- 6 An unpalatable corporate logic – *Ana Vračar*

ECONOMICS

- 7 How unsustainable global supply chains exacerbate food insecurity – *Benjamin Selwyn*
9 A summit for the 99% – *Ed Pomfret*

COVER

Occupation 2.0

Gaza after UN Security Council Resolution 2803

- 10 The UN embraces colonialism: Unpacking the Security Council's mandate for the US colonial administration of Gaza – *Craig Mokhiber*
13 Hardwiring normalisation: Infrastructures, extraction and Gaza's future – *Rafeef Ziadah*
17 The final reckoning: Israel's last-ditch battle to win the media war – *Ramzy Baroud*
19 After the genocide, the genocide – *Saree Makdisi*

WORLD AFFAIRS

- 24 A permanent war machine – *Michelle Ellner*

HUMAN RIGHTS

- 27 Operation Condor: The secret system that terrorised exiled South American dissidents 50 years ago – *Francesca Lessa*

WOMEN

- 29 The rise of Red Brigade – *Roli Mahajan*

BOOK REVIEW

- 30 Andrée Blouin was Africa's forgotten power broker – *Ernest Harsch*

THIRD WORLD RESURGENCE is published quarterly by the Third World Network, an independent non-profit international research and advocacy organisation involved in bringing about a greater articulation of the needs, aspirations and rights of the peoples in the South and in promoting just, equitable and ecological development.

Published by Third World Network Berhad (198701004592 (163262-P)), 131 Jalan Macalister, 10400 Penang, Malaysia
Tel: 60-4-2266728 Fax: 60-4-2264505
Email: twn@twnnetwork.org
Website: www.twn.my

Views expressed in these pages do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Third World Network.

Cover design: Lim Jee Yuan
Cover image of Gaza map: The Great Mule of Eupatoria via Wikimedia Commons

Editor: Lean Ka-Min
Managing Editor: Chee Yoke Ling
Staff: Linda Ooi (Design), Lim Jee Yuan (Art Consultant)

Deserting the Delta

After decades of plunder, oil giants are scrambling to divest from the Niger Delta without cleaning up or paying reparations to impacted communities.

Obiora Ikoku

This story originally appeared in Earth Island Journal.

DORIS Egba's strongest memory of her childhood in the village of Otuabagi, in Nigeria's Bayelsa State, is of her parents' interminable search for arable land. 'When I look back now, out of all my memories, it is the one that stands out – the fact that they were always looking for where they could grow crops just to feed us,' says Egba, who's now a teacher in the village school.

Otuabagi, a rustic fishing village nestled within the vast network of alluvial lands, mangrove forests and slow-moving creeks that make up the Niger Delta, is the birthplace of oil production in the country. In 1956, when Shell D'Arcy – as Royal Dutch Shell was then known – struck black gold in the region, the fortunes of Egba's parents and their fellow villagers, who are predominantly farmers and fisherfolk, took a turn for the worse. Their ancestral land, with its rich soil and plentiful water, became part of what came to be known as the Oloibiri Oilfield. At least 18 of the 21 oil wells that made up the oilfield were sited in Otuabagi, mostly on farmlands, fishing ponds and streams that had served the villagers for generations.

Over the next two decades, the oilfield would pump over 20 million barrels of crude oil, resulting in massive hydrocarbon pollution that changed Otuabagi forever. By the time Egba was born in 1980, two years after the oilfield had ceased to produce, the once-thriving fish ponds and farms had been transformed into polluted,



A 2011 study found the groundwater near oilfields in Rivers State was contaminated with benzene, a known carcinogen, at levels over 900 times above those deemed safe by the World Health Organization.

Milieudefensie / Akintunde Akinleye (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

lifeless waters and barren lands.

'We could not farm anywhere because you would be seeing crude oil on the surface of the water and in the soil,' Egba recalls. 'So, my parents had to look for another location to farm.' Unfortunately, amid rising land costs, they could not afford to move, so they remained, eking out a living amidst the rusty carcasses of the oil wells.

Shell never cleaned up the mess it made in Otuabagi. Improperly decommissioned well heads and manifolds (the assemblage of pipes, valves and other fittings that help direct the flow of pressurised oil from wells) still litter the landscape. 'Until today, crude oil still seeps out into our farmlands and waterways from the infrastructures left behind by Shell,' Egba says.

Otuabagi isn't the only village to suffer such a fate. For decades, Shell and a host of other international and domestic oil companies expanded drilling operations throughout the Niger Delta, displacing local communities and despoiling the natural environment in the process.

Now, in the face of mounting lawsuits over spills and crude theft, as well as a decline in output from the oilfields in the restive region, all of the international oil companies that plundered these lands are attempting to rid themselves of their once-lucrative-but-now-problematic assets in the Delta.

By October 2024, four oil majors – the American-owned ExxonMobil, the Norwegian-owned Equinor, the Italian-owned ENI and the French-owned TotalEnergies – had received approval from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) to sell their respective onshore and shallow-water assets in the Niger Delta. Royal Dutch Shell's divestment was approved soon after. The sale sent shockwaves through communities that are still seeking redress from the historically largest operator in the Niger Delta for damages to their lands, waters and public health.

This massive scramble to get out of the Delta marks the end of an era for the region, one characterised by international companies' domination of

onshore oil production, massive environmental damage and human rights abuses. None of these companies have committed to a responsible exit strategy. Which means they are basically passing the onus of environmental remediation onto the new owners, the Nigerian government and impacted communities like Otuabagi.

‘I am angry about what is happening,’ Egba told *Earth Island Journal*. ‘Just look at us here in Otuabagi. If a community that is the gateway to oil prosperity in Nigeria can be abandoned like this, then what would be the fate of other host communities?’

Crude contamination

The Niger Delta is a vast low-lying wetland on the southern edge of Nigeria, where the Niger River drains into the Gulf of Guinea. One of the most biodiverse wetlands in the world, it is home to more than 6,000 species and has immense ecological and economic importance for both Nigeria and the West African subregion. Its mangrove forests, the largest on the continent, are particularly biodiverse and act as a nursery for many fish, mollusc and crustacean species that provide essential sustenance to local communities.

Sixty percent of the Delta’s 30 million residents are subsistence farmers and fisherfolk.

The area also contains vast oil and gas reserves – including 37.50 billion barrels in proven crude oil reserves – which are the mainstay of Nigeria’s economy. Nigeria is the largest crude oil producer in Africa and the eighth largest exporter in the world.

The discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta in 1956 opened the gateway for Nigeria’s transformation from a pre-colonial agriculture-based economy into a petrostate. But while 70 years of oil exploration have brought huge wealth for Big Oil and a privileged Nigerian elite, oil-bearing

communities in the Delta have been left largely in poverty. Several communities in the Niger Delta, including some forcibly evicted by the government, have lost their land entirely to oil development. Others continue to lack basic amenities like public schools, hospitals, electricity and passable roads.

‘Local people in the Delta are acutely aware of how much wealth oil can produce,’ the United Nations Development Programme wrote in a 2006 report. ‘But for most people, progress and hope, much less prosperity, remain out of reach.’

These same communities bear the cost of crude oil spills from the thousands of kilometres of pipelines that criss-cross the land, and gas flaring from wellheads, all of which have transformed the Niger Delta into one of the most polluted places on Earth. Between 1976 and 2001, there were more than 6,817 documented spills from the thousands of oil facilities that are scattered across the landscape. There have been thousands of additional spills since. All told, an estimated 13 million barrels of crude oil have been spilled in the Delta.

The spills have contaminated the region’s surface water, groundwater, air and soil with hydrocarbons, including known carcinogens like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and benzo(a) pyrene. In a 2011 report, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) found groundwater on land held by the Ogoni ethnic group in Rivers State, one of the nine states constituting the Niger Delta, was contaminated with benzene, a known carcinogen, at levels over 900 times above those deemed safe by the World Health Organization. A 2023 report commissioned by neighbouring Bayelsa State described pollution in the region as an ‘environmental genocide’, noting that studies connected oil spills to 16,000 neonatal deaths annually in Nigeria, and a life expectancy of 41 years in the Delta compared with

the national average of 61 years.

The contamination also harms the fishing and farming occupations of locals. Every year, farmers in the region complain of declining crop yields due to historic and ongoing oil spills. One single incident, the 2005 Ogale oil spill from an onshore field operated by Shell Nigeria Production and Exploration Company, destroyed the livelihoods of an estimated 15,000 residents in the Ogale and Bille communities.

Despite widespread evidence of damage, oil companies regularly deny responsibility for the spills, often blaming sabotage and pipeline vandalism instead. But industry watchdogs say that, while these factors do play a role, the companies deliberately overstate the case in order to evade responsibility for a majority of the spills caused by ageing, poorly maintained infrastructure. A recent study of pipelines in six states of the Niger Delta found that leaks, often caused by corrosion, constituted 86.8% of failures resulting in product loss.

‘Nowhere is the failure of governance and the devastating effects of corporate exploitation more evident than in the Niger Delta,’ Akinbode Oluwafemi, executive director of the human rights organisation Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), told *Earth Island Journal*.

In an attempt to remedy this, and in response to the 2011 UNEP report on pollution of Ogoniland, considered one of the most impacted parts of the Delta, the Nigerian government launched a \$1-billion cleanup and restoration programme to be mostly paid for by oil firms. The cleanup, which began in 2017, is expected to take between 25 and 30 years. However, ongoing oil spills in the area have outpaced the cleanup, casting doubt on the prospect of full remediation of Ogoniland.

Apart from Ogoniland, there’s little happening in terms of cleanup in other polluted communities

across the sprawling 70,000-sq-km delta. That includes Bayelsa State where Egba lives. Two years ago, a state commission estimated it would take at least \$12 billion to clean up and restore Bayelsa. Community members and watchdog groups, therefore, have reason to worry that the Western oil majors' asset transfers – primarily to complex networks of domestic investors that are hard to keep track of – will worsen the situation.

'Multiple investors are entering and exiting the sector ... with no information provided to nearby communities or civil society. It is often unclear who the owners and operators are that communities have to deal with, and in some instances, Shell remains a shadowy presence behind the scenes,' the Dutch nonprofit Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations, or SOMO, wrote in a 2024 report analysing Shell's divestment moves. 'The money behind several of the new ventures appears to be precarious, with massive risks in terms of the ability of companies to pay for the upkeep and proper decommissioning of wells and other infrastructure.' (SOMO said much of its analysis applies to other US and European oil majors as well.)

For instance, between 2010 and 2021, Shell sold its interest in 12 oil mining leases in the Delta to 10 domestic oil companies, each of which is owned by business consortiums comprising anything from three to five or more companies. In March 2025, the Anglo-Dutch firm divested all of its oil assets in the Delta, keeping only a 25.6% stake in a joint gas venture, Nigeria LNG Limited, when it finalised the sale of its Nigerian subsidiary, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited, to Renaissance Africa Energy Company (RAEC). RAEC is a consortium of five energy companies – the international group Petrolin and four Nigerian-owned businesses that industry watchdogs say have neither adequate funding

nor requisite experience in the energy sector.

Given the inexperience of the buyers, some point to the possibility that the sales are a front. 'We think it is either Shell has [loaned] them money to take over its own asset or somebody somewhere, possibly some corrupt politicians, gave them the money,' says Isaac Botti, a programme director with the civil society group Social Action.

The 2015 sale, by Shell and its joint-venture partners TotalEnergies and Eni, of Oil Mining Lease 29 to Nigerian firm Aiteo Eastern E&P offers a glimpse into what can happen when less experienced domestic companies take over high-risk assets. At the time of the sale, nearby community members said the oil infrastructure in the lease was poorly maintained and unsafe.

Six years after the purchase, an oil blowout occurred at one of the well platforms included in the sale, leading to a crude oil leak that took the company a month to cap. More than 4,320,000 gallons of crude oil were released before the leak was contained by an American blowout-control company that had to be called in to plug the well. An investigation by a local newspaper, *Premium Times*, found that a series of missteps by Aiteo and a lack of capacity or planning to address spills worsened the impact, subjecting villagers, aquatic ecosystems and the broader environment to avoidable damage from what has been described as the biggest oil-spill disaster in the history of Nigeria's petroleum industry.

Heading for the exit

In explaining its divestments, Shell has referenced security challenges involved with managing onshore investments, and the desire to 'simplify its presence' in Nigeria to focus on deepwater oil and integrated gas projects in the country. It has also suggested that the divestments are part of its strategy to reach 'net zero'

emissions, a rationale that, SOMO points out, doesn't align with its recent investments in other fossil fuel assets in the country.

Activists and community members point to oil companies' mounting liability for environmental damage as a significant factor. They note that there has been an increase in community-led lawsuits against international companies operating in Nigeria in recent years. Shell, in particular, has been the target of litigation, some of which has been successful, including a £55-million settlement between Shell and the Bodo community in 2014, and a 2021 Dutch court order requiring Shell to pay \$111 million to the Ejama-Ebubu community of Ogoniland.

'The divestment is a scam,' Phillip Godfrey, an activist who heads the Bayelsa State office of the Youth and Environmental Advocacy Centre, told *Earth Island Journal*. 'The [international oil corporations] are thinking ahead. They know a time is coming when they will no longer be able to avoid paying for the crimes they have committed. This is why they want to run away ... They are pulling out from onshore to offshore where the communities will not be able to see all the shenanigans they are doing, including pollution.'

Shell did not respond to a request for comment on these allegations.

The legal landscape around divestment is complicated. The country's 1969 Petroleum Act doesn't say much on the issue, though it required divestment deals to have the consent of the Minister of Petroleum Resources, a position held by the President. That act is now superseded by the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) of 2021, which addresses divestment in more detail but doesn't apply to older leases. Under the PIA, buying companies are to be vetted by the NUPRC before an application by the divesting company is approved by the minister. The NUPRC is

required to consider the buyers' technical and financial capacity, including their ability to fulfil well-decommissioning and abandonment obligations.

Indeed, the NUPRC initially rejected Shell's sale to Renaissance, noting that Renaissance wasn't qualified to responsibly handle the assets. However, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu went ahead and approved it in 2024, prompting protest by activists, which briefly paused the deal.

Some organisers point to the close connection between international oil companies and Nigerian officials, particularly President Tinubu, who has held positions with both domestic and international oil companies, to explain the approval. 'The president has an entrenched interest in the oil and gas sector, and this explains why, despite our resistance, the divestment succeeded,' Botti, of civic group Social Action, said.

Defending the government decision, Heineken Lokpobiri, a junior minister of petroleum, said in a recent interview that 'divestment is a global practice. If you want to attract investments, you must also allow people to divest when they want to.'

Local communities and advocates are pushing back, calling on the Nigerian government to hold international companies responsible for damage before they exit the region. That includes King Bubaraye Dakolo, Agada IV of Ekpetiama Kingdom in Bayelsa State. The kingdom has joined a lawsuit by several civil society groups against the Nigerian government and Shell, demanding a halt to the divestment pending full environmental remediation and reparations to impacted communities.

'Shockingly, the people of Ekpetiama woke up one day to hear the rumour that Shell's Nigerian subsidiary, with the parent company, have divested and sold their oil assets ... to a hitherto unknown entity in the oil industry, Renaissance African Energy Ltd.,

and this was done surreptitiously without recourse to the host communities,' says Chuks Oguru, the lawyer who is representing the plaintiffs in the case.

'Any divestment must be with the concurrence or knowledge of host communities,' he added. 'Secondly, there must be a plan to safely decommission and abandon obsolete infrastructures. Thirdly, there must be remediation of environment and payment of compensation to the people.'

International law would tend to support their claims.

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct both require consultation with stakeholders, remedy for impacted communities and environmental due diligence when it comes to oil asset sales.

In March 2025, after Shell's sale was finalised, 195 representatives of local and international civil society organisations signed an open letter to Shell demanding that it embark on a full cleanup of the Niger Delta and provide transparency around how the process will occur. 'The history of the energy transition is being written now,' they write. 'Shell's exit from the Niger Delta will, in this history, stand as perhaps the emblematic example of the global oil industry's irresponsible divestment strategy, passing toxic assets and liabilities to others.'

The scar of pollution

Growing up under the shadows of deteriorating wellheads and manifolds, Egba knows well the lasting toll oil extraction has had not only on the Otuabagi landscape, but also on the health of her generation. She recalls how, when she was a child, the elders in her village believed the crude that was left in the wellheads after Shell's departure

was a healing liquid brought by God. When children were sick, they would rub it on their skin.

It was not until Egba went into secondary school and studied subjects like biology and chemistry that she began to realise the danger she was in. 'When I reached a particular age, I saw that even the crops that grow in those oil-polluted areas ... may be dangerous to our health,' she said. 'I feel bad and frustrated, but it is like you are just angry, but you don't have power either to say or do anything.'

Egba, who is now 45, hasn't been able to conceive yet. Although she can't know for sure that her infertility is connected to oil extraction, she suspects as much.

Her suspicions are well founded. A recent study into the reproductive health impacts of oil extraction in the Otuabagi community by the nonprofit Kebetcache Women Development & Resource Centre found high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in blood samples taken from 80 participating women, some of which were 12,000 times higher than limits established by the World Health Organization. PAHs are known to negatively impact reproductive health, and some are also known carcinogens. The report stressed that, nearly five decades after oil production stopped in Otuabagi, women continue to bear the scar of pollution.

It is these types of life-changing impacts for which advocates are demanding redress before international oil companies pack up and go.

'Compensation must go beyond token gestures and reflect the full extent of the harm inflicted on these people and their ecosystems,' says CAPP executive director Oluwafemi. 'The opportunity to hold those who have profited immensely from the region's resources accountable must not be squandered.' ♦

Obiora Ikoku is a freelance journalist and author from Lagos, Nigeria, who writes about climate change and conflict in Africa.

An unpalatable corporate logic

The ultra-processed food industry is blocking efforts to address the health impacts of its products.

Ana Vračar

A RECENT series of articles published in *The Lancet* medical journal examines the influence of the ultra-processed food (UPF) industry on today's food systems, identifying it as a central driver of an increasingly urgent public health crisis. Researchers and activists from around the world warn that despite strong scientific evidence on the harms of UPF-dominated diets – and despite the availability of policies that could address them – UPF producers and their allies continue to obstruct reform.

'We propose that the key driver of the global rise in UPFs is the growing economic and political power of the UPF industry, and its restructuring of food systems for profitability above all else – especially by the business practices of its leading corporations – in an increasingly financially-driven, capitalist world economy,' the authors of one article write.

Between 2009 and 2023, global UPF sales rose from \$1.5 trillion to \$1.9 trillion. This growth has benefited not only corporate giants headquartered in North America and Western Europe, such as Nestlé, Coca-Cola and Mondelez, but also their suppliers, marketing firms and affiliated researchers. The article notes that the industry's model rests precisely on profit maximisation. UPF manufacturers rely on cheap ingredients and industrial processing to keep production costs low compared with traditional and local food systems; this allows them to create food-like products using inexpensive compounds, while simultaneously driving consumption through aggressive advertising and the engineered palatability of these products.

'In capitalist economies,' the

authors write, 'where investments flow to the most profitable firms and industries, this drives the structural transformation of food systems in favour of ultra-processed diets.' This dynamic creates a vicious cycle where the UPF industry depletes food systems worldwide yet is rewarded financially, including through shareholder payouts. Between 1962 and 2021, the article suggests, more than half of the \$2.9 trillion in shareholder payments linked to US food production came from the UPF sector, further boosting the industry's appeal.

But internal profit logic is not the only factor behind the industry's rise. Major UPF corporations – notably Nestlé, Coca-Cola, Unilever, PepsiCo, Danone, Mars, Mondelez and Ferrero – have mirrored tactics long associated with the tobacco, alcohol and fossil fuel industries. These include lobbying governments, shaping policy language and models, and hijacking public debate. This kind of political activity, the authors argue, 'is the most important barrier to the implementation of effective public policies to reduce UPF-related harms'.

Crucially, these corporations do not operate in isolation. The article series identifies around 200 interconnected interest groups, ranging from manufacturers' associations to advertising and agroindustry lobby organisations, through which UPF producers organise their influence. Through this web of relations, the industry is able to impose its agenda, undermine progressive public health regulations and sideline independent research.

Just like in the case of other harmful industries, governments in the Global North remain deeply influenced by UPF actors, often advancing their priorities through institutions such as the World Trade Organisation. Yet the articles insist that today offers an important opportunity to change course. Despite industry pushback, scientific understanding of UPF-associated harms is expanding, and some countries have already introduced meaningful regulations. 'Successes in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa show that effectively regulating UPF production, marketing, and consumption is possible through multi-component policies, even in the face of strong industry resistance,' the authors note, citing progress in Mexico and Ghana, among others.

Still, they argue, fully transforming food systems requires far more coordinated action from policymakers, civil society and activists, including broad coalitions capable of countering corporate pressure and advancing a just transformation of food systems. The series adds that such a transformation must be grounded in food sovereignty and adapted to local contexts, ensuring that workers currently employed in the UPF industry are not left behind. Potential policy solutions leading to this outcome, according to the articles, include stricter regulation of marketing, adequate taxes on actors profiting from UPF production and sales, but also – importantly – public investment in collective food provisioning such as school meal programmes and community kitchens. ♦

This article is reproduced from Peoples Dispatch (peoplesdispatch.org) under a Creative Commons licence (CC BY-SA 4.0).

How unsustainable global supply chains exacerbate food insecurity

Brazil offers examples both of how integration into globalised food supply networks can undermine food security – and of how to overcome this.

Benjamin Selwyn

WHILE there is more than enough food produced to feed the world's population, hunger and food insecurity persist. In 2024, around 8% of people faced hunger, while about 28% were food-insecure (without consistent access to safe and nutritious food).

Global supply chains are important for feeding and nourishing people around the world. In this vein, the World Bank funds projects that facilitate trade in food and trade of agricultural inputs such as agrochemicals, both within and between countries and regions.

But my research shows how wealth and poverty are two sides of the same coin. Wealth and poverty can both result from the growth of convoluted and globalised food supply chains. While such supply chains can reward large-scale exporters of relatively-high-value products, they can undermine local food systems.

As export volumes increase, the expansion of food sectors into global supply chains actually reduces food security in significant ways. Conversely, establishing the right to food domestically represents a viable way to combat food insecurity.

Brazil highlights how both issues play out. Despite being a major world food producer, food insecurity, and often hunger, have been longstanding problems in Brazil.

Following the election of the Workers' Party in 2002, a decade of pro-poor policy – including the



Tiago Fioreze (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Brazil accounts for more than half of the world's soybean trade. Exports have enriched Brazilian agribusiness but undermined domestic food production.

flagship Fome Zero (Zero Hunger initiative), Bolsa Família (the family allowance grant) and rising minimum wages – reduced hunger and food insecurity. The country was removed from the Food and Agriculture Organization's world hunger map in 2014.

However, Brazil was returned to the map in 2022 following COVID pandemic price spikes and the Bolsonaro government's abandonment of much of the previous pro-poor policy agenda. Then, following the victory of the Workers' Party in 2022, the reinstatement of pro-poor policies and consequent falls in levels of hunger, it was taken off the map again in 2025.

This recent removal is good news, but food insecurity still stalks the country where 28 million Brazilians – predominantly women and children – still face food

insecurity.

While social policy influences rates of food insecurity, so too do agricultural systems. This is where the differences between integration into high-value global supply chains and attempts to formulate alternative food networks become apparent.

Brazil used to have a relatively diversified national economy. Since the 1990s, under governments of different political stripes, its integration into global supply chains has occurred through exporting a few primary products.

Brazil accounts for more than half of the world's soybean trade. About 70% of that goes to China for use as animal feed. It is also the world's second largest corn exporter, mostly for animal feed and biofuels.

Such exports have enriched Brazilian agribusiness, but they

have undermined domestic food production. This is negatively affecting the food security of poorer communities. Between 2010 and 2022, soybean production increased by over 100% while rice production fell by 30%. The production of other basic food crops also fell.

Domestic food prices increased faster than general inflation, and low-income families have experienced food insecurity and have cut their food consumption.

The struggle for an alternative

But there are alternatives to this model. In 1993, the newly elected Workers' Party mayorality of Belo Horizonte declared the right to food for its 2.5-million population, and the city government's duty to guarantee it. Its success influenced the formation of the national Fome Zero programme in the early 2000s.

Since then, with some variations depending on the party in power, the city mayorality has dedicated 1–2% of its annual budget – less than \$10 million per year – to the scheme.

Long-term effects include a 25% reduction of people living



Brazil's Fome Zero (Zero Hunger initiative) helped reduce hunger and food insecurity in the country.

in poverty, a marked increase in consumption of fruit and vegetables among the poor, and 75% fewer children under five being hospitalised for malnutrition than prior to the scheme.

The system encompasses production, distribution and consumption. The local government's Secretariat of Food Policy oversees and is responsible for implementing the right to food across the city. It facilitates local participation by small farmers and businesses, workers and consumers.

Objectives included using the city government's purchasing power to stimulate local, agroecological food production, linked to consumers in ways that reduce prices while maintaining small farmers' incomes.

Public restaurants, open to all, provide 20,000 healthy meals a day – organised by local chefs

and nutritionists – for less than \$1 per meal. Lunch (Brazilians' main meal of the day) typically consists of rice, beans, meat, salads, fruit and juice.

Under the scheme, meals from public restaurants are sold at cost price – the cost of food production, distribution and maintaining restaurants. Registered homeless

people eat for free, and beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família scheme get a 50% discount. Another 40 million meals are served to over 150,000 students a year under the scheme's school meals programme. The city government partners with selected groceries to sell a range of products, often sourced locally, at 25% below market prices.

Under the scheme's 'straight from the field' programme, the city purchases food directly from producers for its public restaurants. The city provides inputs to low-income farmers and empowers them with secure land tenure. Local and regional family farms are encouraged to produce basic and other food crops for sale in the city through farmers' and traditional markets.

Global supply chains are designed and operate as systems of production and trade that reward profitable exports, rather than combatting food insecurity. They often direct resources away from where they are needed to where they are profitable.

When right-to-food systems are established to tackle food insecurity, as in Belo Horizonte, they must cater to their local context. Policies such as subsidised food consumption and production, plus coordinated distribution are all ingredients required for tackling food insecurity. ♦

Benjamin Selwyn is Professor of International Relations and International Development at the University of Sussex, UK. This article was originally published on The Conversation (theconversation.com) under a Creative Commons licence (CC BY-ND 4.0).



Felipe Tofani (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Fruits on sale at the Central Market in Belo Horizonte. The Brazilian city's right-to-food initiatives include public restaurants, school meals and direct purchases from farmers.

A summit for the 99%

Taking place just as leaders of the world's major economies convened in November, an alternative People's Summit denounced a system rigged to favour profit over public good.

SOUTH African billionaire Johann Rupert has enjoyed a sudden surge in wealth. His expanding fortune, like those of other billionaires around the world, is not a sign of brilliance or achievement. It is a symptom of a system built to funnel wealth upwards into the hands of the 1%.

Rupert's net worth jumped from \$13.7 billion to \$19.1 billion in under a year, powered by sales of high-end jewellery through Richemont, the luxury goods holding company he founded. With his exploding profits, he invests in hospital networks, viewing them simply as financial assets, not the essential services the rest of us – the 99% – need and have the right to. The headlines call it 'performance', but anyone living outside the 1% knows it is extraction.

Look closely at this 'growth story'. Rupert's empire now includes 50 hospitals. Almost 9,000 beds. Over 21,000 workers. None of this signals progress. It signals concentration of what should be public goods into private hands. Healthcare, one of the most basic human needs, converted into a pipeline for shareholder returns. Workers are reduced to cost lines. Beds are converted into units of revenue. When entire health systems become part of billionaire portfolios, this is clearly not for the public good.

This is not just an African story. In the United States, for example, private equity investors have spent more than \$1 trillion on healthcare acquisitions in the past decade. And a growing body of evidence shows that when these wealthy private owners take over, the quality of patient care declines.

This is the context within which We the 99% met at the People's Summit for Economic

Ed Pomfret

Justice in Johannesburg, South Africa, in November. While world leaders gathered for the official G20 summit convening a short distance away, the alternative summit gathered those who face the brunt of inequality and unjust decisions made by the 1% and leaders out of touch with us, the people.

Teachers who work without materials. Smallholder farmers whose land becomes collateral for big business. Hospital workers who don't have the medicines to treat patients. Migrants forced into precarity to survive. LGBTQIA+ people who are excluded and face abuse and discrimination. Caregivers whose unpaid labour props up societies. Indigenous communities who continuously see their forests and minerals stripped, then handed back to them as charity.

The discussions at the People's Summit named the problem. Inequality is not a mistake, it is a result of deliberate decisions by elite-controlled governments.

Illegitimate debt is a tool of control. Tax havens are organised theft. Militarisation drains collective resources. Digital monopolies profit from human creativity. Climate collapse uproots those who contributed least to it. These are not crises that just 'happen'. They are outcomes of rules designed to protect the powerful and externalise the cost onto everyone else.

The demands from the Summit are proportionate to the damage:

- Tax the one percent
- Shut down the offshore structures that hollow out public budgets
- Cancel illegitimate debts that force countries to choose

between paying creditors or funding public hospitals

- Enforce corporate accountability so land, water and labour cannot be plundered
- Make polluters pay rather than letting them sell 'green' fantasies while communities drown or burn
- Value and recognise care work
- Secure food sovereignty so communities set their own agricultural priorities
- Protect culture, civic space and the right of peoples to live free of occupation or genocide.

Put Rupert and his billionaire friends' wealth beside these demands and the pattern is painfully clear. Wealth accumulates because the system prioritises profit over public good. Governments cut services, impose austerity and tell citizens to be patient while billionaires acquire more hospitals. It is not accidental.

Johannesburg was not a conference of complainers. It was an incredibly inspiring and powerful gathering of the many who bear the costs of inequality. We say this clearly: we are done carrying these costs. We are done allowing this broken system to continue. We are done with failed governments, failing multilateral systems and elite capture. We the 99% do not ask permission from those who benefit most. We the 99% have a future to claim, and we are already building it together. ♦

Ed Pomfret is Senior Strategic Communications Advisor at Fight Inequality Alliance. He is a global activist with decades of experience leading high-impact campaigns that shift power, influence policy and mobilise people across over 80 countries. The above article is reproduced from Inequality.org under a Creative Commons licence.

The UN embraces colonialism: Unpacking the Security Council's mandate for the US colonial administration of Gaza

Through its Resolution 2803 of 17 November, the United Nations Security Council has effectively handed Gaza over to US control, in the process flouting international law, failing the Palestinians and neglecting accountability for genocide.

Craig Mokhiber

MORE than two years into the genocide in Palestine, the United Nations Security Council has finally acted. But rather than acting to enforce international law, protect the victims and hold the perpetrators accountable, it adopted a resolution that openly flouts key provisions of international law, disempowers and further punishes the victims, and rewards and empowers the perpetrators.

Most disturbingly, it hands control of Gaza and the survivors of the genocide over to the United States, a co-perpetrator of the genocide, and provides for the participation of the Israeli regime in decision making. Under the plan, Palestinians themselves are to be granted no such participation in decisions on their own rights, governance and lives.

In adopting this resolution, the Council, in effect, has become a mechanism of US oppression, an instrument for the continued unlawful occupation of Palestine, and a complicit actor in Israel's genocide.

Not since it partitioned Palestine in 1947 against the will of the indigenous people, setting the stage for 80 years of Nakba, has the UN acted in such a baldly colonial (and legally *ultra vires*) way, and



Patrick Gruban (CC BY-SA 3.0)

The chamber of the UN Security Council. In adopting Resolution 2803, 'the Council, in effect, has become a mechanism of US oppression, an instrument for the continued unlawful occupation of Palestine, and a complicit actor in Israel's genocide'.

trampled so recklessly on the rights of a people.

A resolution from Hell

On 17 November, the UN Security Council adopted a US proposal to hand control of Gaza over to a US-led colonial body called the 'Board of Peace' while deploying a proxy occupation force, also US-directed, called the 'International Stabilization Force'. Both will answer, ultimately, to Donald Trump himself. And both will function in consultation with the Israeli regime.

In what will long be

remembered as a day of shame for the UN, while both Russia and China abstained, they did not use their vetoes, and not a single member of the Security Council had the courage, principle or respect for international law to vote against what can only be seen as a US colonial outrage, a ratification of genocide and a flagrant abdication of UN Charter principles.

The resolution implicitly rejects a series of recent findings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), openly denies the Palestinian right to self-determination and reinforces Israeli regime impunity, even as the genocide continues.

Despite the ICJ's finding that the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination on their land, the resolution strips that right away, empowering hostile foreign forces to govern them.

Despite the Court's finding that Gaza (as well as the West Bank and East Jerusalem) is illegally occupied and that the occupation must end quickly and completely, the resolution extends the Israeli occupation, endorses the indefinite presence of Israeli regime troops and superimposes a second, US-led occupation on top of it.

And despite the Court's finding that the Palestinians need not negotiate for their rights with their oppressors, and that no agreement or political process can trump those rights, the resolution nullifies those rights and assigns them to the discretion of the US and its Israeli and other partners.

Even in the midst of an ongoing genocide perpetrated by an apartheid regime, nowhere in the resolution is there a single mention of the crimes of genocide, apartheid or colonisation, of the thousands of Palestinians still held in Israeli torture and death camps, or of the principles of accountability for perpetrators or redress for victims.

Nor is Israel required to meet its legal obligations of compensation and reparations, with that responsibility handed instead to international donors and international financial institutions, in what amounts to a multi-billion-dollar bailout of the Israeli regime. In sum, the resolution guarantees the full impunity of the Israeli regime, in addition to advancing its normalisation.

A colonial administration

The resolution even welcomes, endorses and annexes the widely discredited Trump plan (29 September version) and, while not citing all of its problematic provisions, it calls on all parties to implement it in its entirety.

It empowers the Trump-headed Board of Peace to serve as the transitional administration

governing all of Gaza, to control all services and aid, to control the movement of people in and out of Gaza, and to control the framework, funding and reconstruction of Gaza, and it includes the dangerously broadly formulated authorisation of 'any other tasks that may be required'. And it grants up-front authority to the Trump Board to establish undefined 'operational entities' and 'transactional authorities' at its own discretion.

The resolution even envisages a quisling body of Palestinian technocrats taking orders from and reporting to Trump's Board of Peace – on their own land. In clear breach of international law, it rejects Palestinian control of their own territory in Gaza until Trump and his collaborators decide that the Palestinian Authority has satisfied the reform requirements set by Trump himself and by the similarly odious 'French-Saudi Proposal'. And it contains no promise whatsoever of Palestinian independence or sovereignty.

Instead, in direct contradiction to the findings of the ICJ, it sets back the cause of Palestinian freedom and self-determination with a vague, hyperqualified and non-committal line that says that *after* the Trump-led bodies decide that the Palestinians have met *undefined* 'reform and development' criteria, 'the conditions *may* finally be in place for a credible *pathway* to Palestinian self-determination and statehood' (emphasis added).

Any shred of hope for progress left within those conditions is finally dashed with the *coup de grace* provision stating that any such process towards those ends is to be controlled by the US itself. In other words, the UN Security Council has granted a veto over Palestinian self-determination to the US, the Israeli regime's chief sponsor and co-perpetrator of the genocide.

The resolution does not even offer hope that the systematic deprivation of the Palestinian people in Gaza will end. While the ICJ has declared that restrictions on aid must cease, the resolution only 'underscores the importance

of' humanitarian aid. It does not demand its unfettered flow and distribution.

A proxy occupation force

The resolution also mandates an armed proxy occupation force, labelled the 'International Stabilization Force', to operate under the Trump-headed Board of Peace. This force is to have a command approved by the Trump Board and will explicitly operate in collaboration with Israel, the perpetrator of the genocide (as well as with Egypt).

Its members are to be identified 'in cooperation with' the Israeli regime, and it is to work with the regime to control the Palestinian survivors in Gaza.

It will be mandated to secure the borders (i.e., to cage the Palestinians), to stabilise the security environment of Gaza (i.e., to suppress any resistance to occupation, apartheid or genocide), to demilitarise Gaza (but not the Israeli regime), to destroy Gaza's military defence capacities (but not those of Israel), to decommission the weapons of the Palestinian resistance (but not those of the Israeli regime), to train the Palestinian police (in order to control the Palestinian people inside Gaza) and to work for the (nefarious) objectives of the 'Comprehensive [Trump] Plan'.

The force is also mandated to 'protect civilians' and assist humanitarian aid, to the extent that it is allowed by the US (or inclined) to do so. But that such a force, which is to collaborate with Israel, would do nothing to stand up to Israeli aggression and attacks on civilians should by now be self-evident.

And it is to 'monitor the ceasefire', a US-guaranteed ceasefire that has allowed continuous Israeli attacks on Gaza every day since it was declared (killing hundreds and causing massive destruction to civilian infrastructure) but which tolerates no retaliation by the Palestinian resistance. It is safe to assume that any ceasefire monitoring by such

a force will be focused principally on the Palestinian side – not on the Israeli regime as the occupying power.

In other words, the mission of this proxy occupation force is to control, contain and disarm the population victimised by the genocide, not the regime perpetrating it, and to ensure security not for the victims of the genocide but for its perpetrators.

In still another stunning breach of international law, the resolution authorises Israeli regime forces to continue to (unlawfully) occupy Gaza until the US-led Board of Peace and the Israeli regime forces collectively decide otherwise. And, in any event, the resolution provides that the Israeli occupying forces can remain in Gaza to occupy a ‘security perimeter’ indefinitely.

Finally, both the colonial Board of Peace and its proxy occupation ‘stabilisation force’ are given a two-year mandate and the possibility of an extension in consultation with Israel (and Egypt) but not with Palestine.

The madness of colonisers

Needless to say, this resolution has been rejected by Palestinian civil society, almost all Palestinian political and resistance factions, and human rights defenders and international law experts from around the globe.

As a matter of international law, the occupation of Palestine is unlawful, the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination, and they have the right to resist foreign occupation, colonial domination and racist regimes like Israel. Not only does this resolution seek to deny these rights, but it even goes so far as to buttress the illegal Israeli presence and to authorise its own mechanisms of foreign occupation and colonial domination.

What’s more, the Security Council derives all its powers from the UN Charter. That Charter, as

a treaty, is a part of international law – not above it. As such, the Council is bound by the rules of international law, including and especially the highest, so-called *jus cogens* and *erga omnes* rules, like self-determination and the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. Its blatant disregard for the findings of the ICJ on these matters reveals the degree to which many of the terms of this resolution are in fact unlawful and *ultra vires* (beyond the authority of the Council).

As such, the ramifications of this rogue action by the UN Security Council will have implications far beyond Palestine. The UN Security Council, if unconstrained by international law, becomes a dangerous instrument of repression and injustice. This is precisely what we have witnessed in this case, as the Council ignored international law and effectively turned the survivors of Gaza over to the perpetrators of the genocide.

Followers of the Council will be well aware that the veto has repeatedly been used in the Council to deny Palestinian rights. In this case, when it could have been used to protect Palestinian rights, the veto was nowhere to be found. In one minute of voting, the Security Council has lost all legitimacy.

A path forward

The US attempt to impose a 19th-century form of colonialism on the long-suffering Palestinian people of Gaza, like the French-Saudi colonial scheme that came before it, is destined to failure. Such schemes are fundamentally flawed from the outset, as they seek to impose outcomes without legality (under international law), without legitimacy (in their exclusion of Palestinian agency) and without any practical hope of success (given their near-universal rejection both in Palestine and across the world).

The US may be able to threaten and bribe enough states to

support it in a UN vote, but securing sufficient troops and other personnel to implement the resolution on the ground, against the will of the indigenous people, may well be another matter. And sustaining support as the plan (inevitably) begins to unravel will be even more difficult.

In the meantime, for those committed to justice, human rights and the rule of law, the task is clear. This plan must be opposed in every capital and at every juncture. Governments must be pressed to end their complicity in Israeli abuses, US excesses and in this atrocious colonial scheme. The Israeli regime must be isolated. Efforts towards boycott, divestment and sanctions must be redoubled. A military, fuel and technology embargo must be imposed. Israeli perpetrators must face judicial prosecutions in every available tribunal. And the streets must echo with the righteous roar for Palestinian freedom of millions through demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience and direct action.

And when this colonial house of cards falls, another, more just solution is ready to take its place. If the global majority will rise from its knees before the emperor and assert its collective power, acting under the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Uniting For Peace mechanism to circumvent the US veto, adopt accountability measures to isolate and punish the Israeli regime, and deploy real protection to Palestine, then the UN may live to fight another day. If not, it will almost certainly wither away and die, a victim of self-inflicted wounds, none deeper than the shameful resolution of 17 November 2025. ♦

Craig Mokhiber is an international human rights lawyer and former senior United Nations official. He left the UN in October of 2023, penning a widely read letter that warned of genocide in Gaza, criticised the international response and called for a new approach to Palestine and Israel based on equality, human rights and international law.

This article was originally published in Mondoweiss (mondoweiss.net).

Hardwiring normalisation: Infrastructures, extraction and Gaza's future

In the US-driven scheme for normalising relations between Israel and Arab states, Gaza's future is envisioned not in terms of sovereignty but as serving a regional infrastructure network that locks in Israeli participation.

Rafeef Ziadah

IN the summer of 2025, a 38-page blueprint circulating inside the Trump administration was leaked to the press: the Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation (GREAT) Trust.

At first glance, it resembled countless other speculative development schemes, renderings of luxury resorts, free-trade zones and smart cities. Gaza, the plan insisted, could be remade as part of an 'Abrahamic fabric' and a new 'pro-American regional architecture'.

The proposal imagined Gaza not as a territory with a people and political rights, but as a logistics hub folded into the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the transport, energy and data corridor linking South Asia, the Gulf and Europe, via Israel, launched in 2023. In the plan's diagrams, Gaza was to become a node of this east-west trade artery, its coastline and land zoned for ports, pipelines and digital cables.

The leaked document was less a plan to rebuild Gaza than an add-on to the Abraham Accords, the US-brokered normalisation deals struck in 2020 between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain, and later joined by Morocco and, to a varying degree, Sudan. Marketed as a diplomatic breakthrough, the Accords pushed the idea of 'economic peace', that



The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor was launched at the G20 summit in New Delhi in 2023. Under a leaked US plan, Gaza is viewed as a logistics hub within IMEC, not as a territory with a people and political rights.

trade, investment and infrastructure could stand in for political resolution. In practice, it meant connecting Israel into Gulf supply chains while sidelining Palestinian rights and sovereignty. IMEC takes that logic further, turning the promises of the Accords into concrete form: railways, pipelines and data cables that tie Israel even more tightly to Gulf and European economies.

The document even names Gulf rulers directly. In addition to an 'Abraham Gateway' logistics hub at Rafah, it proposed an 'MBS Ring' highway (after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia) and an 'MBZ Central Highway' (after Emirati president Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan). This vision seeks to fold Gaza into Israeli, Egyptian and Gulf networks under US trusteeship, merging Gulf capital and Israeli technology while

reducing Palestinians to obstacles to be displaced or bypassed.

IMEC and the new regional architecture

IMEC was launched with great fanfare at the G20 summit in New Delhi in September 2023. The memorandum of understanding, signed by the United States, India, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, promised nothing less than a new trade and energy artery. Its eastern leg would connect Indian ports to the Gulf. Its northern leg would run from the Gulf across the Arabian Peninsula and Israel to Europe. Railways, hydrogen pipelines, electricity interconnectors and data cables would build a 'green and digital bridge across continents and civilisations', in the words of European Commission President

Prime Minister's Office (GODL-India)

Ursula von der Leyen.¹

For Washington, IMEC was never just a logistics project. It was a geopolitical anchor designed to counterbalance China's Belt and Road Initiative by keeping India and the Gulf tethered to the transatlantic camp. European leaders, meanwhile, seized on it as a way to reduce their own vulnerabilities, both to Houthi disruptions in the Red Sea and to the Suez Canal chokepoint. They presented it as part of their Global Gateway strategy – a €300 billion plan to fund infrastructure, energy and digital projects abroad – launched in 2021 as the EU's answer to China's Belt and Road.

For India, IMEC aligned with Delhi's ambitions to reposition itself as a global manufacturing and transport hub, moving its goods westward on faster, more secure routes. For the Gulf monarchies, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the corridor dovetailed with their long-running strategy of transforming oil wealth into logistical centrality, positioning themselves as indispensable gateways for energy exports, container traffic and digital flows.

From the beginning, Israel was integral to IMEC's design. The corridor's northern route runs through its Mediterranean ports, with Haifa – privatised for \$1.15 billion and now majority-owned by India's Adani Ports & SEZ – positioned as the key gateway between Gulf terminals and Europe. Adani's role ties the project back to India as well: its ports on the country's western coast, including Mundra, India's largest container terminal, are slated to serve as IMEC's entry point from South Asia. With Adani's network of ports anchoring both ends of the corridor, IMEC has clearly been structured around major corporate players, not only state sponsors.

IMEC's momentum has slowed since its launch, as Israel's genocide in Gaza forced public celebrations of normalisation to quiet amid widespread protests,



Israel's offshore gas boom is built on unresolved jurisdictional claims.

but it has not stopped. India and European governments have renewed consultations and feasibility work to push it forward, and the leaked GREAT Trust proposal for Gaza brings it back centrally in US policy circles.

Rerouting through genocide

As public celebrations of normalisation grew quieter, the underlying architecture, gas investments, arms contracts, trade agreements and digital cables, for the most part, continued to advance.

The Red Sea disruptions of late 2023 were a turning point. As Houthi strikes on shipping forced vessels to avoid the Bab Al-Mandeb strait, Israeli startup Trucknet Enterprise promoted a 'land bridge' concept. The company announced agreements with firms including Puretrans FZCO, in the UAE, and DP World to move cargo overland from Gulf ports through Saudi Arabia and Jordan into Israel, presenting it as a way to bypass the maritime chokepoint.

Israeli officials touted the experiment as a faster route, but evidence of actual shipments remains hazy. Wary of appearing complicit in normalisation during the war on Gaza, Jordan publicly denied that shipments were taking place. The sensitivity was

underscored in May 2024, when Jordanian-Palestinian journalist Hiba Abu Taha was arrested and later sentenced to a year in prison after reporting on overland shipments through Jordan, charged under Jordan's new Cybercrimes Law with incitement and spreading false news.² Official press releases and media briefings, however, have been less vehemently denied by the states involved. Whatever its status, the initiative offers an important glimpse of the kinds of connectivity schemes regional powers hope to advance.

If the land bridge previewed IMEC's terrestrial leg, the Blue-Raman subsea cable illustrates its digital backbone. Launched by Google with Sparkle (Italy's telecom carrier) and Omantel, the system aims to link India directly to Europe through Israel. The Blue cable runs from Israel across the Mediterranean to Italy. The Raman cable stretches from India through Oman, Saudi Arabia and Jordan to Israel. When fully active, they will bypass Egypt's longstanding monopoly on Asian-European Internet traffic through the Suez corridor.

For Europe, the cable has become a flagship of its Global Gateway initiative, promising diversified data flows. For Israel, it marks a leap in regional

integration, not only a land bridge for goods, but a switch point in the digital networks tying Asia to Europe. These projects show how IMEC's promise of connectivity is advancing in practice, despite political denials.

The extractive core of normalisation

If IMEC crystallises normalisation in the language of corridors and connectivity, its logic is not new. Earlier gas deals and energy contracts stitched Israel into regional networks long before the corridor was announced.

Much commentary on normalisation has focused on the increasingly public arms trade between Israel and the UAE. Israel's defence exports hit a record \$14.79 billion in 2024, with about 12% of that going to Abraham Accords partners, the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco. Yet, if weapons are working to bind security establishments, it is energy that now tethers entire economies together.

The most visible Emirati move came in September 2021, when the UAE's Mubadala Energy (a subsidiary of its sovereign wealth fund) acquired a 22% stake in Israel's Tamar offshore field from Delek for just over \$1 billion. Tamar supplies much of Israel's domestic demand and underpins exports to Jordan and Egypt. The investment marked the first time Emirati capital was directly embedded in Israel's upstream gas sector.

Two years later, in March 2023, Abu Dhabi's ADNOC joined with BP in a \$2 billion bid for 50% of NewMed Energy, the Israeli company holding a 45% stake in the Leviathan megafield. The deal would have created a joint venture spanning Israeli and Egyptian gas assets, placing ADNOC at the heart of Eastern Mediterranean supply. Although talks were suspended in early 2024 amid the Gaza war and regional instability, the pause was

tactical, not a cancellation.

Egypt and Jordan have also been bound tighter into this architecture. Both signed multi-billion-dollar import contracts for Israeli gas in the mid-2010s, and those flows have only intensified. Indeed, in August 2025, Israel announced its largest ever export deal, a \$35 billion contract to ship 130 billion cubic metres of Leviathan gas to Egypt between 2026 and 2040. The gas will feed Egypt's Idku and Damietta liquefied natural gas (LNG) plants, which then re-export to Europe, making Cairo dependent on Israeli supply even as it is bypassed by overland and digital corridors like IMEC.

Jordan, for its part, has relied on gas imports from Israel under a 15-year contract with Noble Energy (now Chevron). The arrangement has been politically toxic, triggering public protests in Amman, even as governments have consistently defended it as unavoidable for energy security. Yet, those claims were undermined this past summer, when Israel paused natural gas provision during its June war with Iran, underscoring the risks of Jordan's energy dependency.

These deals show how normalisation works through the nuts and bolts of extraction. Emirati capital now sits in Israel's upstream fields; Egyptian LNG plants depend on Israeli feedstock; Jordanian grids are powered by Israeli imports. Even when regional leaders rail against occupation or genocide, the gas keeps flowing.

Behind the headline deals lies a more uncomfortable fact: Israel's offshore gas boom is built on unresolved jurisdictional claims. The Gaza Marine field, discovered in 1999 in waters allocated to the Palestinians under Oslo, has been kept off-limits for decades, even as Israel has pressed ahead with extraction in nearby blocks. A 2019 report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) called this a systematic denial of Palestinian sovereign rights over

their natural resources. Lebanon's maritime disputes with Israel underline the same point: much of the Eastern Mediterranean's gas map remains unsettled. Normalisation, in this context, cements an extractive order that lets Israel claim contested resources and shut out future alternatives.

This reality also undercuts the rhetoric of a so-called green transition. European leaders present IMEC as a future corridor for hydrogen and renewable energy, while Gulf states promote themselves as clean energy champions. Since the Abraham Accords, Israel and the UAE have highlighted joint projects on solar power, desalination plans and climate innovation as signs that normalisation could deliver a regional green transition. In practice, however, these announcements remain secondary to the hard infrastructure of fossil fuels: billions invested in offshore gas fields, long-term export contracts and new LNG routes to Europe. Rather than phasing out extraction, normalisation has locked it in more deeply, with renewable rhetoric functioning more as diplomatic branding than structural change.

Gaza in the regional frame

As Washington doubles down on its alliance with Israel while Brussels floats recognition of a Palestinian state, much commentary in recent weeks has contrasted US and European approaches to Gaza. But the difference is more a matter of degree than direction. The leaked US administration plan made Washington's orientation clear: Gaza's future imagined not in terms of sovereignty but as a logistics hub within IMEC – a project designed to deepen the Abraham Accords and hardwire Israel into regional trade, energy and digital flows.

Gestures like recognition of statehood allow Europe to position itself differently. Yet, it has been an eager partner in the same US

architecture, folding IMEC into its Global Gateway strategy, lobbying for EU financing and competing over which European ports will anchor the corridor. Recognition talk may sustain the illusion of action, but what matters is what gets built, the pipelines, ports and cables that entrench the status quo.

Saudi Arabia is often cast as the great holdout, reluctant to normalise until Palestinian demands are addressed. But here too, the difference is more rhetorical than real. Riyadh signed the IMEC memorandum in 2023, placing itself at the heart of a project that relies on Israel as its Mediterranean hinge. Saudi officials have repeatedly promoted the corridor as a future route for exporting hydrogen to Europe. As with Europe's recognition talk, these gestures obscure the deeper reality: Saudi Arabia is already underwriting the infrastructures that embed Israel in the region.

Egypt and Jordan underscore the same paradox. Cairo voices unease about being bypassed by IMEC's land and data routes, yet its LNG plants are locked into long-term contracts re-exporting Israeli gas to Europe, including the recent record \$35 billion Leviathan deal. In Jordan, despite local protests, the Leviathan supply contract still binds Jordan's grids to Israeli fields. Both Egypt and Jordan may signal solidarity with Palestinians in public, but their infrastructures tell a different story.

None of this makes the new US-led 'regional architecture' seamless or inevitable. IMEC is riddled with contradictions. India has championed the project as part of its Viksit Bharat vision of becoming a global manufacturing and logistics hub, but relations with Washington are strained over recent Trump tariffs and protectionist policies.

At the same time, Gulf states that have signed on to IMEC as a US-backed corridor remain deeply tied to China. Saudi Arabia and

the UAE send much of their oil eastward, making China their single largest trading partner.³ Both have experimented with yuan-based settlements for oil and gas and continue to host Chinese firms in energy and logistics zones, even as they position themselves as key nodes in Washington's alternative corridor.

Regional powers outside IMEC highlight the same contradictions. For Turkey, the corridor undercuts its longstanding role as the primary land bridge between Asia and Europe. Ankara has built its identity around being the indispensable transit hub, but a Gulf-to-Haifa-to-Europe route bypasses that position. The question for Turkey is how to adapt – whether by finding ways to plug into the corridor or by doubling down on alternative routes that preserve its relevance.

For Iran, IMEC is a project designed to exclude it altogether, binding the Gulf monarchies more tightly to Washington and Delhi while containing Tehran. The overall result is an architecture still in flux, celebrated by the United States and European Union, but riven with unresolved tensions over whether key regional players are to be incorporated or completely sidelined.

In the emergent US visions of connection and prosperity, Palestinians are cast as an obstacle rather than a people with rights, their dispossession treated as a technical problem to be managed away. But they have not accepted this erasure. They continue to resist projects of a so-called economic peace built on dispossession and ethnic cleansing. In that sense, the leaked document only makes explicit what the region's unfolding infrastructure already shows: normalisation is being assembled piece by piece, through concrete, contracts and cables. Beneath the fanfare of plans and announcements, it is these material ties that reveal where the new regional order is taking shape.

Tracing these infrastructures – and contesting the visions they embody – matters now more than ever.

The recent Gaza ceasefire agreement, mediated under Trump's 20-point plan, retains many of the tenets of the GREAT Trust. It packages Israel's military withdrawal and prisoner exchanges into a pause, without resolving the underlying problem of ongoing military occupation or Palestinian rights. In practice, its first phase mandates a ceasefire, phased Israeli redeployment and prisoner exchanges but leaves open who governs Gaza, who monitors security and who controls reconstruction. If such moments are understood as continuations of violence in another register, the question then becomes: How will the infrastructures of normalisation deepen under this ceasefire? Which actors will control crossings – cables, pipelines and funds – and at whose expense? ♦

Rafeef Ziadah is senior lecturer in Politics and Public Policy at King's College London. This article was originally published in Middle East Report (No. 315/316, Summer/Fall 2025, www.merip.org).

Notes

1. European Commission Statement 23/4420, 'Statement by President von der Leyen at the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment event in the framework of the G20 Summit', 9 September 2023.
2. Elia El-Khazen, 'Truck Drivers at a Crossroads: On the Relevance of Trucking Communities to Regional and Global Anti-Normalization Movements', in *Disruptive Geographies and the War on Gaza: Infrastructure and Global Solidarity. Geopolitics*, eds. Rafeef Ziadah, Christian Henderson, Omar Jabary Salamanca, Sharri Plonski, Charmaine Chua, Riya Al Sanah and Elia El Khazen, pp.1–39.
3. Adam Hanieh, 'Greening the Gulf? Renewables, Fossil Capitalism and the "East-East" Axis of World Energy', *Development and Change*, 6 August 2025.

The final reckoning: Israel's last-ditch battle to win the media war

In the information warzone, Israel's campaign for control of the narrative aims to snuff out pro-Palestinian voices.

ISRAEL's allies worldwide are desperately scrambling to help Tel Aviv re-establish a convincing narrative, concerning not only the Gaza genocide, but the entire legacy of Israeli colonialism in Palestine and the Middle East.

The perfect little story, built on myths and outright fabrications – that of a small nation fighting for survival amid ‘hordes of Arabs and Muslims’ – is rapidly collapsing. It was a lie from the start, but the Gaza genocide has made it utterly indefensible.

The harrowing details of the Israeli genocide in Gaza were more than enough for people globally to fundamentally question the Zionist narrative, particularly the racist Western trope of the ‘villa in the jungle’ used by Israel to describe its existence among the colonised population.

People across the globe, even Americans, have decisively turned against Israel. What began as an alarming trend – from the Israeli viewpoint, of course – is now the irrefutable new reality. National polls indicate that support for Palestinians among US adults has risen, with 33% now saying they sympathise more with the Palestinians – the highest reading so far and an increase of six percentage points from 2024. Even the once unshakeable pro-Israeli majority among Republicans in the US is softening in favour of Palestinians, with 35% of Republicans favouring an independent Palestinian state, a significant increase from 27% in 2024, demonstrating a clear shift in a segment of the Republican base.

The Israeli government is now

Ramzy Baroud

fighting with every resource at its disposal to dominate the information war. It is focused on injecting calculated Israeli falsehoods into the discourse and aggressively blocking the Palestinian viewpoint.

A reported Israeli campaign to win social media by granting millions of dollars to TikTok and other social media influencers is only a fraction of a massive coordinated drive.

The war is multifrontal. On 4 November, news reports revealed that Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales personally intervened to block editing access to the page dedicated to the Gaza Genocide. He claimed that the page fails to meet the company's ‘high standards’ and ‘needs immediate attention’. According to Wales, that specific page requires a ‘neutral approach’ – meaning, in practice, that blatant censorship is required to prevent the genocide from being accurately described as the ‘ongoing intentional and systematic destruction of the Palestinian people’.

Israel has long been obsessed with controlling the narrative on Wikipedia, a strategy predating the current Gaza genocide. Reports dating back to 2010 confirm that Israeli groups established specific training courses in ‘Zionist editing’ for Wikipedia editors, with the explicit goal of injecting state-aligned content and shaping key historical and political entries.

The censorship campaign against Palestinians and pro-

Palestinian voices is as old as the media itself. From the very start, mainstream media in the West has been structurally aligned with corporate agendas that are naturally allied with money and power, hence the prominence of the Israeli view and the near-complete erasure of the Palestinian perspective.

Years ago, however, Israel began realising the existential danger of digital media, particularly the open spaces in social media that allow ordinary individuals to become independent content creators. The censorship, however, took an ugly and pervasive turn during the genocide, where even the use of words like ‘Gaza’ and ‘Palestine’, let alone ‘genocide’, would result in shadowbanning or outright closure of accounts.

In fact, very recently, YouTube, which was previously known for being less severe in censoring pro-Palestinian voices than Meta, shut down the accounts of three major Palestinian human rights organisations (Al-Haq, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights), erasing more than 700 videos of crucial footage documenting Israeli violations of international law.

Sadly, though not surprisingly, not a single mainstream social media platform is innocent of censoring any criticism of Israel. Thus, it becomes a daily practice that references to Palestine, the Gaza genocide and the like must be written in coded language, where, for example, the Palestinian flag would be replaced by an image of a watermelon.

Many pro-Palestine activists are now highlighting the direct complicity of Western media, especially in the UK, in attempting to whitewash rape accusations against Israeli soldiers. Instead of using the unequivocal word ‘rape’, mainstream outlets refer to the horrific Sde Teiman episodes merely as ‘abuses’. While Israeli politicians and other war criminals are openly celebrating the so-called ‘abuses’ and the rapists as national heroes, mainstream British and French media are still refusing to accept that the widespread torture, rape and mistreatment of Palestinians is part of a centralised, systemic agenda, not mere individual ‘abuses’.

Compare this with the wall-to-wall, sensationalised coverage of alleged ‘mass rape’ by Palestinians in southern Israel on 7 October 2023 – despite the fact that no independent investigation was ever conducted and that the claims were made by the Israeli army without credible evidence.

This is not mere bias and hypocrisy, however, but direct complicity, as stated by the Gaza Tribunal’s final statement on 26 October 2025. ‘The Jury finds a range of non-state actors to be complicit in genocide,’ the verdict read, including ‘biased media reporting in the west on Palestine and under-reporting of Israeli crimes’.

The final reckoning unfolds in the information warzone. The coming months and years mark the most critical fight for truth in the conflict’s history. Israel, relying on censorship, intimidation and manufactured consent, will use every method to secure a victory. For Palestinians and all who champion justice, this battle for history is as consequential as the genocide itself. Israel must not be allowed to sanitise its image, because polishing genocide guarantees its repetition. ♦

Dr Ramzy Baroud is a journalist, author and the Editor of The Palestine Chronicle

(www.palestinechronicle.com), from which this article is reproduced. He is the author of six books. His forthcoming book, Before the Flood, will be published by Seven Stories Press. His other books include Our Vision

for Liberation, My Father was a Freedom Fighter and The Last Earth. Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net.

Climate Change Series No. 12

Equity and Development Considerations of Just Energy Transition Partnerships for Developing Countries

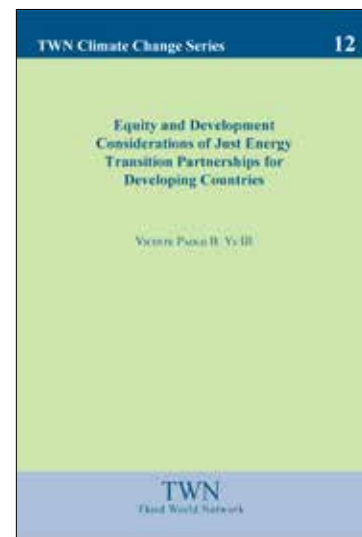
by *Vicente Paolo B. Yu III*

Touted as an innovative form of international cooperation to tackle climate change, Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) are supposed to channel financial and technical support from donors for a shift to clean energy systems in developing countries. Such support is, however, often tied to a policy agenda driven by donor developed countries and financial institutions – an agenda which narrowly prioritizes emission reductions

over broader development needs. Furthermore, the financing is heavily reliant on loans and private capital mobilization, deepening indebtedness and limiting fiscal autonomy in the recipient countries.

Uncovering the fundamental flaws in the current JETP model, this paper stresses the imperative of undertaking energy transitions in a “just, orderly and equitable” manner, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) enshrined in the United Nations climate regime. To be genuinely just, the transition framework must be backed by grant-based public finance and ensure affordable transfer of renewable energy technologies. It should also involve workers, communities and other transition-affected sectors in decision-making, and be aligned with national development goals of energy access, job creation and economic diversification.

Download the book: <https://twm.my/title/climate/climate12.htm>



Year: 2025 No. of pages: 44

After the genocide, the genocide

US-based academic *Saree Makdisi* reflects on the all-too-human agony of Gaza.

‘THE prayers of millions have finally been answered,’ announced Donald Trump at a recent summit in Egypt, where he’d arrived to sign the paperwork for the ceasefire in Gaza. ‘At long last,’ he added, ‘we have peace in the Middle East.’

But what we have isn’t peace. What we have is a continuing genocide, albeit one that has shifted gears and has – for now – moved into the slow lane. Rather than hundreds at a time, it is killing by twos and threes – an obscenity that has coalesced into a new normal. To quote a searing poem published in early November by Fady Joudah: ‘After the genocide, the genocide.’¹

Israel’s US-imposed ‘ceasefire’ in Lebanon offers the blueprint: for the year since Hizballah ceased its attacks on Israeli forces, Israel has continued to fire, sending drones buzzing over Beirut, bombing randomly all over the country, killing hundreds of people, demolishing villages, burning olive trees. Now, in addition to an ongoing siege that shows no signs of abating, something similar seems to be Gaza’s fate as well. Genocides don’t end with ceasefire agreements: they end only with the termination of the conditions that brought them into being and the punishment of those who oversaw and conducted them. So far there is no evidence of a resolution along either of these lines.

It must be said, too, that a ‘peace plan’ dictated to the Palestinians by Israel via its American proxies, which offers no basis for peace, can hardly be called a peace plan at all. A ‘deal’ determined by one side that runs roughshod over the rights and aspirations of the other is no deal at

all. When Macron, Starmer, Meloni and other European leaders showed up onstage in Egypt alongside Trump, their recognition of the non-existent ‘State of Palestine’ attained its full, cynical efflorescence. They had defused popular pressure in support of Palestinian rights at home only to sign on to the Trump plan for Gaza, and now that ‘we have peace’ they hope that the looming threat of actually imposing sanctions on Israel might be deferred indefinitely.

It’s true that the Israeli government has provisionally suspended its large-scale bombardment and demolition of Gaza. But at the same time, Israel has stubbornly maintained its siege and continues to restrict aid deliveries urgently needed for a starving people’s very survival, at times blocking them entirely. According to the BBC, Israel has destroyed more than 1,500 buildings since Trump made his grand declaration. ‘We have peace’, because peace for Israel has always meant and will always mean the destruction of Palestinian homes. And of course, the killing has continued.

Day after day, the Israelis have repeatedly bombed or shelled parts of Gaza and have gunned down civilians via dystopian quadcopter sniper drone (one of the clever, high-tech inventions in which the country takes such pride). Hundreds of people have been killed since this so-called ceasefire went into effect, including men, women and children who venture too close to the arbitrary and invisible line – deep inside Gaza – beyond which the Israelis have temporarily withdrawn their forces. The offence for which those people were ‘neutralised’, as the Israeli army puts it? Trying to

return to the ruins of their homes. They join the uncounted multitude of fellow Palestinians killed by Israel since 1948 for the same crime: a crime so existentially threatening to the very premise of the settler-colonial state that constant killing is its only remedy.

‘Torture camps’

In exchange for the remaining Israeli prisoners held by Hamas, hundreds of Palestinians held hostage by the state have been returned – a negotiated trade that could have taken place two years ago without the intervening agony. The agony of Gaza, however, was the point. The exchange of prisoners was merely a sideshow to the main event of displacement, destruction and death that began long before there were prisoners to exchange. It is a regime that will continue, in one form or another, long after they’ve returned home.

Of those Palestinians recently set free, only a small minority had ever faced a hearing in Israel’s capricious system of military injustice, and most of those were immediately – and illegally – banished into permanent exile from their homeland. Compounding punishment on punishment, their reunion with their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives and children has now been deferred across borders that neither the former prisoners nor their family members can cross without permission – permission that is rarely granted, and even then generally only in one direction.

As the Western media and politicians breathlessly celebrated the return of the final Israeli

prisoners, a number of them soldiers captured in combat, Israel began returning hundreds of captives it had snatched from Gaza over the previous two years and held in abominable conditions ever since. Having released some 2,000 people, Israel still holds around 9,000 Palestinian men, women and children in captivity, hostages for a future day. (It feels almost banal to observe that any Palestinian in the West Bank can be kidnapped by Israeli forces at any moment and held indefinitely without ever being charged, let alone tried, so that Israel can effectively replenish its stock of hostages.)

Who are these returned captives? Doctors, nurses, medics, drivers, farmers, pharmacists, healthcare workers, teachers, journalists. They are the men and boys – and a few women – we saw paraded naked and rounded up into trucks by the Israeli army in 2024, driven away to what the Israeli human rights organisation B'tselem has described as the 'torture camps' of 'hell'.

Far too many will never return from those camps; at least 12 captives are known to have been tortured to death there. Most of the bodies released by Israel alongside the surviving captives showed signs of beating and torture. All were bound by shackles on the hands and feet. Almost all had been blindfolded and shot in the head. Some had been run over by Israeli tanks. All were unidentifiable. Each came with a number on a tag attached by the Israelis, but no name. 'They know the identity of these bodies, but they want the families to suffer even more about these victims,' one doctor told the *Guardian*. So far, at least 135 mutilated bodies bearing the marks of torture and close-range execution have been returned.

Adnan al-Bursh, the head of orthopaedic surgery at Shifa Hospital, was captured by Israeli forces in 2023 along with the rest of his medical team after Israeli troops stormed and ransacked Al-

Awda Hospital. He was not simply killed in captivity, but because of it: after months of detention and solitary confinement, Israeli guards eventually dumped him, bleeding and naked from the waist down, in the yard of the prison where he was being held. He died soon afterwards. It's likely that al-Bursh had been 'raped to death', as Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, suggested, but since Israel has refused to release his body, this remains unproven. (For years, since long before the Gaza genocide, it has been Israel's standard practice to hold the bodies of Palestinians it has murdered – including those of children – as bargaining chips, all with the blessing of the high court. Hundreds of bodies remain in its freezers, invariably caked with dried blood and dirt from the streets where they fell.)

What is not unproven, however, are the widespread and authenticated accounts of other cases of torture, sexual abuse and rape coming out of Israel's prison camps. Abuse is the baseline condition. The circumstances of detention alone are inhuman, including the lack of nutrition or any provision for wounds and injuries – as well as prolonged shackling, blindfolding and immobilisation in vermin-infested cages. Israeli doctors summoned as a last resort to one of the most notorious torture centres – Sde Teiman – reported that amputations were 'routine'. One doctor amputated the legs of two different prisoners in the span of a single week; the conditions in which they were being held rendered amputation inevitable.

Reports of more active forms of torture have been widespread. Human Rights Watch has documented the case of a Palestinian paramedic who was serially raped by Israeli prison guards using their assault rifles. Israel's Channel 12 actually broadcast leaked footage on live television showing Israeli

guards gang-raping another prisoner with batons, leading to severe rectal and lung injuries. The broadcast sparked public outrage in Israel, but not because of the severity of the crime. What provoked riots, and even the storming of an army base, was the leak itself, as well as the arrest of Israel's 'best heroes', as security minister Itamar Ben Gvir called them. The army prosecutor who oversaw an investigation into the soldiers was herself recently arrested over the leak, while the soldiers themselves went free. According to the minister of defence, the distribution of the video constituted a 'blood libel'. Asked about the outrages, Ben Gvir smirked and gloated that everything published about the abominable conditions of the Palestinians being held in Israeli prisons – for which he is responsible – was true. 'Everything is legitimate,' one member of the ruling party bellowed in parliament.

'From the moment they brought me here, I was tortured and tortured. ... My whole body is broken. All broken.'

The return of the captives only clarifies how much horror has been occluded over the past two years – how little the assault on Palestinian lives has penetrated mainstream US coverage of the genocide. Shortly after the photojournalist Shadi Abu Sido was freed from Israel's torture camps, he called his family. 'I didn't think I'd ever see them again,' he told bystanders. While inside, he had been taunted by Israeli prison guards, who told him that his family had been killed. 'They are all safe, my parents, my family,' he exulted. But he himself was not safe. 'From the moment they brought me here,' he said, 'I was tortured and tortured. I was hanged by shackles on my

wrists. My whole body is broken. All broken. My hands, my bones, everything. They have a machine to break bones, a policy to break. They shattered and broke our bodies. I bled for three weeks from one eye and received no treatment. Because I am a photographer. He [the guard] told me, “I’ll rip out your eye the way I ripped out your camera lens.”

Such interviews are widely shared in Arabic media; in much of Western media they are effectively non-existent. For months after 7 October, stories about a Hamas-led ‘campaign of mass rape’ dominated headlines in outlets such as *The New York Times*; even as those stories gradually fell apart due to a lack of evidence, they have never been corrected or retracted. By contrast, the flood of corroborated evidence about the systematic torture and sexual abuse in Israeli prisons – including of children – rarely reaches US readers.

Abu Sido was able to see his family again, but many other captives weren’t so lucky. Upon their return from the long and agonising months of detention, they discovered that their families had been killed, adding punishment to punishment for the original sin of being born Palestinian. One of these was Haitham Salem, a municipal electrical engineer. While in detention, he had managed to weave a little bracelet for his daughter’s upcoming birthday. Just a few weeks before he was released, an Israeli pilot had dropped a bomb on the tent in which Haitham’s wife and children had been sheltering. His daughters were killed instantly; his wife was severely injured and died of her wounds a few days later. His son suffered only relatively minor shrapnel wounds in the attack, but the jagged shards of hot steel carried dirt and bacteria and – because he couldn’t find treatment in Gaza’s shattered healthcare system – he likely died of the resulting infection a few days later as well. Hearing the terrible news, Haitham collapsed in writhing agony, per a

report from Middle East Eye. ‘My wife, I can’t find her,’ he cried out. ‘My beloved boy, every night I see you in my dreams.’

Campaign of obliteration

In previous articles, I’ve relied on statistics to try to express the scale of the harm inflicted by the Israeli government over the past two years.² But no statistics can adequately capture the sheer malice of Israel’s conduct.

How to express the human meaning of the destruction Israel has inflicted? Once densely inhabited communities have been reduced to piles of wreckage and rubble. Rafah literally no longer exists as a city – it is a bulldozed field of smashed stone and pulverised concrete. The same is largely true of Beit Hanoun, Jabalya, Deir al Balah and other once-teeming communities, aside from the odd ruin still left standing. ‘Just as we levelled Rafah, we will level all of Gaza,’ exulted Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich last spring. ‘The army’s operation aims to occupy and cleanse areas in Gaza, and every house we destroy is considered a tunnel in our view.’ When the ceasefire (such as it is) took effect, Israel was in the process of levelling Gaza City, one of the oldest cities in the world.

Levelling, pulverisation, obliteration, annihilation and, of course, cleansing – these are the terms in which Israel’s genocidal violence in Gaza has been transacted. We have become familiar with the statistics of bomb tonnage the Israelis dropped on Gaza, far exceeding that dropped on London, Hamburg, Dresden, Hiroshima or Nagasaki, leaving devastation on a scale unprecedented in all of modern warfare. But even those statistics miss the point. Rightly or wrongly, all those cities were bombed in order to defeat an enemy. The Israelis weren’t trying to defeat Gaza – they were trying to obliterate it, to erase it from the earth, to expunge its people from

their land once and for all.

Israel’s primary tool in this campaign of genocidal violence isn’t the warplane, the tank, the field gun or the bomb. It’s the bulldozer, and specifically the Caterpillar D9 – an armoured beast that weighs 110,000 pounds and has been adapted by Israel for one purpose: to level and crush homes, trees, greenhouses, farms, orchards, and to snuff out people’s lives. No other army fields such a fleet of similar bulldozers. (When the US army needs them, it borrows them from its Israeli counterpart, as it did during the invasion of Iraq in 2003.) The D9 is the diesel-gulping, smoke-belching, track-grinding, asphalt-scraping embodiment of Israel’s obsession with home demolition.

Beyond the bulldozers, there are also decommissioned Vietnamese M113 armoured personnel carriers packed full of explosives, which Israeli forces sent into areas they didn’t fully control. The M113s were sent wandering at random into cities and towns that were still inhabited and densely built up, and then detonated by remote control. These armoured robot bombs carried far more explosive power than many heavy aerial bombs combined. ‘We had become somewhat accustomed to air and artillery strikes, but these explosions feel like an earthquake every time,’ one Gaza resident said of the robot bombs, according to a report in Euro-Med Monitor. ‘Debris flies hundreds of metres, the smoke and dust are overwhelming, and the destruction is immense.’ Khadija al-Masri, a displaced woman in Tel al-Hawa in northern Gaza, told one human rights organisation’s field team: ‘Every time one of these robots explodes, I feel my soul leave my body. My children scream hysterically, and I try to calm them but often fail because I find myself screaming too.’

In areas where the Israelis were able to gain enough control for enough time, their engineering units rigged up not just single buildings

but entire neighbourhoods with explosive demolition charges. Buildings were blown up all at once, captured on video by soldiers revelling with glee as the charges went off. It takes time to rig buildings with demolition charges – it takes effort, coordination, calculation, planning, care. It's not something one can do in the heat of combat. In Gaza, demolition replaced battle, rather than supplementing it.

Thus has Gaza been obliterated; thus have its people been stripped of homes, schools, libraries, universities, clinics, farms, shops; spaces of work and of leisure; of effort and of rest, of freedom and necessity. Carefully, thoughtfully, meticulously, Israel has destroyed the material basis for the modern social existence of an entire people, reducing them to what the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben once called the naked life of the concentration camp: the bare existence ever so grudgingly granted to them by Israeli politicians.

'A genocidal society'

It should go without saying, however, that support for the genocide has not been limited to Israel's political class. Over the past two years, numerous Israeli civilians have ventured to a hill in the south of the country overlooking the ruins of Gaza, where a large viewing platform was set up, complete with tap-to-pay viewing binoculars and a drinks dispenser. 'Even with a naked eye it is possible to see something of the scale of destruction and the constantly rising smoke,' wrote a correspondent for the *Irish Times* who visited the site last summer, 'but through the binoculars the lengthy expanse of toppled buildings and decimated neighbourhoods is staggering.' The correspondent reported that 'multiple tours came and went' just in the hour she was there. The guides reassured the visitors that all this was being done to keep them

safe from 'terror'.

Opinion polls in Israel have found overwhelming popular support for the state's actions. One Tel Aviv University poll from late 2023 found that 94% of Jewish Israelis believed that the Israeli army was using either appropriate or *too little* force in what was by then a systematic obliteration of entire neighbourhoods. According to a follow-up poll from 2024, 88% of respondents found the number of casualties among Palestinians justified – at that point the number of casualties had crossed 100,000, the overwhelming majority of them civilians. A separate poll conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute in early 2024 found that 68% of Jewish Israelis opposed allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza. These outcomes remained consistent into 2025. A poll commissioned by Penn State for the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* this past spring found that 82% of Israeli Jews supported the idea of expelling the entire population of Gaza from the territory; around half supported the idea of simply killing everyone outright. Almost 80% of the Israeli respondents to a 2025 Democracy Institute poll reported that they were 'not so troubled' or 'not troubled at all' by reports of famine and suffering among the population in Gaza.

As the Lemkin Institute for the Prevention of Genocide put it, 'Israel is a genocidal state supported by a genocidal society.' In this thanatocracy – the only appropriate term – no statement has been too obscene or inhumane to reach mainstream acceptance. On TV and on social media, Israeli politicians have pledged to cut off food, water, medicine; Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly invoked the destruction of the Amalek; journalists and pundits have openly called for the annihilation of Gaza and everyone in it. To invert and refract Israeli President Isaac Herzog's infamous remarks about Gaza: 'It is an entire nation out there that is responsible.

It is not true this rhetoric about civilians not being aware, not involved. It's absolutely not true. They could have risen up. They could have fought against that evil regime.'

Nor are there many innocents here in the West. Israel's supporters in the US, on which Israel depends for its very existence and its continued survival, think that terms like 'ceasefire' and 'peace plan' possess a kind of totemic power. Repeat them enough times and everything changes. With a 'ceasefire in place', Israel can just dust off its hands and walk away from the catastrophic harm it has inflicted on the people of Gaza; it can walk away from the dismantlement of the very foundations of life, from the murder of tens of thousands. Now that there's a 'peace plan', Israel can confine an entire population without any means of subsistence to an utterly desolated wasteland and leave it entirely dependent on a trickle of aid handouts that it can turn on and off at will. With Trump having 'brought peace to the Middle East', an entire generation of Palestinian children can be subjected to continuing abuse, constant bombardment, the loss of parents and siblings and limbs – a million children left to fend for themselves while their needs, their cares, their traumas and their rights are deemed unworthy of even passing consideration by anyone in the West with a shred of political influence.

The cost to rebuild Gaza is estimated to be in the tens of billions of dollars. Western leaders are looking to relief agencies, their friends in the Gulf, and private investors and speculators to foot the bill and – no doubt – mortgage the future of the Palestinians themselves while Kushner, Witkoff, Trump, Blair and their ilk engorge themselves on the profits. It doesn't seem to occur to these leaders that Israel might be held to account; that it should be isolated, boycotted and punished not only until it has paid

for the rebuilding of Gaza and the rehabilitation of its population, but for all the harm it has inflicted on the Palestinian people since 1948 – including the rebuilding of their demolished homes, the return and accommodation of those it has driven into exile, and the restoration of their inalienable rights. And yet this is the only way forward until the Israelis abandon their enterprise of racial domination and genocidal exclusion, which has been feeding violence for the past 75 years and will go on feeding it for as long as we allow it to go on, existentially dependent as it is on the financial and political support of Western states.

We cannot let our politicians get away with the idea that it is time for business as usual. It falls to us, as ordinary people of goodwill, to continue protesting, striking, boycotting; to continue demanding the suspension of aid and bombs to Israel and the suspension of diplomatic relations and the expulsion of Israeli diplomats and the divestment from Israel of our institutions and universities. We have to be there when an Israeli team shows up to play; we have to be at every port when an Israeli tour ship arrives to dock; we have to be there when an Israeli orchestra starts tuning its instruments in an international concert hall; we have to be there when an Israeli politician shows up to speak. Our politicians have failed and will always fail. It falls on us to try to see some kind of justice done. ♦

Saree Makdisi is Professor and Chair of the Department of English at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). His most recent book is Tolerance is a Wasteland: Palestine and the Culture of Denial (University of California Press, 2022). This article was originally published on the n+1 website (www.nplusonemag.com).

Notes

1. <https://arablit.org/after-the-genocide/>
2. <https://www.nplusonemag.com/issue-47/politics/no-human-being-can-exist-2/>

TWN Biotechnology & Biosafety Series 20

Genetically Engineered Self-Spreading Vaccines for Wildlife: Promise, Case Studies, and the Precautionary Imperative

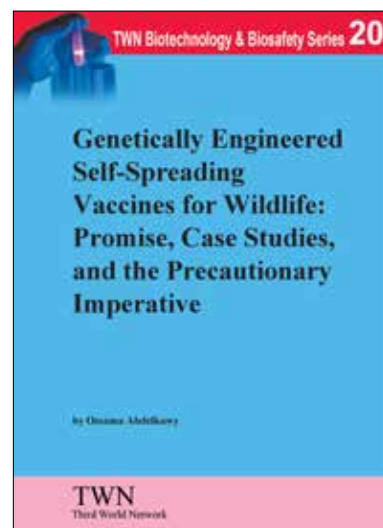
By Ossama Abdelkawy

Self-spreading vaccines have been proposed for over four decades as a way to achieve population-level immunity in wildlife by allowing genetically engineered vectors to passively disseminate protective antigens from host to host. Since the 1980s – through successive waves of recombinant vaccinia, herpes- and cytomegalovirus constructs, and post-COVID synthetic biology platforms – the concept has repeatedly been promoted as close to field-ready. Yet no candidate has progressed beyond models and contained experiments. The distance between promise and practice persists because the very traits that make these vaccines attractive – transmissibility, persistence, and autonomy – create risks that current science and governance cannot effectively address.

This paper reassesses the paradigm through three frequently cited targets – Lassa fever in *Mastomys* rodents, rabies in bats, and white-nose syndrome in North American bats – chosen because they span zoonotic control and conservation imperatives and because they have repeatedly been presented as “near-product”. Across these cases, the scientific rationale is plausible, but ecological and evolutionary behaviour in open systems remains inherently unpredictable: small genetic changes can shift host range or virulence; interactions with circulating pathogens can produce unintended dynamics; and once established, a transmissible construct cannot be reliably recalled.

Situated within the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the analysis shows that existing risk-assessment procedures, liability and redress provisions, and transboundary safeguards presume containment and reversibility – assumptions incompatible with self-propagating agents. Ethical commitments, including meaningful participation of potentially affected States and communities, are likewise difficult to realize when spatial and temporal boundaries are indeterminate. The conclusion is therefore precautionary and practical: research on genetically engineered selfspreading vaccines should remain confined to laboratory and strictly contained settings, while international efforts focus on developing credible ecological monitoring, long-term modelling, and governance mechanisms that would be prerequisites for any future consideration of environmental release.

Download the book: <https://twn.my/title2/biosafety/bio20.htm>



Publisher: TWN

Year: 2025 No. of pages: 20

A permanent war machine

The lethal US boat strikes in the Caribbean are not isolated actions, writes *Michelle Ellner*; they are the extension of a militarised imperial model that treats entire regions as expendable.

THE first US attacks on boats in the Caribbean in early September 2025 were described by Washington as a ‘counter-narcotics operation’, a sterile phrase meant to dull the violence of incinerating human beings in an instant. Then came the second strike, this time on survivors already struggling to stay afloat. Once the details emerged, the official story began to fall apart.

Local fishermen contradicted US claims. Relatives of those killed have said the men were not cartel operatives at all, but fishermen, divers and small-scale couriers. Relatives in Trinidad and Venezuela told regional reporters their loved ones were unarmed and had no connection to Tren de Aragua or other cartels, describing them instead as fathers and sons who worked the sea to support their families. Some called the US narrative ‘impossible’ and ‘a lie’, insisting the men were being demonised after their deaths. UN experts called the killings ‘extrajudicial’. Maritime workers noted what everyone in the region already knows: the route near Venezuela’s waters is not a fentanyl corridor into the United States.

Yet the administration clung to its story, insisting these men were ‘narcoterrorists’, long after the facts had unravelled. Because in Washington’s post-9/11 playbook, fear is a tool. Fear is the architecture of modern American war.

The US did not emerge from the Iraq War into peace or reflection. It emerged into normalisation. The legal theories invented and abused after 9/11 – elastic self-defence, limitless definitions of terrorism, enemy combatants, global strike authority – did not fade. They became the backbone of a permanent war machine. These

justifications supported drone wars in Pakistan, airstrikes in Yemen and Somalia, the destruction of Libya, special operations in Syria and yet another military return to Iraq. And behind every expansion of this global battlefield was a US weapons industry that grew richer with each intervention, lobbying for policies that kept the country in a constant state of conflict.

What we are seeing today in the Caribbean is not an isolated action; it is the extension of a militarised imperial model that treats entire regions as expendable. The next wars were always there because we never confronted the political and economic system that made endless wars a profitable cornerstone of US power.

A post-9/11 legal framework built for endless war

The Trump administration has advanced several overlapping legal arguments to justify the strikes, and together they reveal a post-9/11 framework that stretches executive power far beyond its intended limits.

According to detailed reporting in *The Washington Post*, a classified US Justice Department Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) memo argues that the United States is engaged in a ‘non-international armed conflict’ with so-called narcoterrorist organisations. Under this theory, the strikes qualify as part of an ongoing armed conflict rather than a new ‘war’ requiring authorisation by the US Congress. This framing alone is unprecedented: drug-trafficking groups are criminal networks, not organised armed groups targeting the US.

A second pillar of the memo, described by lawmakers to *The Wall Street Journal*, claims that once the president designates a cartel as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, it becomes a lawful military target. But terrorism designations have never created war powers. They are financial and sanctions tools, not authorisations for lethal force. As US Senator Andy Kim put it, using an FTO label as a ‘kinetic justification’ is something ‘that has never been done before’.

The OLC memo also invokes Article II of the US Constitution, claiming the president can order strikes as part of his commander-in-chief authority. Yet this argument depends on a second, unsupported premise: that the boats posed a threat significant enough to justify self-defence. Even internal government lawyers questioned this. As one person familiar with the deliberations told *The Washington Post*, ‘There is no actual threat justifying self-defence – there are not organised armed groups seeking to kill Americans.’

At the same time, the administration has publicly insisted that these operations do not rise to the level of ‘hostilities’ that would trigger the War Powers Resolution because US military personnel were never placed at risk. [The War Powers Resolution is a US federal law limiting the president’s power to commit the US to armed conflict without authorisation by the US Congress. – Editor] By the administration’s own logic, that means the people on the boats were not engaged in hostilities and therefore were not combatants under any accepted legal standard, making the claim of a wartime self-defence strike impossible to

reconcile with US or international law.

Under international law, executing people outside a genuine armed conflict is an extrajudicial killing. Nothing about these strikes meets the legal threshold for war. Because the people on the boats were not lawful combatants, the operation risks violating both international law and US criminal law, including statutes on murder at sea, a concern reportedly underscored by Admiral Alvin Holsey's early resignation as head of the Southern Command responsible for US forces in the Caribbean.

The memo goes further still, invoking 'collective self-defence' on behalf of regional partners. But key regional partners, including Colombia, Brazil and Mexico, have publicly criticised the strikes and said they were not consulted, undermining the very premise of 'collective' defence.

This internal contradiction is one reason US lawmakers across both parties have called the reasoning incoherent. As Senator Chris Van Hollen put it, 'This is a memo where the decision was made, and someone was told to come up with a justification for the decision.'

And beneath all of this lies the most dangerous element: the memo's logic has no geographic limits. If the administration claims it is in an armed conflict with a designated 'narcoterrorist' group, then, by its own theory, lethal force could be used wherever members of that group are found. The same framework that justifies strikes near Venezuela could, in principle, be invoked in a US city if the administration claimed a cartel 'cell' existed there.

For decades, OLC memos have been used not simply as legal advice but as the internal architecture that allows presidents to expand their war-making power. The Bush torture memos treated torture as lawful by redefining the word 'torture' itself, calling

it 'enhanced interrogation', thereby enabling years of CIA black-site operations and abusive interrogations. The Libya War Powers memo argued that bombing Libya did not constitute 'hostilities', allowing the administration to continue military action without congressional approval. Targeted-killing memos, including those related to drone strikes on US citizens abroad, constructed a legal theory that lethal force could be used outside traditional battlefields, without trial, based on executive determinations alone. In each case, the memo did not merely interpret the law; it reshaped the boundaries of presidential war powers, often without public debate or congressional authorisation.

If Trump truly believes he leads 'the most transparent administration in history', then releasing the OLC memo should be automatic. The American people have the right to know what 'legal theory' is being used to justify killing people in their name. Congress needs it to conduct oversight. Service members need it to understand the legality of the orders they receive. And the international community needs clarity on the standards the US claims to follow. There is no legitimate reason for a president to hide the legal basis for lethal force, unless the argument collapses under scrutiny. A secret opinion cannot serve as the foundation for an open-ended military campaign in the Western Hemisphere.

The older foundation: a 200-year-old doctrine of control

If the legal foundation comes from the post-9/11 era, the geopolitical foundation is older – almost ancestral. For 200 years, the Monroe Doctrine has served as the permission slip for US domination in Latin America.

The Trump administration went even further by openly reviving and expanding it through

what officials called a 'Trump Corollary', which reframed the entire Western Hemisphere as a US 'defence perimeter' and justified increased military operations under the language of counter-narcotics, migration control and regional stability. In this framework, Latin America is no longer treated as a diplomatic neighbour but as a security zone where Washington can act unilaterally.

Latin America is no longer treated as a diplomatic neighbour but as a security zone where Washington can act unilaterally.

Venezuela, with its vast oil reserves, sovereign political project and refusal to submit to US pressure, has long been marked as a target. Sanctions softened the terrain. Disinformation hardened public opinion. And now, military strikes near its waters test how far Washington can push without triggering public revolt at home. The term 'narcoterrorism' is simply the newest mask on a very old doctrine.

The strikes in the Caribbean are not isolated. They are the predictable intersection of two forces: a post-9/11 legal regime that allows war to expand without congressional approval, and a 200-year-old imperial doctrine that treats Latin America as a zone of control rather than a community of sovereign nations. Together, they form the logic that justifies today's violence near Venezuela.

The label that opened the door

After 9/11, every administration learnt the same lesson: if you label something 'terrorism', the public will let you

do almost anything. Now, this logic is being used everywhere. The cruel, decades-long blockade on Cuba is justified by claiming that the island is a 'state sponsor of terrorism'. Mass surveillance, border militarisation, endless sanctions, all wrapped in the language of 'counterterrorism'. And now, to authorise military action in the Caribbean, they simply take the word 'narco' and attach it to the word 'terrorism'. The label does all the work. The danger is not confined to foreign policy: after Charlie Kirk's assassination, the same elastic definition of 'terrorism' is now being used domestically to justify crackdowns on NGOs the administration claims are inciting 'anti-American' political violence.

The only reason Trump has not launched a full-scale attack on Venezuela is that he is still testing the ground, testing resistance inside Venezuela, testing Congress, testing the media, and testing us. He knows nearly 70% of people in the United States oppose a war with Venezuela. He knows he cannot sell another Iraq. So he is probing, pushing, looking for the line we will not let him cross.

We are that line.

If we do not challenge the lie now, if we do not demand release of the memo, if we stay silent, 'narcoterrorism' becomes the new 'weapons of mass destruction'. If we allow this test case to go unanswered, the next strike will be a war. We are the only ones who can stop him. And history is watching to see whether we learnt anything from the last 20 years of fear, deception and violence.

Because the next wars were always here, looming. We just need the clarity to see them and the force to stop them before they begin. ♦

Michelle Ellner is a Latin America campaign coordinator of CODEPINK. She was born in Venezuela and holds a bachelor's degree in languages and international affairs from the University La Sorbonne Paris IV, in Paris. After graduating, she worked for an international scholarship programme out of offices in Caracas and Paris and was sent to Haiti, Cuba, The Gambia and other countries for the purpose of evaluating and selecting applicants. The above article is reproduced from Common Dreams (www.commondreams.org) under a Creative Commons licence (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0).

The East Asia Plant Variety Protection Forum and UPOV 1991 Implications for Seed Systems in Southeast Asia

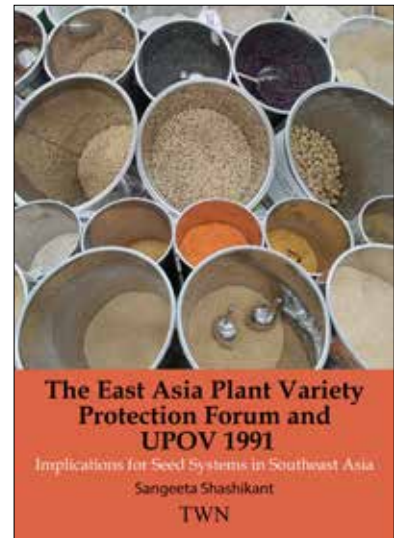
Sangeeta Shashikant

THIS paper critically examines the growing pressure on Southeast Asian (SEA) countries to adopt the rigid 1991 Convention of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV 1991) designed for the commercialized farming structures of industrialized nations.

It reveals how the East Asia Plant Variety Protection Forum, initiated by Japan under the guise of cooperation, has evolved into a key platform for aggressively promoting UPOV 1991 standards, sidelining

national agricultural priorities and farmers' rights. Through detailed analysis, the paper exposes the commercial motivations driving this agenda and the pivotal role of developed countries and their allied entities, who stand as the primary beneficiaries of the UPOV system and regional harmonization based on it. It highlights how the Forum's pro-UPOV activities threaten to erode national sovereignty, undermine food security, and entrench a rigid, inappropriate plant variety protection (PVP) system across the region – one designed to serve the commercial interests of Japan and other developed nations, particularly the Netherlands, Germany, France and the United States.

It calls on SEA countries to critically reassess their participation in the Forum, advocate for meaningful reforms to safeguard their policy space, and, if necessary, withdraw to protect their national interests and ensure implementation of a PVP system that is aligned with domestic agricultural needs and that safeguards the interests of farmers and food sovereignty.



Publisher: TWN
Year: 2025 Pages: 32

Available at: https://twm.my/title2/books/EAPVP_Forum_and_UPOV_1991.htm

Operation Condor: The secret system that terrorised exiled South American dissidents 50 years ago

Opponents of South American dictatorships in the 1970s found themselves in the crosshairs of a transnational terror network set up by these repressive regimes.

Five decades on, the quest for justice for its victims continues.

FIFTY years ago, on 25 November 1975, military intelligence officers from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay gathered in the Chilean capital of Santiago to set up what they called the 'Condor System'.

Better known as Operation Condor, this was a secret transnational terror network that allowed repressive regimes in these countries to persecute opponents living in exile. It left behind a legacy of torture, as well as hundreds of kidnappings, disappearances and murders.

Condor was built on three main operational pillars. First, all intelligence information about perceived subversive activities across the region was centralised in a database in Santiago. Second, an encrypted communications channel let state agents communicate secretly and efficiently. And third, the so-called office for coordination and advanced command oversaw joint operational activities.

Argentina, Chile and Uruguay also set up the Teseo unit to target exiles from those three countries who were living in Europe. And while Operation Condor ended in late 1978, bilateral operations which mainly saw Argentina collaborate with Brazil, Paraguay and Chile continued until early 1981.

Because of Operation Condor's top-secret nature, there are no official lists of victims. But my research has confirmed there were at least 805 victims between August

Francesca Lessa

1969, when several South American regimes began collaborating in informal ways, and February 1981.

While victims came from a variety of backgrounds, they were mostly political and social activists plus members of revolutionary armed groups, primarily from Uruguay, Argentina and Chile.

Seeking justice

From 1976, when Condor's repressive operations peaked, evidence was being compiled on the atrocities committed by member states. In 1977, for example, a Uruguayan journalist called Enrique Rodríguez Larreta gave evidence to Amnesty International in London about his abduction in Buenos Aires the previous year. He had travelled there to search for his missing son.

Rodríguez Larreta recounted how he was detained and tortured in three secret prisons across Argentina and Uruguay, before being released six months later. His testimony provided undeniable evidence of the clandestine coordination between South America's military regimes.

Further proof of Operation Condor's atrocities was provided in 1979, when American journalist Jack Anderson wrote an article in *The Washington Post* revealing Condor's role in the assassination of Orlando Letelier in 1976. Letelier

was a minister in the government of Chile's socialist former president Salvador Allende.

Wider progress towards justice was limited while South America's dictatorships remained in power. But the collapse of several regimes across the region in the 1980s opened a window of opportunity.

This period saw some groundbreaking achievements including the Nunca Más (Never Again) report, published in 1984 by Argentina's National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons. Beyond investigating the military dictatorship's systematic practice of disappearing people, the commission was the first official state body to recognise Operation Condor's transnational terror machinery.

However, the possibility of seeing perpetrators stand trial for their crimes was again delayed. So-called impunity laws were sanctioned by democratic governments in Argentina and Uruguay in 1986 and 1987, effectively preventing proceedings against people accused of committing crimes during the military dictatorships.

These laws were passed primarily to quell military dissent and prevent further uprisings after the return to democracy. The laws in Argentina and Uruguay accompanied existing amnesty laws in Brazil and Chile.

The tide of justice finally began to turn in 1998. That

year, former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet was detained in London to face charges for human rights abuses, including Condor atrocities.

Pinochet was spared from trial on medical grounds. But there has been considerable progress since then in the investigation, prosecution and sentencing of state agents for the atrocities committed by Operation Condor.

My research has mapped 50 criminal trials since 1976 that endeavoured to shed light on some of these atrocities. Convictions have been handed down in 40 of these trials so far, with over 100 people sentenced to prison.

These include high-profile figures like former dictators Reynaldo Bignone of Argentina and Juan María Bordaberry of Uruguay. Several high- and middle-ranking military officers, such as Chilean colonel Manuel Contreras, Argentine admiral Antonio Vañek and Uruguayan colonel José Nino Gavazzo, have also been jailed.

Most of these trials have taken place in South America, with 13 verdicts handed out in Argentina, 11 in Uruguay and seven in Chile.



The daughter of Rafaela Filipazzi, who was killed by Jorge Troccoli in 1977.

In September 2025, retired military intelligence officers Carlos Alberto Rossell and Glauco Yannone were sentenced in Uruguay to 12 years in prison. These men were found guilty of abducting and torturing political activists Universindo Rodríguez and Lilián Celiberti, as well as Celiberti's two children,

in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in 1978.

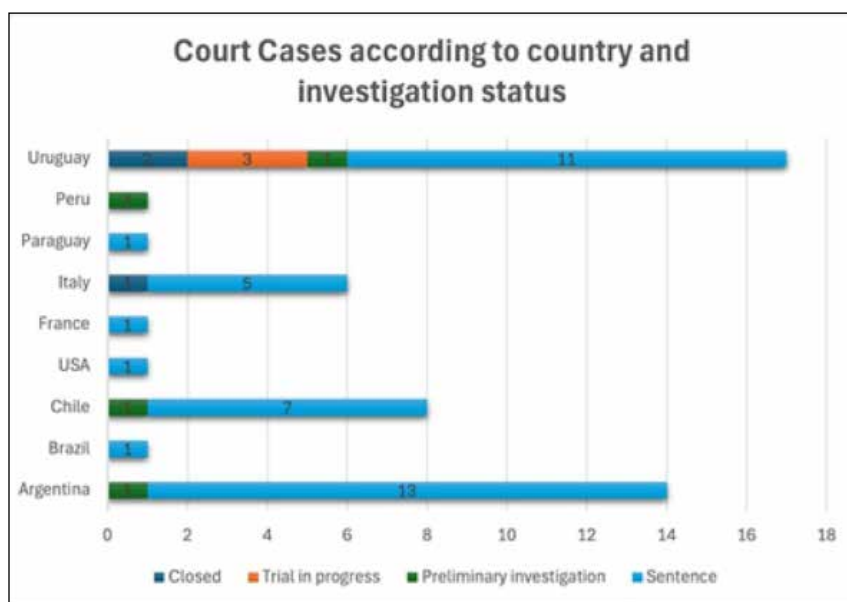
This sentence is significant, despite a four-decade-long delay. In February 1984, Rodríguez and Celiberti were the first people to file a lawsuit in Uruguay for the crimes they had suffered at the hands of Operation Condor. At that time, Uruguay was still in the grips of its military dictatorship.

Five verdicts have also been delivered by Italian criminal tribunals. A Rome court sentenced Jorge Troccoli, a former officer in the Uruguayan navy, to life imprisonment in October. He was convicted for the murders of Italian Rafaela Filipazzi, Argentine José Agustín Potenza and Uruguayan Elena Quinteros between 1976 and 1977. Troccoli is a dual Uruguayan-Italian national and fled to Italy in 2007 to avoid prosecution in Uruguay.

According to Alessia Merluzzi, a lawyer I consulted prior to writing this article, this prosecution not only once again confirmed the existence of Operation Condor, it also 'probed deeper into its violent and operative mechanisms and structures'. Merluzzi added: 'It revealed the modus operandi of the repressive agents beyond borders – and the specific, planned and methodical organisation of the atrocities suffered by the three victims'.

While significant progress has been made towards achieving justice for victims of Operation Condor, many of its crimes remain shrouded in impunity and silence. As the Inter-American Court of Human Rights recommended in 2021, all former Condor member states should work together to uncover the extent of this transnational network's crimes. ♦

Francesca Lessa is Associate Professor in International Relations of the Americas at University College London. This article was originally published on *The Conversation* (theconversation.com) under a Creative Commons licence (CC BY-ND 4.0).



Over 100 South American civilian and military officers have been sentenced to prison over crimes committed under Operation Condor.

The rise of Red Brigade

A movement founded by a survivor of an attempted rape is helping young Indian women reclaim security and dignity.

Roli Mahajan

WHEN Shruti, a frail 17-year-old schoolgirl, arrived at a three-day self-defence training in Lonavala, a town in the Indian state of Maharashtra, she was burdened by self-doubt. Her family had long dismissed her as weak, and she believed it too. Quiet on the first day, she slowly began to engage. By the final session, she had practised all the self-defence moves confidently and had also proclaimed: 'What other girls sitting here can do, I can also do.'

Only days earlier, she had fainted at school. Now she stood tall before her peers. In many ways, she embodies the mission of the popular Indian movement and civil society organisation Red Brigade Lucknow: transforming fear into faith and silence into strength. Based in Lucknow, India, the organisation empowers women through self-defence education.

Red Brigade was founded in 2011 by Usha Vishwakarma, after she survived an attempted rape. What began as an act of defiance and healing – in the beginning, 15 young women performed street plays on abuse and harassment – evolved into a powerful movement for women's security and dignity in India.

The group's work took on new urgency after the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, as women across India sought ways to protect and empower themselves. That's when Red Brigade expanded its mission from protests to structured training programmes, creating space for physical and psychological recovery.

In India, gender-based

violence remains widespread and women are often silenced by social and cultural norms. According to data collected between 2019 and 2021, almost one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence, and many girls still grow up being told to stay quiet or stay home. In such a reality, teaching self-defence is not only about personal protection but also about reclaiming confidence and dignity as women.

Learning how to fight

During Red Brigade's sessions, it became clear that conventional self-defence methods often failed real survivors. The group therefore developed Nishastra Kala, a technique focused on survival within seconds of an attack. Co-created with women who had experienced violence and martial arts experts from India, France and Australia, this approach prioritises realism over ritual. Since then, more than 250,000 girls in schools and villages have been trained, learning not only how to fight, but how to believe in their own resilience.

Over time, Vishwakarma realised that safety alone could not dismantle entrenched gender hierarchies. 'Protection is the first step,' she says, 'but if women do not sit where decisions are made, nothing really changes.'

This conviction led to the creation of Veerangana Vahini – an 'army of brave women' focused on cultivating young female leaders. Operating in 20 districts across Uttar Pradesh, one of India's most challenging states for gender equality, the organisation engages women aged 18 to 25 in discussions about safety, education, independence and governance.

These dialogues, Vishwakarma believes, are the seedbed of transformation: 'Only when discussion deepens do thoughts begin to grow.'

The impact is already visible. At a leadership summit earlier in 2025, more than a thousand young women from across the state declared, 'I am ready to lead.' Some, from farming families, Dalit communities and other marginalised castes, now aspire to become Pradhan, the village head, or Members of the Legislative Assembly, both roles long dominated by men.

'Protection is the first step, but if women do not sit where decisions are made, nothing really changes.'

The movement is also challenging the grip of the Pradhan Pati, the 'unelected husbands' who often hold power behind the scenes and exercise unofficial authority, thereby undermining the leadership role of their wives who have been elected as village chiefs. In one village, a young Dalit girl's speech inspired the local female Pradhan to demand accountability from her husband. Soon after, he stormed into the organisers' office, asking furiously, 'What are you teaching my wife?'

What Veerangana Vahini is teaching, it seems, is simple yet radical: when women hold the seat of power, their decisions must lead. ♦

Roli Mahajan is a journalist based in Lucknow, India. This article was originally published in D+C (Development and Cooperation, Issue 12|2025, dandc.eu/en).

Andrée Blouin was Africa's forgotten power broker

The memoirs of the Central African revolutionary Andrée Blouin tell the story of a woman who witnessed firsthand the ecstatic highs and tragic lows of Africa's struggle for independence.

Ernest Harsch

My Country, Africa: Autobiography of the Black Pasionaria by Andrée Blouin (Verso Books, 2025)

ANDRÉE Blouin was one of the closest allies of Patrice Lumumba, the charismatic Congolese politician who led his country to independence before his murder in 1961. American and Belgian critics of the slain leader often held Blouin in contempt. To them, she was a 'fanatic', possibly a communist agent, certainly strongly opposed to Western power. Almost 40 years since her death in 1986, aged just 64, Andrée has drifted somewhat into obscurity.

The recent reissue of her long-out-of-print autobiography, *My Country, Africa: Autobiography of the Black Pasionaria*, provides evidence of her enduring importance. It comes at a time of renewed interest in the politics of Central Africa. The 2024 award-winning documentary film by Johan Grimmonprez about American jazz music's uncomfortable relationship with empire, *Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat*, quotes her extensively. This renewed attention is overdue. Her life story is a remarkable tale of personal and political struggle by a truly extraordinary individual.

As with many activists, Andrée's engagement was shaped by firsthand experiences. The late colonial era, when the continent's subject peoples were starting to



mobilise on a grand scale to throw off foreign domination, was the backdrop to her life. So much seemed possible. Yet optimism often ended in disappointment. The continent's more conservative leaders saw sovereignty mainly as a replacement of European faces with African ones, leaving intact existing borders and social relations fostered by colonialism.

Blouin chose instead to side with the interests of ordinary people and viewed political struggle in Pan-Africanist, rather than nationalist, terms. Her 'country' did not have one flag, but many.

Personal trauma and growth

Andrée was born on 16 December 1921. Her father was a French businessman, and her mother the 14-year-old daughter of a Banziri chief in the French colony

of Oubangui-Chari, today's Central African Republic. Aged barely three, Blouin was sent off to a Catholic orphanage in Brazzaville, capital of the small French-ruled Congo, across the river from the much larger Belgian colony of the same name.

The orphanage in which she spent her early life was created for unwanted mixed-race girls guilty of the 'sin' of having been born of European and African liaisons. It was, as Andrée put it in her later years, 'a kind of waste bin for the waste products of this black-and-white society'. The orphanage's nuns, she recalled, were especially severe. They fed the girls sparingly and punished them for the slightest infraction. Blouin quickly developed a reputation as a troublemaker.

At 17, Andrée and two friends escaped by scaling the orphanage's walls. For her, there were too many new sights, sounds and customs outside of these walls to stay put. In *My Country, Africa*, Andrée writes that she 'watched with the ardent eyes of one who had been deprived of her Africa for fourteen years'.

In the years that followed, she lived in different French and Belgian colonies, worked as a seamstress, managed a transport enterprise and a plantation (with a hundred employees), ran her own parcel delivery business, and wrote prize-winning poetry.

Far from the clutches of the orphanage's nuns, who planned early marriages between Andrée and other mixed-race orphans, she was free to pursue her own relationships. The first two were

THE WOMAN BEHIND LUMUMBA

Behind every famous man, there is a woman.

According to the *London Daily Mirror*, Madame Andrée Blouin is the power behind the actions to Congo leader Patrice Lumumba.

She is 42, half-African, half-French and married to a French mining-engineer.

Officially, she holds the position of Chief of Protocol, but Justin Bomboko, the Congo's Foreign Minister, told the Congo Senate that she is trying to run the country and was a Communist.



Africa Is a Country

A screenshot of a 1961 article in the *Baltimore Afro-American*.

with European men, 'of the race that had so often hurt me'. Both unions eventually soured, but gave her two children, a daughter and a son. When her son, at two, became seriously ill with malaria, she tried to obtain quinine to treat it. But the French authorities reserved the medicine for 'whites only'. Her son died, a tragedy that, she wrote in her memoir, 'politicised me like nothing else could'.

Rebirth in Guinea

In 1948, Andrée would meet a former French artillery officer and mining expert named André Blouin. The couple would marry four years later, stay together for a quarter-century and have two children. Unlike many other white men in Africa, André 'had escaped the colonialist mentality', she wrote.

The couple moved to Guinea in West Africa after André got a job researching alluvial gold mining in the country. The 1950s were a feverish political time across Africa, and André supported his wife's activity throughout it. In Guinea, the strongest nationalist party was the local branch of the regional Rassemblement démocratique africain (RDA). It was led by

Ahmed Sékou Touré, a fiery trade union leader. Andrée saw her own developing views crystallised by Touré's determination to achieve genuine independence from colonial rule. His enthusiasm had, she wrote, given her a 'second birth'.

The most pressing issue for the RDA was a referendum called by French president Charles de Gaulle in which voters in the colonies would choose whether or not to belong to a new French 'Community', which would retain military, diplomatic and economic ties to the metropole. Touré's RDA saw this as a manoeuvre to perpetuate French domination and called for a 'no' vote. Andrée eagerly jumped into the fray, travelling hundreds of kilometres with RDA activists. Twice, she and several companions were almost killed in mysterious road 'accidents'. Officials soon ordered her expulsion and fired her husband from his job.

By the time a majority of Guineans had voted 'no' – making it the only one of France's 18 African colonies to do so – André and Andrée had fled the country. With Touré at the helm, the Blouins returned, he to work for the government and she to further promote Pan-African causes.

Through Touré, she met Ghana's president Kwame Nkrumah and recorded a radio appeal to African women to champion continental unity in a broadcast that went out in both French and English.

Before returning to Guinea, Andrée had already engaged in several diplomatic initiatives of her own. She mediated a political rift between the presidents of the Central African Republic and Congo-Brazzaville, and another between clashing parties within Congo-Brazzaville. In the latter conflict, her intervention helped to end fighting that had claimed hundreds of lives.

Fighting for a free Congo

The year 1960 was pivotal for Africa. Seventeen colonies won their independence. France, Britain and Belgium had decided that maintaining formal rule was becoming too risky and began seeking new, less formal ways to retain economic and political influence. The ambiguities of that process were nowhere starker than in Congo, the vast, resource-rich territory that Belgians had pillaged for decades.

Although Andrée had previously spent some time in Congo, even learning a couple of Congolese languages, her introduction to that country's politics came by chance. One day, at a restaurant in the Guinean capital, she overheard several Congolese speaking Lingala and struck up a conversation with them in that language. One happened to be Pierre Mulele, a leader of the Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA), who was in Guinea hoping to secure Touré's support. Soon, the head of the PSA, Antoine Gizenga, invited her to help mobilise Congolese women. With Touré's blessing, she agreed.

In early 1960, Andrée spent months touring Kwilu and other Congolese provinces addressing rallies of thousands of women and men with a PSA caravan. She

organised a pro-independence women's association, which by the end of May had recruited 45,000 members. On the border with Portuguese-ruled Angola, she also helped establish a village of Angolan refugees, an early rear base for the rebel Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

The Belgian authorities sought to keep the Congolese fractured by playing on ethnic divisions and promoting more conservative currents against those aligned with Lumumba. They also bristled at Andrée's influence, denigrating her for being a woman and a foreign communist agent. Despite Lumumba's strong objections, they ordered her expulsion. On her way out of the country, Andrée took with her a protocol signed by a majority of Congolese parties. Her dissemination of that document to the international media helped undermine Belgium's plan to bypass Lumumba by handing power to a moderate.

On 30 June 1960, with Lumumba as its prime minister, Congo gained formal independence. Listening to the radio in Guinea, Andrée heard his hard-hitting speech. The words were already familiar to her, since the speech Lumumba delivered – destined to stand as one of the most famous critiques of colonialism – was one she had helped to draft before her untimely departure. Ever discreet, she made no mention of that detail in her autobiography; her daughter Eve reports it in the epilogue to *My Country, Africa*, citing as evidence the testimony of a Congolese security officer.

Dashed hope – but perseverance

At Lumumba's request, Andrée returned to Congo, where she became his chief of protocol. But they had little time to build the newly independent state. Belgian politicians and businessmen continued to promote an array of



Patrice Lumumba (centre).

factional splits and opponents, including a breakaway in the mineral-rich province of Katanga. America's CIA recruited a young army colonel, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko), who soon ousted Lumumba in a military coup. Andrée was again expelled.

For several months, chaos reigned. Mercenaries from Belgium, South Africa and elsewhere flooded into Congo. United Nations peacekeepers were generally ineffective, but in some cases, they sabotaged nationalist efforts to retain control. Pro-Lumumba forces led by Gizenga attempted to rally opposition. As Lumumba tried to join them, he was captured, taken to Katanga and murdered.

Andrée was in Switzerland in January 1961 when she learned of Lumumba's death. To journalists who confronted her and asked for comment, she said that 'all the hot words, the passionate outpourings that had been the substance of my days for so long, had been drained from me in this loss. I was unable to speak.'

Steeled by a lifetime of difficulties and disappointments, Andrée eventually bounced back. In 1962, after the victory of Algeria's independence war against France, she and her family moved

to Algiers. For at least the next decade, the Algerian capital served as a 'Mecca' for revolutionaries worldwide, as Guinea-Bissau's legendary guerilla leader Amílcar Cabral put it.

Andrée wrote regularly for *El Moudjahid*, the newspaper of Algeria's National Liberation Front. Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella asked her to oversee humanitarian relief for orphans of the Congolese struggle. She championed the massive rebellion of 'Lumumbist' rebels that shook eastern Congo in the early and mid-1960s, led in Kwilu by her old friend Mulele.

She was often visited by a diverse range of revolutionaries from South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Eritrea and other African fronts, even Palestinians and American Black Panthers. Her living room, she quipped, was 'the chancellery of the United States of Africa'.

After moving to Paris, where she would die of cancer in 1986, she continued to write essays and books throughout the 1970s and 1980s, including her autobiography, which was first published in 1983 but was out of print before Verso Books reissued the book in 2025. According to her daughter Eve Blouin, Andrée remained convinced to the end that Pan-African revolution would eventually overcome all the neocolonial intrigues and that 'the future belonged to the unity of free, sovereign peoples'.

Almost 40 years on from her death, the value of Andrée's work remains in its sober assessments of the prospects and aims of many prominent African leaders, the heart-wrenching descriptions of human sufferings, and the sharp dissections of colonialism's many injustices and absurdities. ♦

Ernest Harsch, a research scholar at Columbia University's Institute of African Studies, has been writing about the continent since the 1970s. His most recent book is Corruption, Class, and Politics in Ghana. The above article originally appeared on the Jacobin website (jacobin.com).