

## Editorial

# Israel's Genocide on Palestine

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine grew out of an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of Israel's construction of a large wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In 2003, the General Assembly of the United Nations asked the Court to render its opinion 'urgently'. In July 2004, the Court found that construction of the barrier in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was illegal and that Israel was under an obligation to cease construction, to dismantle the wall already built, and to make reparations. Around this time, a Belgian Senator, Pierre Galand, who was visiting the United Nations in New York was privy to discussions about how there was no effective way of carrying through the Court's findings. He resolved to do something about this juridical impasse, having in mind the Vietnam International War Crimes Tribunal, which Bertrand Russell convened in 1966. The initiative would pass to civil society.

Galand was an old friend of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. He asked if he could borrow the Foundation's flag for what became the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, launched as an autonomous and self-governing grouping in Brussels in 2009. The Tribunal held sessions in Barcelona, London, Cape Town, New York and Brussels (twice). It concluded its work with an Extraordinary Session in Brussels in September 2014, scrutinising the extended onslaught on Gaza which Israel waged during that year. In its final report, the Tribunal sounded a warning about the increasing risk of genocide against the Palestinians. Ahdaf Soueif set the scene in her opening remarks to the report, which we reprint here.

A decade on in 2024, much of Israel's genocide on the Palestinians of Gaza is wrought in plain sight. On 7 October 2023, Hamas had launched from Gaza its audacious and deadly raids against Israel, the occupying power. Some 1200 Israelis were killed during those days, with approximately 200 more taken hostage. Many were civilians of all ages. Some were likely killed by Israeli fire. The fury of Israel's response to this gross provocation launched by Hamas from Gaza indicates how acutely

Israel's failure to prevent such an attack is felt in governing and military circles. Hence, Israel's daily bombardment of densely populated residential districts from land, sea and air adds to the rows of shrouded bodies of tens of thousands of Gazans of all ages. Many more are injured, traumatised, orphaned, left to starve amidst Israel's unrelenting siege. The Court in The Hague will weigh the evidence.

Those who are responsible for instigating Israel's atrocities in Gaza also control Israel's substantial arsenal of nuclear weapons.

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Julian Assange, journalist and publisher, has been held in London's high security Belmarsh Prison for some five years. The regime is harsh and restrictive. His young family has little access. Julian has been convicted of no offence. His detention follows US moves to extradite him to face charges relating to Wikileaks' release of US diplomatic cables and military records. A final appeal against extradition is scheduled for February 2024 in London. Should that fail, there may need to be recourse to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Whatever the legal status, Julian Assange should not be incarcerated for publishing documents which help us to better understand our complex world (see *Spokesman* 111, for example).

John Pilger was a great champion of Julian Assange over many years. John's untimely death prompted us to send Julian a copy of 'Dog', the poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, which John told us he loved. See *Spokesman* 121 for the full 'Dog'. Meanwhile, here's a few lines.

*But he has his own free world to live in  
His own fleas to eat  
He will not be muzzled  
Congressman Doyle is just another  
fire hydrant*

***Tony Simpson***