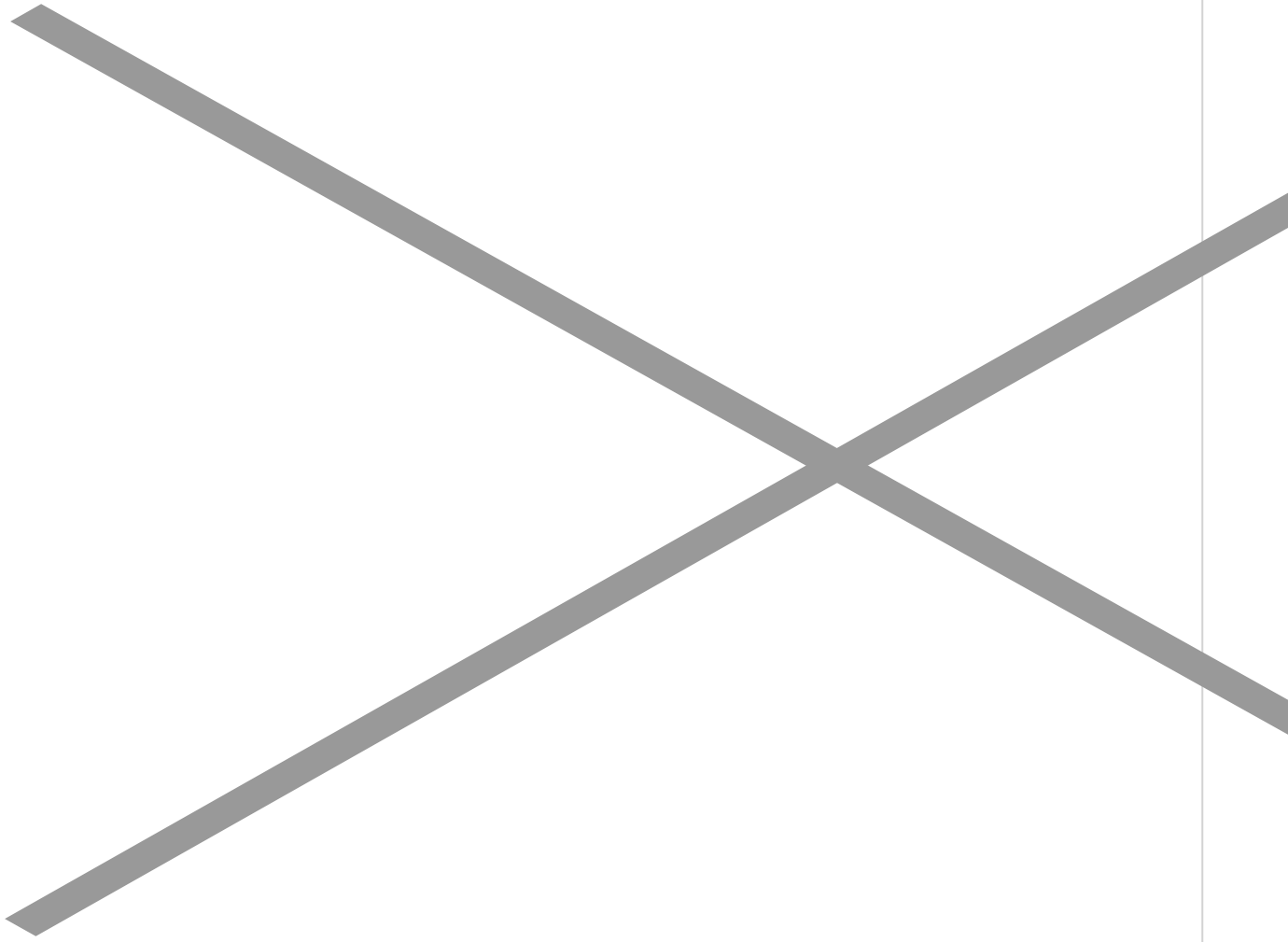


World leaders, intellectuals denounce Israel's genocidal onslaught on Gaza

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Cairo, December 19 (RHC)-- At least 115 world leaders, academics and intellectuals have signed a declaration to denounce the months-long "genocidal onslaught" by Israeli forces against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The declaration states that Israel keeps pressing ahead with its crimes and has ignored worldwide protest rallies and pleas for a permanent ceasefire over the past months. "Under these circumstances, this Declaration calls not only for the denunciation of Israel's genocidal assault but also for taking effective action to permanently prevent its repetition," the group said in a joint statement.

"We come together due to the urgency of the moment, which obliges global intellectuals to stand against the ongoing horrific ordeal of the Palestinian people and, most of all, to implore action by those who have the power, and hence the responsibility, to do so." The signatories held the Israeli regime responsible for worsening the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, forcing the medical system to fail and for people to starve.

"Yet, now the bodies are again piling up, the Gaza medical system can no longer offer treatment to most of those injured, and threats of widespread starvation and disease intensify daily," the statement added. "Many weeks of cruel devastation caused by Israel's grossly disproportionate response to the October 7 attack continues to exhibit Israel's vengeful fury."

"The revival of this military campaign waged by Israel against the civilian population of Gaza amounts to a repudiation of UN authority, of law and morality, in general, and of simple human decency," it said.

They called on the Israeli regime to choose the road to peace not only for humanitarian reasons but also for the sake of achieving security and respect for Palestinians. "We also support the Palestinian unconditional right as the indigenous people of the land to give or withhold approval to any proposed solution bearing upon their underlying liberation struggle."

Some of the signatories of the declaration include Turkey's former prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu, Javad Zarif, the former foreign minister of Iran; Amr Moussa, the former secretary general of the Arab League; Chris Hedges, the former Middle East bureau chief for The New York Times, and Palestinian novelist Susan Abulhawa.

It was signed by Moncef Marzouki, former president of Tunisia; Mahathir Mohamad, former prime minister of Malaysia; Mairead Maguire, a Nobel Peace laureate, and Arundhati Roy, renowned Indian writer, among others.

Other prominent people have also signed the declaration, including the Palestinian American activist and professor Noura Erakat, and Victoria Brittain, the former associate foreign editor of the Guardian.

Death and destruction, dire shortages of food and water and widespread displacement; this is the harsh reality facing 2.4 million Palestinians in Gaza as the Israeli regime continues its relentless strikes on the war-ridden strip. Scores of Palestinians have fallen victim to the regime's artillery targeting residential areas in northern and central Gaza over the past 24 hours.

The latest airstrikes on Jabalia have claimed over 110 lives. Air raids in the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza have also left at least 50 people dead. The regime's artillery shelled the maternity ward of Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, killing a teenage girl and wounding several others.

The Palestinian Red Crescent has slammed as extremely dangerous the shelling of the medical facility. Human rights groups have also warned the regime is using starvation as part of its war campaign by blocking humanitarian aid and destroying agricultural land.

An Israeli council head calls for sending all Gazans to refugee camps in Lebanon and "flattening" the whole area so it becomes an empty museum like Auschwitz.

In a visit to the occupied territories on Monday, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reiterated Washington's unwavering support for Tel Aviv and pledged to provide the regime with more arms.

Austin is in Tel Aviv to discuss Israel's plans for a transition to the so-called next phase of the war. He is the latest U.S. official to visit Israel since the regime began its bloodbath in Gaza in early October.

Washington has been defying domestic and international outcry to stop supporting Israel's bombardment campaign against the defenseless women and children in the Palestinian territory.

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