

Adriaan Basson | If you are silent about Gaza, you have chosen the side of the oppressor

57m ago

Harrowing | Struggling with malnutrition, seven-month-old Salim Mahmoud Awad suffers significant weight loss due to the lack of baby formula and food after being displaced to Gaza City, Gaza with his family, on July 26, 2025.

No decent human being should look away from the faces of starving children. It's time for the rest of the world to speak out against Israel, writes **Adriaan Basson**.

I do not know if Israel is committing genocide against thousands of Palestinians in Gaza. I am not a lawyer.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) will decide next year if the test for what constitutes genocide in law has been met by South Africa and its supporters like Brazil, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, Chile, Mexico and others.

What I do know is not to look away when I see the face of a starving child, irrespective of their creed, culture or race. The pictures coming out of Gaza over the past week have forced the world, including those nations propping up Israel's war machine, to pause.

Pencil-thin arms

Photographs of emaciated children with pencil-thin arms and translucent skins, some force to eat sand, are harrowing. We are witnessing an absolute failure of human compassion and decency.

We may soon no longer have access to these visuals. My colleagues working in Gaza are starving and can no longer feed themselves and their families to cover this unfolding tragedy. Outsider journalists are not allowed to enter Gaza, and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) is not allowing local journalists to get in and out of the area.

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AFP, one of the world's leading news agencies covering the Gaza conflict, has warned that its journalists are dying of hunger. This has never happened in AFP's history.

"They are now facing the same dire circumstances as those they are covering. Journalists endure many deprivations and hardships in war zones. We are deeply alarmed that the threat of starvation is now one of them," a statement by AFP, AP, Reuters and BBC read.

Even right-wing tabloids in Britain have called for a ceasefire and the urgent delivery of food to prevent full-blown famine in Gaza. The war in the Middle East has reached a point where nobody with access to remaining coverage out of Gaza can say "I didn't know".

And although you may feel utterly powerless to do anything to stop the IDF from indiscriminately bombing the starving population of Gaza, every voice counts.

Indefensible

Israel's war on Palestine, in retaliation for the barbaric attacks by Hamas on innocent Israelis on 7 October 2023, has reached a point where it's become indefensible for even the staunchest supporters of Israel to disregard the atrocities playing out in Gaza.

You can condemn the atrocities of Hamas (1 200 people were killed

in the 7 October attacks) AND at the same time condemn the atrocities committed by Israel in targeting thousands of innocent children, women and men in a campaign that supposedly targets Hamas.

According to the Gazan health ministry, almost 61 000 people, including thousands of kids, have been killed in retaliation.

Do not be silenced by those who want to force you to choose sides. What's wrong is wrong. Call out those who abuse human rights and have assumed the superiority to decide who to exterminate, whether their names are Yahya Sinwar or Benjamin Netanyahu.

How to end the status quo

Remember the fall of apartheid? It was only when the voices of ordinary people around the world were heard that negotiations to end our crime against humanity were expedited.

The sports boycotts, the sanctions, the cultural boycotts, the protest music, poetry, literature and the investigative journalism. It all mattered to bring an end to the National Party's madness.

How will the madness of Netanyahu and the IDF end?

Many feel it can only happen once the United States turns its back on Israel and stops the supply of weapons and political support. I don't know if this is true.

I want to believe that the status quo cannot continue if the rest of the world unites in its condemnation of the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians in Gaza.

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graves, one silence

Every day, more voices are ringing out against Netanyahu and the IDF. On Monday, two Israeli human rights groups, B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, called what is happening in Gaza a genocide, reported the New York Times.

B'Tselem [released a report titled "Our Genocide" that details the displacement of nearly two million Gazans](#), the attacks and Israel's efforts to withhold food meant for Gaza. Israel was coordinating to destroy Palestinian society, the organisation said. "In other words: Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."

These are the words of an Israeli human rights group, not South African lawyers.

South Africa, Israel and their respective supporters return to the ICJ next year for the merits of the genocide case to be heard. Until then, it is up to the rest of the world to use our influence, voices and power to bring an end to the madness that is playing out in Gaza.

When asked in 2014 what he thought of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories, the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu said:

Those who turn a blind eye to injustice actually perpetuate injustice. If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

I would like to think Tutu would have said the same today.

- *Adriaan Basson is editor-in-chief of News24.*

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