



## Double Standards...

Between the War in Ukraine and the Palestinian Cause

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## Introduction

The Russo-Ukrainian war is not a recent one, but rather an ongoing conflict attributed to Ukraine being a member of the Soviet Union before its dissolution, and NATO's ongoing attempts to annex Ukraine. In 2021, it was renewed with Ukraine's desire to join NATO, which represents a strategic danger for the Russian Federation, as the anti-Russian NATO will besiege the Russian borders. Thus, Russia began its attempts to resolve the situation. Russia began a major military build-up near the Russian-Ukrainian border as a kind of warning, but this decision was met with international criticism and economic sanctions from Western countries. The Russian government then, diplomatically recognized the popular republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, which had been fighting for independence from Ukraine for a long time. They took them as an excuse to intervene, accusing the Ukrainian government of attacking the citizens of Donetsk and Luhansk. Russian forces were directed to deploy in Donbass, in what Russia described as a "peacekeeping mission", but since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Russian army has committed a number of war crimes documented by the United Nations, such as attacks on hospitals and the killing of defenceless citizens.

This is constituted a cultural shock for all states, which makes one think about the always-present scene in the Arab world and how these same states react to it. The previous scene is not a strange or unfamiliar to us in the Middle East, but the difference is that it is in a European country. The Israeli occupation of Palestine began before the declaration of the establishment of the Israeli state. It violates all recognized international rights and laws in the midst of silence from the international community. It has been going on for more than 75 years, during which Israel, as a state and as



people, has been constantly attacking the Palestinian people. The crimes the Israeli occupation is committing include is trying to forcibly displace Palestinians with the aim of increasing Israeli settlements In the Palestinian Territories in 2021. As well as, in 2022, and the escalation of Israeli harassment of worshipers in Al-Aqsa Mosque, as the Israeli forces stormed the mosque several times, preventing worshipers from entering, assaulting and arresting them, and preventing the call to prayer from Al-Aqsa Mosque, as violence against Palestinians increased, and the simplest example is the killing of an unarmed Palestinian woman from by the Israeli forces. The most recent attack on Palestinians was in May 2022, when during an Israeli raid, the Israeli forces shot Shereen Abu Aqla, a Palestinian journalist. She was shot in the head just under its protective helmet while wearing a vest that clearly identifies her as a journalist.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has exposed the double standards of the West against Palestine. Ukraine was met with support from media, states, and international organisations. On the other hand, Palestine, which has been occupied for more than 75 years, does not get the same support. They are met with condemnation or, at best, impartiality. Even though its right to self-determination and self-defence are stipulated by international law, the West does not extend to it those rights.

This is due to the West's interest in their political interests at the expense of human rights, as their position in support of Ukraine stems from their common interests with it, and their political and ideological differences with Russia, so it is easy for the West to take their position and express it, while disregarding the rights of the Palestinians, despite the similarity of the situation between them. And between Ukraine, due to the convergence of



their interests in the first place with Israel, so the report shows how human rights are just an excuse used by the West to achieve their own interests.

This report compares the Western response to the Ukraine crisis vs to the Palestinian crisis. It starts by outlining the rights of both, Ukrainians and Palestinians, to self-determination and self-defence in international law. It examines the difference in the Western media coverage, and Western government's reaction. It also discusses the response of international organisations to both crises. The report highlights the duplicity and double standards in the Western reaction.

## First: International Law

The right to self-determination has been cemented in international law through the ratification of the United Nations Charter. Article 1.2 of the Charter states that its purpose is

*"To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and **self-determination of peoples**, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace".*

Moreover, it is stated clearly in Art.1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which states that

*"1. All peoples have the **right of self-determination**. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development", and*

*"3. The States Parties to the present Covenant, including those having responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, shall promote the*



realization of the **right of self-determination**, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.”

The right to self-defence is also included in international law by virtue of the United Nations resolution 37/43, dated 3 December 1982, which

*“Reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle.”*

Moreover, the resolution’s preamble makes clear that it refers, specifically to the rights of Palestinians, stating,

*“Considering that the denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, sovereignty, independence and return to Palestine and the repeated acts of aggression by Israel against the peoples of the region constitute a serious threat to international peace and security.”*

The resolution refers to the Palestinians eleven times, explicitly describing them as: *“Under foreign and colonial domination.”*

The above-mentioned rights are rights that apply to both, Ukraine and Palestine. However, for the West, they are stated and extended only to Ukraine, while Palestine’s are deprived and questioned.

## Second: Media Coverage

There was a stark difference in the media coverage in regards to language, headlines, and narratives. The language used in the Western media to discuss both crises uncovered the duplicity and double standards



of the US and European media in their claims of objectivity. Their objectivity was simply thrown out of the window in their coverage of the war in Ukraine.

Mostly, the attacks and the war are presented from the Ukrainian perspective. Most Western media coverage is clear in who is the aggressor and who is the victim. However, in their coverage on Palestine, they are sure to 'present both sides', presenting it as "Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This makes it unclear who is the aggressor and who is the victim. This is evident in the words they use to describe both crises.

They use skewed language that give the impression of a power balance between Israel and Palestine. In their coverage of the Ukrainian crisis, the words "*invasion*", "*war*", and "*occupation*" are used freely. Alternatively, violence on Palestine is portrayed as "*conflict*", "*clashes*", and "*skirmishes*". BBC in its article covering the Israeli attack on the funeral of the slain journalist, stated that "***Violence breaks out at funeral of reporter Shireen Abu Aqla in East Jerusalem: Her coffin was jostled as Israeli police and Palestinians clashed as it left hospital***". They referred to the attack as 'violence' and portrayed it as a clash between equal parties. They failed to mention the fact that the Israeli forces attacked the mourners and caused her coffin to fall, not "jostle".

Moreover, media agencies such as France 24 and AFP have been consistently covering all allegations of war crimes committed by the Russian Federation. However, the alleged war crimes committed by the Ukrainians are excluded from the coverage. On the other hand, they have approached the occupation of Palestine and the Israeli aggression in a very "objective"



manner, which is to say it is one that perpetuates and echoes Israeli propaganda as well.

This was evident in the most recent Israeli attack on worshippers in Al Aqsa Mosque during the Holy month of Ramadan. AFP and France 24 published an article titled “*Israeli police, Palestinians clash anew at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound*”. The subtitle of the article was the report of Israeli police. The article also included both Israeli and Palestinian sources. Reuters also released an article titled “*Palestinians clash with Israeli police at Jerusalem holy site, 152 injured*”. The headline insinuates that Palestinians are the ones who started the ‘clash’, rather than Israeli police attacking a holy place.

To add to that, they use headlines that give the impression of equal numbers of casualties and fatalities on both sides. For example, The Sun published the headline “*BLITZ BLOODBATH ‘Fifteen kids’ massacred in Israel-Hamas conflict as Netanyahu warns ‘we will inflict blows you couldn’t dream of’*”. The headline fails to mention that fourteen of those kids were Palestinians.

Moreover, the language used in their articles is usually passive, not stating who the subject is. For example, The New York Times’ article titled “*Al Jazeera Journalist is Killed in West Bank*”. The title does not include the important information that the journalist was killed by Israeli fire, which is a war crime and a violation of international law.

On the other hand, Ukrainian casualties are usually highlighted and put front and centre. Moreover, multiple western media agencies have highlighted the power imbalance between Russia and Ukraine, and the difference in their military capabilities. NBC News published an analysis titled “*Russian-*



*Ukraine war has the underdog army winning*”, in reference to Ukraine. The article discussed how *“Ukraine’s military success”* showed that *“inferior adversary can impose surprisingly sharp costs”*.

In addition to that, their coverage of the Ukrainian resistance is mostly positive. The Western media glorifies the Ukrainian civilian resistance. They broadcasted videos of Ukrainian women making Molotov cocktails and tutorials of how it is made. MARCA posted an article titled *“What’s a Molotov cocktail and why Ukraine is using them against Russian forces? What’s the story behind this homemade explosive?”*. They published news reports on the Ukrainian government’s decision to issue guns to all civilians. They also positively portrayed the Ukrainian citizens who took up arms to resist. For example, The Economist published an article where they went *“on patrol with Ukraine’s volunteer army”*, following *“Lorry drivers, mechanics and a health-care entrepreneur”*.

They also praised the citizens who antagonise the Russian soldiers by standing in front of, or even on, their tanks or yelling at them. The Guardian and Independent posted a video of a Ukrainian man standing in front of Russian tanks. They drew parallels between him and a lone protester standing in front of a line of tanks in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in 1989, with The Independent calling him *“a brave man risking his life”*. CNN also broadcasted an *“incredible”* video of a man jumping on a Russian tank in Occupied Kherson. Moreover, barely anybody is condemning the Far-right armed groups such as Azov, who posted blatant hate speech on their twitter page, which was retweeted by the official Ukrainian twitter account. The Sun also posted a video of *“Russian tank ‘destroyed by Ukraine’s Azov regiment’ in Mariupol outskirts”*, calling them the *“the fearsome Azov Regiment”*.



However, the Palestinian resistance is not afforded the same treatment. They are either negative, or ‘objective’ at best, in their coverage of Palestinian resistance. This is despite both resistances being against illegal occupations. Armed resistance by various organised armed groups, such as Hamas, is considered terrorism. Express referred to Hamas as “*Islamist militant group which has controlled Gaza since 2007*”. Peaceful protests are considered antagonism. Citizens holding rocks to resist against an army are considered criminals. Moreover, when they are killed by Israel, they are portrayed as Hamas’ human shields, rather than victims of Israeli aggression. Toronto Sun published an article stating that “*Iran-backed terrorist organization Hamas*” clearly uses human shields, which is a war crime.

Moreover, they are fiercely positive of the boycotts and sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation. In fact, companies who did not boycott Russia are being condemned. The New York Post published an article detailing the names of the companies that are doing business in Russia. The New York Times has also published an article condemning these companies and their ‘silence’ over Ukraine. On the other hand, they are wary at best of any sanctions or boycotts of the Israeli state. In fact, most acts of support to Palestine by celebrities are portrayed as “antisemitic”. They highlight any criticism of Israel or support of Palestine as hate against Jews. Fox News, for example, made sure to publish that Gigi Hadid and vogue were criticized for announcing her donations to Ukraine and Palestine. It included in its article various Israelis’ criticism and accusations of antisemitism. However, they did not post an article of the criticism that vogue had garnered due to its initial erasure of Palestine in its social media post.



To add to that, Sportsmen from all nationalities showing the Ukrainian flag were praised by the media. On the other hand, when Leicester's Hamza Choudhury and Wesley Fofana showed the Palestinian flag after a match, various articles were released wondering why they were not fined. According to the English media, this was an obvious political message as neither player was Palestinian and there was an ongoing “*conflict*”. These are the same conditions of the players showing the Ukrainian flag, however, they garnered two different reactions from the media.

The UN General Assembly voting on the Russian attack on Ukraine has been met with much scrutiny by the media. The vote on the resolution condemning the Russian attack on Ukraine coverage highlighted the states who abstained as supporters of the invasion. Associated Press even released an article on African states in particular. It showed in the article that African states who abstained are ones who were “saved” by Russia beforehand from being condemned themselves for human rights violations. They stress that any vote other than a strong “yes” is a protest of the resolution and support of Russia, and any support or empathy for Russia is because they are as corrupt and bad as Russia allegedly is.

On the other hand, the votes for Palestine being a non-member observer state was met with much less bias by the Washington post. They politically examined why the nine states who rejected the bid did so. In fact, in another article on the progress of EU votes on Palestine membership, they view abstention as a progress in favour of Palestine, not the silent protest they view in the Ukrainian case.



### Third: Western Governments' Reaction

The Russian attack on Ukraine was met with a very swift and clear stand by Western governments. They unanimously and clearly condemned the attacks, very rightfully so. However, their response to Israeli aggression towards Palestine is always hesitant and vague at best. They call for restraint from “all sides”. Other times they outright condemn and criticise Palestine for defending themselves and their right to self-determination.

For Ukraine, they lit up monuments in the colours of its flag, they advocated for it in the United Nations, and they even gave permission to their nationals to fight alongside Ukraine. Even a country well-known for its neutrality such as Switzerland, has broken said neutrality and joined the European Union in imposing sanction against Russia. They also closed off their airspace in the face of Russian airlines and jets.

They also openly advocated for the Ukrainian sovereignty and right to self-defence, as well as, made it clear that any abstention or silence is an act of complicity. Thus, they put pressure on countries such as Pakistan for their abstention on UN resolutions condemning Russia. In fact, they reject any resolution or attempt to acknowledge or assist Ukraine, that does not include a clear stern condemnation of the Russian Federation and calls for the withdrawal of its army from Ukrainian land. For example, they rejected South Africa's resolution that wanted the UN GA to place the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine at the centre of its deliberations, and not politicise the text.

Moreover, US president Biden called Putin a “war criminal”, as well as condemned the silence or impartiality of any state. On the other hand, The US actively protects Israel. It has vetoed dozens of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions that are critical of Israel, including at least 53



since 1972. These included resolutions calling for an investigation into the 1990 killing of seven Palestinian workers by a former Israeli soldier. They also blocked a proposed statement being considered by UNSC members in May 2021 that would have condemned the violence in Gaza and called for a cease-fire between the parties.

The US duplicity and double standards can be summarised in the US secretary of state speech in the UN Human Rights Council. He asked of the council to call on Putin to stop the invasion which included various human rights violations. In the same speech, Blinken made point of calling the Council's ongoing investigations into Israeli actions in the occupied territories (which found it responsible for persistent "violations of the right to life" and other crimes) "a stain on the council's credibility", calling for them to be halted.

To add to all that, western governments were quick to impose economic sanctions on Russia in retaliation of its attack on Ukraine. The US also kicked out various Russian diplomats from its land. This would lead one to believe that sanctions and boycotts are an effective and permitted form of condemnation and resistance.

However, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Palestinian movement is mostly met with criticism from the West. It is accused of being antisemitic and bigoted, even though it is directed at Israel, not Jews. There have even been laws in various US states that are criminalise boycotting Israel. Texas residents had to certify they would not boycott Israel in order to qualify for relief for damages caused by Hurricane Harvey. Moreover, an Arkansas newspaper was asked to sign an anti-boycott pledge in order to be paid for the advertising it ran for Arkansas State University.



As of 2020, 32 US states have laws that prevent boycotts against Israel and a number of non-binding resolutions have been passed denouncing BDS. Two federal acts have been introduced, the 2017 Israel Anti-Boycott Act and the 2019 Combating BDS Act, both intended to deprive entities participating in boycotts of Israel of government contract work. US states have also put the ice cream company “Ben & Jerry’s” on list of companies barred from receiving government investments due to their decision to stop selling their products in Occupied territories and Israeli settlements in Palestine.

In France, as well, BDS has been criminalized. There are also various legal battles with BDS campaigners under claims of “discrimination based on national origin”. Moreover, they banned pro-Palestine rallies in May 2021 that were demonstrating against Israel's use of force in the Gaza Strip. They cited fear of violence as the reason for the ban. Pro-Palestine activists were also routinely arrested by French police. However, pro-Ukraine rallies were permitted. According to the French interior ministry, it is estimated that about 41,600 people demonstrated in 119 protests in towns and cities across France. In Paris itself, 16,000 gathered at Place de la Bastille.

In Canada, anti-BDS laws were proposed twice under the name of standing up to antisemitism. There have also been various anti-BDS laws and actions in Germany. Frankfurt city council have denied any organization that supports BDS funds and venues. Munich passed a resolution titled “Against every form of antisemitism – No cooperation with the antisemitic BDS”. Moreover, local and national parliaments in Austria, Czech Republic and Spain have passed symbolic resolutions condemning BDS. Most of these condemnations have alleged that BDS is anti-Semitic.



Various Western states, most recently Germany, are also starting to provide military aid (weapons/ tanks/ troops) to Ukraine. They are also allowing their own citizens to go to Ukraine and volunteer to fight in the Ukrainian army. However, this support is never extended to Palestine, regardless of the similar circumstances. The United Kingdom even stated that it is legitimate for Ukraine to attack Russian soil, when they criticise, Palestinian resistance attacking Israel.

Through these actions, it became clear that human rights are not the main concern of these governments. They were very comfortable with turning a blind eye to the Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights, as their interests are aligned with Israel. It is important to note that western governments mostly condemn the actions of states that they already oppose, or that does not have much interests with. In the case of Russia, even though their economic interests were aligned with Russia, these governments are known to be anti-Russian in their stances. They are also more interested in keeping the pretence of being the protectors of democracy and human rights. However, it is important to note that, the NATO for example, rejected imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Moreover, they are not working to get Ukraine to join the alliance. The members of the alliance agreed that if they did, then they will be obligated to honour the mutual defence agreement. This will lead to a full-blown war with Russia which does not serve the NATO's interests. Thus, they mostly focused on giving support to members of the alliance. As much as they say they are supportive of Ukraine, their number one objective is still their own interests.



## Fourth: International Organisations and Companies

International Organisations also showed their double standards. International sports organisations, after Russia attacked Ukraine, very swiftly and unanimously removed Russia from all competitions. Suddenly, Sports and politics were allowed, and even expected, to be mixed. FIFA, Formula 1 and other organisations removed Russians, and Russian clubs from competitions. In Formula 1, as well, a Russian driver has been allowed to compete under the Israeli flag. They also removed any fixtures that were supposed to happen in Russia. Cultural organizations like Eurovision, and others also removed Russia, even though it included Israel (which is not even a European country).

These organisations have always insisted on their apolitical stance when it came to boycotting Israel. However, now it is considered both a legitimate and necessary moral response to the Russian violation of international law and human rights in Ukraine.

Football players are now allowed to wear and show Ukrainian flags and slogans. Sports governing bodies did not consider the presence of flags on the pitch or in the stands as a breach of their rules in regards to prohibiting anything construed as a political message.

The Champions League match between Bayern and FC Salzburg had Ukraine flags on each corner flag. Moreover, captains of European teams wore the Ukrainian flag on their armband. On the contrary, the Palestinian flag is considered a breach of rules. Celtic fans were fined twice by UEFA for displaying the Palestinian flag in Champions League matches. Moreover,



players are fined for showing solidarity with Palestine. For example, the Egyptian Player AbouTrika, and the Mali player Kanoute were fined for displaying words of support to Palestine and Gaza. The International Cricket Council have also banned English player Moeen Ali from wearing wristbands saying 'Save Gaza' and 'Free Palestine'.

International human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) have also shown their bias. Amnesty International has released multiple statements accusing Russian forces of committing war crimes in Ukraine. However, it stayed silent on war crimes committed by the Ukrainian forces. On the other hand, these organizations routinely call out the Palestinian authorities.

Moreover, multinational businesses are encouraged to boycott Russia and stop all their operations in Russia. There has been boycotts in entertainment, energy, Automotive, Apparel and accessories, Technology, video games, shipping & transport, tourism, space, and aviation. On the other hand, these same businesses have no problem in participating in the Israeli apartheid by allowing the sale of their products in Israel's illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian land.

## Conclusion

The scale of duplicity and double standards revealed by this crisis is astounding. It made it clear that the treatment of victims or war violence depends on their skin color or origin of the victims and the political alliances of the perpetrators. The bias showed that international law and human rights



are merely tools that the West use when they find it convenient. Ukraine was met with worldwide support. Western media and states continued to stress that impartiality is not an option; war crimes and violations of human rights are not up for discussion, unless of course if it is against the Palestinians.

We strongly condemn all prejudices against Palestinian content on Western media, and demand reciprocity to achieve justice and peace around the world, in accordance with the rules of international law and international human rights law.

We reiterate that human rights are universal, and do not accept division in humanitarian crises, nor adhere to them for the sake of the individual interests of some countries at the expense of others, in order to represent the capabilities of the most powerful politically and militarily in the international community.