



OCTAGON 2024

**Facing Existential Crises:
From Gaza to Europe and the
Role of the Global South**

Madrid, Spain | 08 November 2024

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DISCLAIMER

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ABOUT CAF

Common Action Forum (CAF) is an independent transnational foundation based in Madrid, Spain. CAF acts as a think-tank, sustaining a global network of prominent and emerging intellectuals, politicians, journalists, and activists from diverse backgrounds. Fostering dialogues to consolidate a progressive agenda, CAF facilitates spaces to design solutions to critical issues of our times. We aim to promote multilevel cooperation and in- depth, structural-oriented analyses of global challenges. As opposed to cynical, panicked, and pessimistic accounts of our world's dysfunctions, CAF seeks alternative narratives and constructive proposals that address root causes, not only the symptoms. We are driven by the vision of an empowered, cosmopolitan, and democratic global citizenry, conscious of a common ground that unites and overcomes differences. In a time of noise, we focus on the existential questions humanity

faces: ever-increasing inequalities, environmental collapse, the social impact of technology, and the rise of neo- fascist/xenophobic policies.

THE OCTAGON

The OCTAGON is a yearly private round-table discussion in which over 32 top intellectuals, activists, and experts join to address particular vital issues of our time. Despite being our youngest, the OCTAGON is CAF's most intensive and focused initiative. Comprised of four main workshops and functioning under the Chatham House Rule, it aims to gather sound analyses and grounded innovative proposals that can be further developed into political action and policy recommendations.

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For more detailed information about CAF's work, mission, vision, and values, please visit our website,

www.commonactionforum.net

FOREWORD

OCTAGON 2024 was held on 08 November 2024, right after the United States (US) elections. By the time this report is published, a major shift for the region has happened in Syria (not addressed in this document) and a feeble ceasefire still stands in Gaza. Despite a significant military withdrawal, violence continues in the strip now thousands of survivors have returned to what is left of their homes and neighbourhoods. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) operations and impune settler attacks have brought total war to the West Bank. For now, Israel has rejected withdrawing from seized territories in Syria and Lebanon. These lines are written amid growing threats the deal will collapse anew, soon after the US government announced its intention to take over Gaza as a real state opportunity. This, they say, will happen once Gazans "voluntarily relocate" neighbouring countries, like Egypt and Jordan. Both vehemently reject the notion, the latter has threatened with war. Not because population transfer is an international crime they'd be complicit in, but because they understand it as an existential security risk. Beyond its manifest logistical unfeasibility and what would surely be fierce resistance on the side of Gazans, this plan illustrates the openness and levity with which the US now endorses genocidal action, ethnic cleansing, and overall, overt international crime.

As already hinted by President Trump and thoroughly discussed in OCTAGON_2023, attempts to enact this plan are bound to instrumentalise and aggravate the genocidal destruction of life conditions in Gaza, alleging humanitarian interest. The confirmed death toll of this genocide borders 50.000 people, with true figures suspected to be three times higher. 80% of the strip lies in ruins, with medical and sanitation infrastructure severely crippled. Malnutrition and disease are rampant. For its part, Europe continues to have a disjointed, lukewarm, if not blindly supportive response to these actions, even at the gates of mass-destabilisation in the Eastern Mediterranean

(something bound to unleash the waves of refugees that crippled its politics in 2015. The smear campaign against the International Criminal Court (ICC) spearheaded by the West has now resulted in US sanctions against the court's prosecutor, Karim Khan, mirroring its past retaliation against court officials for investigating war crimes in Afghanistan. Evidently, the prevalence of international law continues to be largely under question.

Amid escalating trade wars and unprecedented threats of territorial expansion, the US has become locked in an aggressive internal reform that increasingly looks like a power grab. However, the minutiae of the ongoing American plight and its growing complicity with big-tech corporations will not be thoroughly discussed here. Focusing on the interconnectedness of this genocidal aggression with recent meta-crises and centuries-old structural and ideological issues, this edition of the OCTAGON continued to explore the role of the Global South in the multilateral fray, also reflecting on the global reactionary wave and the ways Europe can come to a redefining reckoning. Conscious of the speed at which reality shifts and in line with CAF's vocation to propose structural and long-term approaches, the following lines condenses and update the event's main reflections, outlining dilemmas, some dissents and several open questions. Regardless of the moment of reading, we are convinced that the ideas presented here and in previous reports may prove crucial to bringing change to Israel, Palestine and the world, looking beyond uncertain waters and into the promised horizon of the future.

INTRODUCTION: FACING THE HERITAGE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

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The international order, though bankrupt and gravely undermined, remains the only effective framework for leveraging existing institutions, norms, and rules to their fullest extent. It is hardly up for discussion that the United States, as the historic promoter of this system, has instrumentalised international law and multilateral institutions to assert its dominance and propagate a self-satisfying narrative that portrays it as a guarantor of the rule of law—if not international justice per se. The core dilemma of international governance, however, does not revolve around the ultimate nature of international law or the extent to which it has often served as a self-indulgent façade to uphold a hegemonic narrative. Complex systems result from cumulative actions, collective objectives, policies, and trends. The intentions and strategies of founders and reformists alike are mere instants in a structural history, highly sensitive to the priorities of a fleeting balance of power both within and outside the system itself. Critiques of the morality and utility of this system are often mere snapshots and thus cannot be framed in terms of black or white.

Ultimately, the defining core issue facing the global community is impunity itself. Unlike its foundational ideas, the functionality of the international system depends largely on its custodians.

The rise of illiberalism, neo-nationalism, and reactionary movements, coupled with the decline of liberalism and social democracy as governance models, signals the irrevocable collapse of the core values of Western civilisation. Power structures and ideologies alike are adaptive and mutually reinforcing, yet they experience strain differently. The functional tension between idealism and realism—between the pragmatic gravitas of

day-to-day decision-making and the universal calling for justice and truth—drives systemic change or stagnation.

Yet, when a system becomes unambiguously incapable—if not outright disinterested—in masking the incongruence between its actions and values, it inevitably signals its demise. The dynamic tension is broken when, after sustained periods of emptying and misuse, practicalities fall short of making ideas anything but husks in service of an overtly cynical narrative. At that point, their expiration date is forthcoming, and so is the end of their civilisational purpose. Societal distrust only accelerates their contestation, and thus, their substitution becomes a matter of time. But just as the structure will try to use this interim to transplant itself into a framework of repurposed notions, the chances of repurposing the ideas it leaves behind will depend on the damage they received as much as on the wits and wills of those taking the baton. The unmasking of Western democracy through racism, supremacism, xenophobia, and religious contestation does not imply that the path of justice can only be trodden by the morally unstained. Reckoning with systemic heritage and delivering redress is a generational, collective endeavour, one that cannot be kickstarted by a sudden, clean break with the past.

Never mind the prevailing significance of Enlightened values and other commendable attempts at drafting universality, the structures we associate with global governance do not stand only on the arrogance of liberal Western worldviews. From human rights frameworks, decolonisation, and diplomacy to social rights, indigenous governance, or the United Nations (UN) Charter itself, development efforts of our now-waning international system have also illustrated the tensions between hegemonic realpolitik and a world striving for genuine democracy and emancipation.

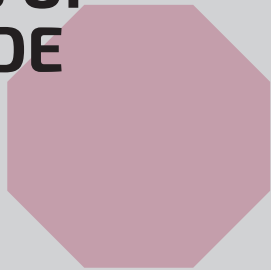
It is undeniable that several state-level actors have

been accommodating—some, arguably complicit—to the Gaza genocide. Yet it is nonetheless also true that the international community has failed to create incentives to prevent it as much as to correct the conditions leading to it for decades, not just since 7 October 2023. The same argument, if not worse, can be waved in the face of evermore disjointed efforts to deal with an outright existential threat such as the climate crisis. The international system, as it is well known, is a byproduct of historical contingencies and power dynamics. It is rooted in a post-World War II period largely shaped by Western powers. Global South, long marginalised in global governance, has come to increasingly question its legitimacy, and the rise of multipolarity and new economic and political blocs, such as BRICS, have further complicated the equation. Despite it all, **it is the Global South that still endorses this framework the most, with their unyielding efforts:** among many other initiatives, what the cases up in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) inevitably advocate is the need for an international legal system that is truly binding.

2025 and the following years will constitute a defining opportunity for global civil movements to repurpose universality, bidding for a new balance of aspiration and possibility. The world in general—and the Global South in particular—offers an awe-inspiring array of young, dynamic creativity and grounded ancient wisdom, at least for those looking. Indeed, together with creativity, traditional knowledge and ancestral cosmogonies hold the potential to reframe an uprooted notion of human life within the broader systems it already belongs to, with cascading effects on our priorities and our organisational and production models. Even though we may not reclaim it in a day, understanding and addressing the flaws of the full multilateral array is the only real option to limit the threat still stemming from its mismanagement. Navigating the tensions between the existing international order and the urgent need for transformative change will

be the defining challenge of our time. As flawed as it inevitably is, the current system remains the only framework through which to engage in global action. Reclaiming and repurposing it in ways that prioritise justice, equity, and the common good will demand collective efforts that can transcend borders, ideologies, and generations.

THE GEOPOLITICAL RIPPLES OF GENOCIDE



As this report was being finalised, it was finally confirmed that President Trump would support a de facto plan for annexation and settlement, with an alleged handout of the territory to US management after it has been “voluntarily” ethnically cleansed of its population. While the Biden administration did not commit to stopping this foreseeable outcome, it is also arguable the Trump Administration may not finance Israel’s genocidal effort as thoroughly as his if faced with the same dilemma. As much as he poses a real threat to the entire multilateral system—as proven by the continuous stream of shocks of his first weeks in office—, if Trump’s presidential style proves to be anything like that of his first term, his personal brand of transactionalism holds the potential for wedges of positive action.

Electoral promises of pacification in Ukraine and the Middle East have given way to a mixed bag of self-important speeches, apparent diversion tactics, economic implications and renewed military funds. As much as the world is fully conscious of the many ramifications of US interventionism, this apparent change in priorities should stand as a reminder that we now face an, crumbling hegemon, potentially as driven by isolationist ambivalence as by personal whims. It was always safe to assume the second Trump presidency was not to be a great prospect for true peace in Israel-Palestine. It will be underpinned by the same principles that pushed them to move the US embassy to Jerusalem and to recognise the illegal annexation of the Golan Heights, going as far as to embed the continuity of illegal settlements in all US-Israel bilateral treaties. Despite the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC’s) unchecked influence cutting across the full mainstream political spectrum of US politics, the influence of extreme Zionist Christian Evangelicals in the current iteration of the Republican party cannot be understated. This phenomenon extends well beyond American

borders and throughout the rest of the region, where the political footing of Evangelical cohorts has become election-defining over the last decade.

Arguably, a growing multipolarity and the emergence of the Global South in spaces like BRICS did not act as a successful leverage when it came to the Palestine issue, not even in the face of a systematically documented genocide that forced the ICC and ICJ into positions opposed by its traditional Western upholders. This might be connected to the geopolitical priorities of the current leadership in powerful actors like India and the ever-pragmatic Chinese approach, linked in turn to the radio silence of most of the Gulf States on the issue. Still, albeit fragmentarily, the middle-sized southern players have led the most defining pushbacks, like South Africa's case in the ICJ, Turkey's arms embargo and the Malaysian efforts to expel Israel from the UN framework. The abovementioned ambivalence and Trump's dramatic and bullying negotiation tactics might shock the international systems underpinning trade, finance and foreign policy, and it will ultimately fall upon regional set-ups to test the waters and check the spaces they could step up into. Their economic and productive potential and their deposits of strategic mineral resources in an age of rising competition will redirect the world's gaze to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Going forward, the choices of alliances like the BRICS will be defining both in terms of aspirations and how they manage internal diversity, dissent and membership expansion.

DOES THE "GAZACIDE" END?

All imaginable red lines have been crossed. The Gaza genocide has been undertaken with complete disregard for the ICJ's provisional measures and of the ICC arrest warrants against top Israeli officials. There is hardly enough space in this report to highlight the extent of the atrocities perpetrated in

the Strip, Lebanon, and now again in the West Bank. For a continually updated review, no matter the time of reading, we encourage the reader to refer to the work of Amnesty International, Bt'selem, Human Rights Watch and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) and their respective sources. By any means, the blow to the standing of international law and its institutions is not just reputational or symbolic. This genocide has not just taken the legal and militaristic precedent of impunity to unimaginable lengths. It has also revealed the unapologetic disdain hegemonic powers have come to display in barely pretending to abide by their own rules and the grim omens that behaviour forbodes.

Their capacity to manufacture and disseminate dehumanising narratives, mitigating civil shock and dissent in the "metropolis", seems to have paid off. A combination of narrative control of the legacy media, algorithmic censorship and digital noise has prevented an untenable domestic position from pulling apart at the seams. The upholder of the international order is not just facilitating material assistance but most of the narrative battle on the side of a genocidal actor. So much that the recent Democratic reelection bid could afford the risk of downplaying a heavily tax-payer-subsidised genocide, live-streamed for over two years, and its own violent protest suppression in universities. The Western status quo simply doesn't seem to care who's looking anymore. Still, the extended sociological damage of this process and the direction in which it will continue to push the institutional transformation of the Global North in the foreseeable future do not look rosy, particularly in the US.

There is an urgent need for a swift and accurate analysis of the balance of forces. Triumphantly or not, many seem to believe that with this last litmus test of their impunity, Israel has finally obtained a de facto carte blanche for its security





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management. Many capitals endorse this given that the military success has been overwhelming, seeing the Axis of Resistance crushed. Conceding to that notion completely, though, may have terrible consequences. Albeit significantly weakened, Hezbollah and Hamas are still there, and Iran may not be as vulnerable as Western nations seem to promote it. Letting this narrative overrule actual circumstances on the ground will not just encourage Israel into complete annexation and further aggression to the territorial integrity of its neighbours, it would be a triumph for destabilisation-based US foreign policy, for the far-right forces in Europe, accompanied by a likely increase of sanctions-based economic pressure on Iran. Globally, this will risk making the geopolitical balance of the Mediterranean and the Middle East as fragile as it has been in over a century.

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As Israel withdraws from the Strip's Netzarim corridor in January 2025, many will be tempted to argue the "Gazacide" is over. Even if the ceasefire somewhat stands, the renewed aggression in the West Bank and the underpinning promise of ethnic cleansing of Gaza point to a continued onslaught on the basic living conditions of returned Gazans to force them out of their homeland. The Gazacide is simply not over. At this point, as many agreed during the OCTAGON in November 2024, the only thing that could seemingly stop the genocide in its tracks is something going dramatically wrong in the region, impacting US interests or the position of Iran and the Gulf States. By then, the damage suffered by others than Palestinians themselves may be just as insurmountable.

OVERCOMING MYTHS

The dilemma around Palestinian national disunity still stands. In its current shape, the Palestinian Authority (PA) remains a de-legitimized and co-opted leadership unable and unwilling to contest the nature and place of power. With no reconstituted Palestinian national movement, the PA is expected to conform with the scraps coming from DC and Tel-Aviv, further hindering international efforts for justice. This approach will only keep them at the helm of ever smaller bantustans. Narrative-wise, four principles still bring Palestinians together at a social level: unity of land, unity of struggle, unity of history and unity of cause. In their words, as much as in their policies, the current PA is at odds with all of those, validating and operating under a paradigm of fragmentation and partition and stifling attempts for unity. Beyond the fact that a weak and subservient PA has been a facilitating factor in settlement advancement and the prevalence of Israeli and US policy, it must be noted that both countries are also directly responsible of its current state, as they blocked democratic free elections in 2021. As discussed in detail in OCTAGON_2021 and 2022, the proportionality system would have ensured no parties could gain a single majority, and the process would have undoubtedly kickstarted much-needed dialogue and a renovation of the apparatus. This would have led to the consensus government/leadership that the PA is hesitant to join, and to the institutional recognition of the wide array of Palestinian voices—most of which have moved past the failures of Oslo.

International diplomatic posturing around rekindling the Two-State Solution and initiatives like the Arab Peace Conference risk wasting time, energy and resources around a treaty that was designed to fail and did so miserably. As thoroughly addressed in OCTAGON_2021, the Two-State Solution was built upon two premises the world will not buy again: one is that Israel was ready for

a compromise, and the other is that the US could be an impartial mediator. As referred, current circumstances point to the mass destitution of Palestinian communities in the West Bank and the attempt to completely ethnically cleanse Gaza. The only genuine solution continues to be to work for a single, democratic state. Most negotiation spaces in the immediate future will provide chances to test the waters if not engagement opportunities and insights on the positions of crucial stakeholders, but it must be remembered they also pose real risks of institutionalising dead-end frameworks and de-mobilising solidarity campaigns. Beyond the inalienable right of Israelis to live safe, dignified lives, just like all human beings, any paradigm that fails to address Israel as an ethno-religious, colonial, militaristic apartheid regime will ultimately hinder the safety, freedoms and self-determination of Palestinians.

UNAVOIDABLE SIGNS

The technical characteristics of this genocide are telling: threats of open warfare in the present, not the future, have become even more tangible in a world marked by a poli-crisis and locked in rising tensions and strategic competition. The global military-industrial complex is in the driver's seat, fueling policies of "peace through strength" and pushing away climate agenda even when environmental collapse is a significant element of this self-aggravating feedback loop. Israel itself and its societal resilience are unravelling. Even if the Gaza genocide holds the support of the majority of the population, ungovernability and social polarisation have sped up to be the tangible, foreseeable consequences of occupation, settler protection, heavy militarisation, apartheid and blatant socio-demographic engineering (as extensively addressed in—OCTAGON_2022—. This includes struggling reservists, severely damaged international reputation and national

brand, unstable political coalitions in an evermore fractious Knesset, power-separation crises, social tensions, civil unrest, etc. In building a global justice campaign, but also to mitigate further regional and global destabilisation, anti-apartheid forces must examine these factors as escalatory risks as much as strategic vulnerabilities to account.

As these lines are written, the US has declared its intention to take over an ethnically cleansed Gaza, putting itself in charge of infrastructure reconstruction once Israel has "voluntarily" relocated the population. Putting aside considerations around the feasibility of this plan for now, two months earlier, the OCTAGON had convened that the US would try to create a collaborative structure supported by external countries to keep Gaza separately administered, facilitating the arrival of Israeli settlers while Israel accelerated dispossession and fragmentation in the West Bank. This would effectively mean liquidating the chance of a Palestinian state and their self-determination, something recently a widely supported Israeli Basic Law already outlawed *de jure*. The rise in forced population transfers, a hardly discussed freefall into religious fundamentalism, the normalisation and proliferation of state-controlled media, crackdowns on dissent including conscientious objectors and even teachers, together with frameworks that facilitate ghettoisation, occupation and citizenship conditionality, arbitrary detentions, settler impunity, and the widespread dehumanising language (including genocidal intent and plans to ethnically cleanse Gaza) underpinning this overt genocide... those are all factors well-known to history that signal the rise of a fascist regime.

THE FAR-RIGHT CONNONDROM



As previously exposed, in the November US elections, after extensive repression of free speech in college campuses throughout the country and having unapologetically financed a genocidal war effort with billions of taxpayer dollars, US Democrats staked it all on making Trump's potential return the responsibility of their alienated voters. With an election narrative that offered nothing to long-lost blue-collar voters or concerned social movements, they portrayed the people as failing the politicians and not vice-versa. Their radically centrist and politically disengaged approach went as far as to glorify Dick and Liz Cheney's endorsement or even JW Bush's while still expecting to guilt-trip progressive voters into mobilisation.

Albeit probably not as explicit, Europe's own dealings with the far-right can be attributed to similar political shortcomings and technological factors. Even considering potential revulsive effects, the return of Donald Trump and his increasingly bully-like style in domestic and international politics is expected to prompt the rise of the right wing worldwide, particularly in the European Union (EU). In itself, this may constitute the final stage of the crumbling of European liberal values, with Europeans standing as the last witnesses in line. In truth, The Second Trump presidency is both a symptom and a factor in this process. **The acceleration of these trends of dissolution, though, also holds a yet-untapped galvanising potential.** It may very well brew more than just bland and scrambling course corrections by the Union's technocratic elites, even rekindling the long-lost drive of Europe's civil society. Pushed by far-right pundits, the irruption of notions like patriotism and sovereignty in the public conversation may also offer crucial opportunities to collectively review the ways Western nations and other states selectively weaponise national identities, feelings and self-determination in the pursuit of power.

UNDERSTANDING THE AUTHORITARIAN PLAYBOOK

It would be oversimplistic to see the result of the last US election as "the rise of fascism" in America. We are witnessing the fundamental unsustainability of the post-war order and the American way of life. This is particularly true when the dynamics in the metropolis have consistently favoured the mass concentration of wealth into a shrinking oligarchy and out of the hands of the people. **Resorting to xenophobic or anti-minority narratives is not just a convenient scapegoat but also a highly efficient strategy for corporate moguls in need to steer the public away from the only available solution to their actual problems: taxing the ultra-wealthy, controlling speculative capital and regulating digital activities.** This symbiosis will help finance and entrench authoritarian politicians and secure corporations' national and international interests (including de-facto legal immunity, lessened competition, subsidies, subservient foreign policy, etc), postponing critical discussions like the redistribution of wealth in times of AI-powered tech feudalism and mass automation. The longer world majorities stay locked in a disinformation-fueled populist race to the bottom, finding false solutions and fake culprits for a crumbling welfare, the longer these companies will secure profits and their hold on power.

In the West, the far right is rallying traditional sectors of the left, mainly because self-identifying working class has practically vanished. This is not a sudden phenomenon but a decades-long car crash in slow motion. The leftists, from the guardians of the neoliberal order to their most recent populist variations, have failed to deliver results in most of the countries, as well as to meaningfully engage with their electoral bases. Their discourse continues to be dragged by self-complacency and tokenistic issues in a failed bid to divert attention to its traditional, material plights, which, like the housing

and the cost of living, demanded much harder structural efforts. This is also true for a demobilised and wearied-down civil society, which, under the guise of a new age of organising, has ultimately renounced its influencing strength in favour of digital posturing, leaving the offices of legislators at all levels to turn into revolving doors for financial interests and lobbyists. **Over time, progressive forces have failed first in mainstreaming their analyses of the problem and then in constituting an alternative.** For their part, with their particular brand of neo-nationalist anti-globalism, allied reactionary forces throughout the world have succeeded in the diagnosis and in finding fake culprits. By instilling fear and feeding from the uncertainty, they are taking the reins of an extractive model locked on an escape-forward trajectory. For however long that lasts, we can expect the shedding of old, purposeless values and, albeit erratically, given the insurmountable complexities of the model, the continuation of the structural trends that led to this anomie in the first place.

The authoritarian playbook we now see in action has been emulated countless times. The last two years' events have narrowed the areas of action for journalists and activists, with even technical discussions about the basics of international law and the Geneva Convention becoming untenable in many spaces. It includes rollbacks on environmental and human rights protections, attacks on activists and marginalised communities, and the misuse of democratic institutions to undermine democracy and the rule of law. Even in some advocacy spaces, mentioning the word genocide has become unacceptable. In the immediate future, we can expect to see a rise in the fragility of inter-institutional relations throughout these states and even relevant constitutional crises. This will likely only worsen as Western democracies have doubled down on prosecuting dissent. In that regard, **providing neutral and safe physical and social spaces for discussion will prove crucial.**

A EUROPEAN RAISON D'ETRE

Europe has an existential decision to make —arguably one it has already made when it comes to the Gaza genocide: either it becomes a museum of political experiments, dragged by the tides of the American slipstream, or it dares to update itself into having something to offer. It risks sacrificing its most social and characteristic contribution to the modern world, the welfare state, on the altar of securitisation, militarism, and peace through strength. Collectively, the EU 27 invests 2.7 times more in its militaries than Russia and approximately the same as China. An area of around 400 million people puts the same militar effort than one, accounting for 1300. Under current circumstances, this trend is only expected to worsen. Proper European security must come through social protections, with a shared, horizontal development agenda that engages Global South neighbours fairly and transparently. For this, it must let go of its geopolitical trajectory, particularly the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in favour of a policy based on true peace.

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In the immediate future, cornered by the likely shifts of US security and trade policies in the region, we can expect the leading European players to try and dust off their talking points around protecting the global rules-based order. This means standing increasingly further from vague notions like the so-called free world (to which the Americans have recently returned in justifying their circumstantial needs) and doubling down on a defence of the multilateral framework that will be conveniently conservative. However hypocritical, this position is helpful for development and solidarity agendas and needs to be engaged with to the fullest.

To develop a truly unifying agenda that can face a highly-coordinated international of reactionary forces, the European left must go back to what it always did best: bridging all the layers of

democratic citizenship, engaging and reinvigorating progressive organisations, trade unions, socially responsible companies, academics, professionals and so on. It must dare to take up the flag of welfare causes like housing and cost of living and universal demands like the right to migrate and take refuge with dignity.

DECOLONISATION AND LEVELED EUROPE-SOUTH RELATIONS

As mentioned above, the reactionary storm we now face is a direct consequence of global inequality and colonial history, especially when it comes to Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The spread of racist populism ravaging the global north is primarily fuelled by a quick succession of crises for which migrants and refugees have become practical scapegoats. Crucially, very few in Europe point at their veiled geostrategic and financial interests underpinning neocolonial dynamics, destabilising regions—and markets—and disrupting effective leadership, particularly in Africa. Let us remember that US/NATO-led conflicts like those in Libya and Iraq were portrayed as acts of liberation. Instead, they left behind failed states and subsequent waves of mass exodus. In the Sahel, the fall of Muammar el Gaddafi marked the start of a domino effect of displacement, inter-community conflict and rising extremist groups trying to fill the power vacuum. It is also worth remembering that the EU gave millions of euros in direct cooperation transfers to the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF),—the army faction behind the current civil war that is ravaging the country—, to guarantee migrants and refugees didn't make it past the border, heading North towards its territory.

The risks undertaken by the EU in supporting the genocide and its complicit silence in regarding Israel's landgrabs in Lebanon and Syria threaten more than its rules-based-order-stye intra-narrative. Cascading

destabilisation of the Eastern Mediterranean would undoubtedly bring waves of refugees to the continent, at potentially larger rates than back in 2015, and in the midst of growing economic upheaval. Considering it was precisely the instrumentalisation of European austericide and the migrant crisis that propelled the far-right into its current heights, it is concerning not to see more strategic efforts for peace on the EU's part.

When regional matters and security crises are addressed through irresponsible interventionism and not by empowering self-governance, decisions like those made in Libya will ripple beyond the continent for years to come. In practical terms, this change of paradigm cannot be undertaken by appealing only to Europe's moral sensibilities anymore.

As the EU continues to analyse socio-political transformations in Africa through a colonial lens —paternalistically if not outright cynically—, it will be bound by its own strategic myopia, fretting at the possibility that other geopolitical players achieve mutual-interest arrangements aligned with the wills of the African people. And yet, there will never be objectives as strategic as ensuring the stability of your neighbour. Decolonising Europe's relations with the Global South necessarily requires a candid and transparent reset of its historic relations with Africa and others. Instead of insisting on democratising Africa, Europe should consider Africanising its democracy. This means understanding democratic engagement through unique identities and social cultures, not only for the sake of regional adaptation and optimising its footing but also to advance the democratic model itself, contributing to global political heritage with the transformative wits and the critical historical experience of African people.





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LEGAL AND CIVIL ACTION



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WHEN JUSTICE STANDS TRIAL

The Gaza Genocide was not an act of self-defence but a shameless aggression. The International Community has failed miserably in stopping it and has been incapable of preventing it from metastasising into the West Bank and even Lebanon. The responsibility for these actions, in any case, lies clearly with the Israeli state. This is the first settler colonial genocide ever to be litigated before an international court. Gaza and the rest of Palestine have been exposed to three simultaneous war crimes: genocide, collective punishment and ethnic cleansing. Albeit limited and tenuous, sanctions, ICJ provisional measures, ICC arrest warrants, UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions, etc., all have consequences beyond mere reputational damage and exposing the feebleness of global governance. There is much work to be done in encouraging the enforcement of those consequences politically, symbolically, legally and practically, creating all sorts of pressure on Israel and its allies.

The smear campaign and threats of sanctions against ICC personnel and lead prosecutor Karim Khan, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Antonio Lazzarini and Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese are just the top layer of a strategy that wants to make an example out of any advocate for justice. This is observable in the fact these attacks are personal, directed solely at officials and activists themselves, but never truly at their arguments. Crucially, this dynamic extends to the criminalisation of peaceful protesting throughout the West. We are witnessing an increasing crackdown on environmental and human rights activists and pacific protests, all the way from media stigmatisation and digital censorship to legal prosecution and funding cuts. Activists have been vilified and made examples of,

and in several countries, subjected to forms of harassment and violence the state is never eager to prosecute.

In places like Germany and the UK, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are being actively restricted in their Pro-Palestine advocacy, even with targeted lawmaking. Lawyers, doctors, journalists and anyone in a regulated sector have faced varying degrees of scrutiny, pushing for an increase in clandestine action. This further spills over into movements that have already experienced significant repression, like the environmental campaign—with paramount actions waged against JustStopOil and Extinction Rebellion—. In some cases, authorities have gone as far as to brand these groups as terrorist organisations and apply exceptionality frameworks for their prosecution.

As noted by many throughout this latest year, when the world's self-perceived democratic countries band together in prosecuting criticism of an ally that is perpetrating genocide, that means democracy and democratic rights are no more, not for the world but for their citizens. Palestinians, international officials and activists alike are being targeted, yet, as vulnerable as they are civil society is all but powerless. Never mind its diversity and its current fragmentation, this unrelenting aggression speaks about the extent to which the status quo fears its potential.

RECLAIMING INTERNATIONAL LAW

As suggested throughout this document, international law will be used swiftly and effectively as long as the West wants it or allows it. The ICC supported Ukrainian prosecutors on the ground in Kyiv to arrest and trial Russian war criminals, sentencing them and imprisoning them during a war and in an actual warzone. There are no bigger issues with the mechanisms at hand

but their gatekeepers. Gaza's is by far the most well-documented genocide in history—including declared intentions, specific policies and recorded violations—, with evidence for war crimes and other violations piling up even after the latest Ceasefire—January 2024—came into effect.

Let us remember that genocide is the destruction of a group in whole or in part sustained by intent, where intent is not the motive. Intent is not the idea in the minds of those who plan or execute it. Intent is the determination to destroy through criminal acts like killing, inflicting severe body or mental pain, or creating conditions of life that will lead to the destruction of the group in whole or in part. Despite their shameless disregard for international law—with some openly suggesting international crimes cannot apply to Western nations and allies—, the viscousness of the smear campaign against the courts reveals an uncomfortable truth that may impact multilateral dynamics for generations: Israel's allies know that once a sufficiently impartial judge hears the case, they will rule in favour of the Palestinians. From that point on, the risk of completely losing control of the narrative grows exponentially, even for those already disregarding all legal outcomes.

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THE TIME FOR SOLIDARITY IS NOW

Never mind the constant political smokescreens and the reality-tv style with which the Trump Administration sets the bar for negotiations, flipping the script of international dynamics. What is happening in Gaza and Lebanon is bound to continue to resonate beyond the noise in most of the world—particularly in the Global South—, reshaping the way people see themselves, their nations and the future of the Middle East. More than ever before, given the instability of the world system and the chances and risks stemming from it, there is a pressing need to push for a sustainable

and effective international movement standing for the rights of the Palestinians and against ethnic cleansing and the apartheid regime.

Throughout 2024, at least 1 billion independent accounts have posted in the social media about Palestine consistently—at least thrice a month—. This overtakes any other global brand or event, from the World Cup to Taylor Swift. There is nothing of the scale this question has had throughout the genocide. It is the first time since the Arab Spring that you saw this many global mobilisations around a single issue. In certain weeks, you would see 15-20 million taking the streets for Palestine. Historically, this would have been enough to transform politics. Interestingly, Israel can be summed up as a field project by the West in defining the terms of what a state and a democracy are. Civil society used to be crucial in this process, but the digital environments have altered the equation, introducing simulacra and performative participation and action. In this vacuum, hollow organisations followed.

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Albeit fractiously, the anti-racist and environmental movements, including frontliners like activist Greta Tumberg, have led the response against the genocide, with protests turning de-facto against settler colonialism. They were soon spuriously branded as anti-semitic. In that regard, as discussed in detail in previous editions, it continues to be crucial to work with like-minded Jewish movements and organisations in the fight. It continues to baffle the world how the conflation of Israel's national narrative and its actions with the rights and dignity of the Jewish people has served to weaponise historical atrocities and rooted cultural concerns against true justice.

It is also worth mentioning that there are many in the solidarity movement who continue to delegitimise resistance, mainly thanks to the twisting of notions such as terrorism. This is far from a unique or innovative narrative tactic. It has

been deployed by the colonial powers for hundreds of years to rally public opinion and even justify false-flag aggressions. Let it be clarified that this does not mean all acts of terror are resistance-driven or that violence against the civilian population is anyhow condonable. Still, the framing of asymmetric, armed resistance as inexcusable acts of terror is invariably designed to conceal the aggressions of bigger, objectively oppressive states against civilian populations, from which the violence stems in the first place. Not only that but even a superficial review of the changes in due process, rights and freedoms of citizens of liberal democracies since the start of the so-called War on Terror reveals an extremely concerning pattern. As thoroughly exposed in CAF_2022—with Israel itself as a case study—, industrial securitisation, the abuse of exceptionality frameworks and the welfare lost to war dividends feedback into a weaponising loop waged against privileged and marginalised citizens alike.

As for the shocking double standards of this discourse, one has only to compare Western lists of rejected and approved Global-South coup leaders, if not look into its overall history of militia-led interventionism and destabilisation attempts. Many should be reminded that Nelson Mandela clearly rejected the suggestion that the African National Congress (ANC) should lay down their arms during peace negotiations. Resistance is crucial for peace and negotiated settlements, not vice-versa. By the time Mandela was elected president, he was arguably the most respected politician in the world, and every American leader chased a photo opportunity with him. Ironically enough, he was still on their most-wanted terrorist list. Despite all of the above, the Western narrative that portrayed aggressive foreign policy as morally and practically contingent counter-terror operations has seen better days. This is the combined result of a new and still diversified media ecosystem and of the West's unapologetically isolationist disregard

for the international system. The more the world leans into a non-aligned multipolar setting, the less global impact those narratives will have. In that sense, as much as our societies need urgent frameworks to fight disinformation, the fallout of obscure and undemocratic reform and rising trends of corporate-led digital censorship should be a cause for concern.

ABOUT US CAMPUS MOBILISATION

Even considering how it factored in the US elections, it can be argued that the unprecedented protest mobilisation failed, even at a campus level. Still, foundations were laid down, the base of the movement has been built—as of 2025, it is already under siege in the US—, and it retains huge potential, but it has not yet impacted realities on the ground. Consequently, pro-Palestinian activists have faced escalating forms of oppression, scrutiny and retaliation. Many universities have implemented restrictions on pro-Palestinian events and organisers through active administrative censorship and silencing campaigns. University administrations sometimes collaborate with external organisations that monitor and track pro-Palestinian activities, branding them as potentially dangerous or even led by terrorist extremists, impacting their student records and future career opportunities. Professors and students have also experienced academic retaliation and disciplinary measures for expressing their views in classrooms. Faculty members have been threatened with losing tenure, their jobs, and even deportation, and suffered smear campaigns, alienation and vilification. Even Jewish students have been essentially excommunicated from their synagogues, homes and places of worship for standing up for human rights.

Against all odds, this crackdown may have a radicalising effect. With Trump in the White

House and judging on the indiscriminate actions undertaken by his administration to reshape the workings of the state, we can expect the criminalisation of pro-Palestinian stances to get worse. In the opinion of several experts, the political fight shaping the future of campus mobilisation and academic freedom will be fought at Columbia. If the status quo loses there, they will have lost an entire generation. If they win, they will effectively shut down tenure systems, defining what it is possible to teach or say and criminalising any words they want within classrooms for both students and faculty.

RECLAIMING GENUINE SOLIDARITY

Recent events have led to protests rediscovering solidarity as a way of being and a model of expression. Ultimately, crackdowns have been aimed at attacking the conditions of solidarity as a phenomenon, and to individuals practising the rights of free speech. It is pertinent to consider, though, which are the reasons it needed to be recovered in the first place. Starting from the 1970s, we can trace the loss of solidarity as a value within the US and its academia to neoliberal thought. In this paradigm, human suffering in the West has been reframed as a problem of empathy that works from individual to individual. This conceptual trap makes us believe that, to understand injustice, we need to identify with the injuries of others first through our own experience. In turn, this has led to a social culture of grievance. Focusing solely on whether something is about people seeing one another as humans is also a trap. Humans, however, are cognitively and morally equipped to relate to universal themes.

Attempting to respond to individual circumstances collectively simply makes it impossible to fight genocide, as it bypasses the systemic and structural aspects of injustice. Solidarity only really needs action, identifying with the rights of others, not an

exercise of personalised injury. It must be noted that Palestine, just like all the other decolonial struggles, isn't just a story about victimhood. That is how part of the Western narrative portrays it, and thus it is not surprising that the legacy media there are trying to push the narrative that energy is faltering in the movement. In the South, on the other hand, the struggle is resistance-driven, values-driven, universal, and a just cause against oppression that signals that social majorities will not go down without a fight.

UPDATED PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEGAL AND CIVIL ACTION

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- As thoroughly exposed in OCTAGON_2023's strategic considerations, crucial elements to building a solidarity campaign remain untapped: diaspora wealth, capital, influence, access to sovereign wealth funds, companies with compatible ethos, willing state actors—especially throughout Africa and the rest of the Global South—, and even symbolic overtaking of spaces like sports and stadia—especially football—.

- The current ways of contentious politics are at a dead-end. The main strategic question remaining is how to canalise this mass movement to disrupt power systems. Several organisations have started mapping out the institutional centres of gravity to disrupt business as usual in administrations throughout the West, which will naturally be more receptive to change due to general uncertainty. General analysis is behind us. It is on the people to start examining and sharing opportunities.

- International law might be ductile without the enforcement capabilities of its hegemonic custodians, but it nonetheless retains a degree of constraining power. National legal avenues hold much-untapped potential. As thoroughly

addressed in OCTAGON_2023, there is an urgent need for wider and better coordinated strategic litigation against government officials, collaborator businesses, and reservists who have engaged in demonstrable violations of international law. This includes holders of double nationality, which, in cases like the UK's, have been able to travel uncontestedly despite the country being a signatory of the Rome Statute. The same can be said about Israeli soldiers travelling across jurisdictions for leisure, especially in Global South countries. There is evidence of violations throughout social media. Combining even low-grade facial recognition software with the work of pro-bono lawyers and volunteer networks can bring cases to national courts with due jurisdiction, creating more than a headache for Israeli foreign officials. Crimes against humanity do not contemplate bail due to the risk of flight, so there is a considerable margin for preventive prison for potential international criminals and for trials that can enhance national debates and beyond.

- In interfering with the genocide, the most effective responses have come from governments that were incentivised to follow civil society and BDS recommendations. To build solidarity, it remains crucial to connect international and universal issues to oppression at the local and domestic levels. Both in the West and in the Global South, civil society will have to come to terms with the need to proactively operate with state actors, finding ways to dissipate the strain politics inflict on social causes. Internal political dynamics and the external pressures politicians face have irredeemable effects on civil society. Just as with international institutions, engaging them might induce attrition, but not doing so leads to cascading damage.

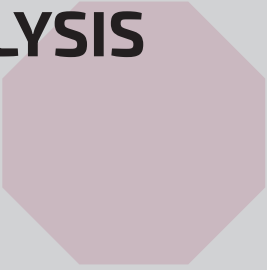
- In the wake of repression and escalatory international trends, an effective solidarity strategy must work across the board to prompt

positive reinforcement in support of Palestine and the environmental cause. It must keep the right, courageous politicians and their interests in mind, encouraging bold leadership. International networking and proper advisory support must also be optimised to prevent avoidable mistakes. From Lula to Anwar Ibrahim, from Petro and Boric to Cyril Rampahosa, the Global South should support the positioning and rationales of fellow countries, especially those far from the issue or lacking a deep bank of advisory expertise. Simultaneously, it will be crucial to work for the wider social understanding of international law, its mechanisms and its many stakes. International legal institutions have contributed enormously to human rights and environmental protections thanks to landmark cases. Special rapporteurs can serve advocacy by means of communication and research that go well beyond the multilateral frameworks to which we confine them.

- As explored in detail in OCTAGON_2021, contemporary social movements present a characteristic organicity that sets them apart from traditional power, but this legitimising aspect becomes a weakness in facing power itself. In aiming for optimal organising tactics, funding and political support, it will be crucial to diversify work. Networking between grassroots movements and institutionalised civil society organisations should aim to make them complementary. It is paramount to also study the internal dynamics and strategies of organisations working against liberation. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), for example, serves a specific geopolitical purpose, and yet its social, media and political capacities go way beyond it. It is structured as an international organisation with associated countries and observers. They follow a wide, comprehensive agenda, working with academia, the media and civil society, lobbying lawmakers from the municipal to the international level into passing specific legislation to protect their interests.

- The UNGA has set a deadline for the occupation to end and for the dismantling of illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine - September 20th 2025. There must be legal and civil initiatives to push member states into reviewing all official relations with Israel, including strategic, militaristic, diplomatic and cultural.

ABOUT UN PARALYSIS



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MULTILATERALISM UNDER FIRE

In regards to the genocide, the UN has so far failed to uphold compliance with its resolutions, including the UNGA, the Security Council's (UNSC), and the ICJ's advisory opinion on the occupation and provisional measures against genocide. This is just the tip of the iceberg, considering decades mounting Israeli disregard towards UN demands. Even now, after an effective ceasefire, the Gazan population is starving and without access to basic humanitarian assistance. Crucially, the UN also fails to recognise that 2024 has seen an unprecedented rise in attacks on the organisation itself, reaching record highs. Putting aside the increase in anti-UN rhetoric by Israeli officials and even Western leaders—including PM Netanyahu's display of contempt while at the very podium of the General Assembly—, Israeli forces have attacked with artillery and sniper fire over 70% of UNRWA premises, including refugee shelters, leading to the death, maiming and permanent injury of 237 UN staff members in Gaza alone. Even the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon has been attacked by the IDF. Israel has directed smear campaigns at ICJ and ICC staff, UN independent experts, and foreign leaders engaging in criticism of their actions. UNRWA has been ousted from legally operating in the OPTs, and even the UN Secretary-General has been declared persona non grata in Israeli territory. All this has happened without a serious debate on the suspension of their UN credentials.

Naturally, the failure of the United Nations can be extended to most of its member states. The West and even much of the global South—honourable exceptions aside—have not enacted a single robust measure to resolve or even mediate in the undertaking of a live genocide by one of their allies. Nationally or internationally, no legal system can stand if its own enforcers question its viability and legitimacy. In talking about multilateral relations,

it is ultimately up to member states to recognise and implement legally binding consequences of unlawful and deliberate acts. As much as these decisions are obviously not exempt from hegemonic retaliation, freezing all cooperation with the Israeli occupation and engaging in reparation becomes an act of justice as much as a reclamation of sovereignty. In that regard, the United Nations and, by extension, its member states are also responsible for the current, overall state of the Middle East, particularly for the spiral of escalation in Israel-Palestine. The international community has allowed the matter to slip through and aggravate despite the constant, steady stream of violations. UNRWA or the Human Rights Council (HRC) have made a difference for Palestinians, but not the system as a whole.

Beyond all complexities of the international order, if the genocide in Palestine continues, history will remember the UN as the body that created Israel and oversaw the erasure of Palestine.

TOWARDS A PACT OF THE FUTURE

Despite it barely scratching the surface of global economic governance, the Summit of the Future was crucial in that it finally addressed the elephant in the room: the shortcomings of the governance model itself. This long overdue debate put the failures and fault lines of international cooperation on the agenda, forcing a discussion on the nature, scope and quality of multilateralism. In recent years, even the UN Secretary-General has criticised the state of Global Governance, which remains power-based by design but is increasingly dominated by big powers, both public and private. This is driving the shift away from the UN's norms and standards, human rights commitments, and environmental treaties to market forces,

especially in the technology and financial sectors.

The UN was put in place about 80 years ago when only 51 countries existed or were independent. The model has since increasingly benefited bigger players, who, in turn, have become extremely reluctant to lose those perks. Unfortunately, the Pact of the Future contains dangerous language, such as endorsing, for example, the shareholder model we see in the World Bank (WB)—one dollar, one vote—. Crucially, it also failed to address the state of the UNSC and the international financial architecture, the most outstanding factors of a failing and undemocratic governance model. The latter remains littered with veto-like instruments upholding power asymmetries and quota distribution in decision-making fora and mechanisms, all the way from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), investor-state settlement mechanisms, etc. It is worth mentioning that, cutting across the North-South divide, the vast majority of UN member states want to abolish vetos. Even the G4, as of its latest meeting, signalled its favour to forgo the UNSC veto for 15 years, pending an internal review to guarantee support for that particular attitude.

In analysing the forces that will shape the Pact of the Future, however, it will be most productive to look into processes rather than the outcomes. The overall language, for example, seems to have slipped a lot in favour of the independence of International Financial Institutions and around the institutionalisation of credit-rating agency power. The Global South, for their part, engaged in a great deal of innovative proposals like taxing high-net-worth individuals, despite most being ultimately boiled down to "exploring options".

STAKEHOLDERISM AND THE FUTURE OF ALTERNATIVE CONFIGURATIONS

Historically, from alliances to projects like the League of Nations, wars give way to global governance systems, and wars also kill them. For now, we lack a major international movement capable of building a normative sense for the next international order, an endeavour that cannot depend rely only on nation-states. In aiming for a multilateralism truly based on solidarity and equity, the world needs to build a new nonaligned movement that steps away from the zero-sum bellicose mentalities, allowing complementary spaces and regional arrangements to grow into functional alternatives to the current ways of global governance. As a matter of fact, there is not so much a lack of creative visions or even specific policies as obstacles to engaging with them, with inequality and asymmetries themselves acting as the hardest barriers to a common agenda.

32 Despite growing calls to decentralise multilateral engagement by means of alternative/regional frameworks, it must be argued that the UN still holds a defining transformative potential. As much time as these processes take, navigating vetoes and being dragged by bureaucratic sluggishness, there are mechanisms available that only require patience and further member-state support to go through. As referenced previously, the UNGA has recently managed to push for a convention on a global minimum tax. As slow as this initiative is moving, it would not require unanimity or US congressional approval. Crucially, given their many attempts to derail it in favour of their watered-down initiative in a framework they control, OECD countries are not thrilled about it. In the future, deeper questions pertaining to global welfare should be addressed, for example: is it unthinkable to propose the expulsion of the IMF and WB from the UN setup, given how different their governance models and values are, and how many countries did not formally

ratify them, as they had not become independent yet. In calling for something beyond the UN, it must also be noted that creating international institutions is more complicated than dismantling them—they tend to linger on, diminished, ineffective and non-operational, becoming scapegoats, scattering international efforts and hoarding crucial resources.

In engaging with state and inter-state actors, it is also essential to tell civil society and social grassroots movements apart, working on their complementarity. Knowledgeable advocacy experts capable of joining negotiation tables and grassroots organisers capable of comprehensively and organically connect communities and other stakeholders both crucial in their own ways. For now, the world is certainly missing a civil society assembly at the UN HQ, but it is hardly possible to make it accessible and truly representative in terms of costs and bureaucracy – it will be interesting to see that kind of work happen at the level of state capitals, in ways that engage movements nationally with the UN calendar.

In any case, civil society engagement in the shape of UN stakeholderism is a contested concern. Reforms to address its shrinking space within the UN framework have been suggested to be veiled attempts to weaken the influence of small and medium states, favouring obscurely-funded non-state actors that align with the interests of corporations and great powers. In that sense, civil society is naturally much more diverse than member states, and any transparent and fair reform needs to reflect that by clearly delimiting eligibility criteria, principles and interests. Social movements which used to keep away from multilateral spaces, understanding them as part of the problem, are realising that while they may not produce the most transformative outcomes for the better, they cannot be ignored in preventing changes for the worse. In this regard, global civil society must keep in mind that the UN Charter contemplates giving NGOs

consultative status within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). As arduous as the process is, this constitutes a right of engagement that needs to be exercised and reclaimed. Otherwise, ECOSOC becomes a UN agency pick-and-choose that risks bringing complacent voices only.

THE ULTIMATE FRONT: DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

GLOBAL FEVER AND THE COLONIAL MIND VIRUS

It remains essential to note how economic and political power ties into the social rights space. In incentivising power into change and justice, activists and grassroots movements have to compete with influential lobbies, many driven by extractive interests opposed to the common good. Ultimately, this interaction boils down to the effectiveness of their capacity to rally social majorities vulnerable to media control and polarisation. We must remember, though, that human rights, environmentalism, labour struggles, gender and even independent journalism can be instrumentalised to keep the system in place. The recent upheaval around the journalistic impact of the closure of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the attempts to gag Palestinian civil society on the basis of conditioned cooperation funds should be food for thought.

It is apparent that these are but the surface of a more complex, underlying issue of soft power and cultural domination. As a defining example, even Global South countries without a history of indebtedness display internalised austerity in their fiscal policies due to a wider, more subtle hegemonic training. Just in the field of economics, technical concepts have built-in limitations and connotations that prevent innovative approaches within doctrines that have long been proven not to work. For decades, developing nations have had to deal with the challenge of regaining economic independence after the alleged success of their political emancipation. The entire international financial architecture, its governance institutions and the networks and rules of commerce underpinning supply and production work under a legal, shamelessly asymmetric system drawn up to strengthen corporations and legitimise plunder. As some in the Global South put it "we played by the rules, and the rulers played us". As previously

suggested in terms of European relations, civil society and the overall Global South thus need to engage in a collective decolonisation of the mind that might take more than a generation.

Humanity is trespassing all planetary limits regarding resource consumption, pollution and environmental disruption. These, too, are ramifying impacts of European colonialism and other kinds of oppression stemming from a global model of racialised resources, supremacism and systemic racism driven by governments and companies. It is not coincidental that both, but especially the latter, are as much at heart of the rise of the far right as they are behind the climate emergency, profiting from the extraction, pollution, commodification and weaponisation of every resource and every aspect of human life; from water, empathy and leisure to fear, knowledge, seeds or soil. Despite their self-complacency, these systems are still inherently racist. Their disregard for the lives and livelihoods of the peoples of the Global South, especially Indigenous communities, not only leaves them exposed to growing environmental damage but continues to articulate their oppression.

In itself, climate change is not an environmental problem; it is simply a failure of a tech-based socioeconomic model of production and supply that destroys the planet. And there is a fine line to tread between pragmatism and legitimisation.

This is also why the commodification and much of the mainstreaming of environmental struggles and conservation groups have become part of the problem. Thanks to them, financial interests have developed and deployed not-so-cunning diversion tactics like green markets, Panda Bonds, sustainable equity funds and a never ending stream of false solutions.

It is not surprising the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2022 assessment report

referenced colonialism for the first time ever, describing it as an ongoing issue, a recognition once confined to climate justice narratives only. As pragmatic as this fight will have to be, the fact of the matter is climate justice and even the bare minimum redress of environmental damage will never be achieved as long as colonialism remains in place. The climate struggle is ultimately about sustainably re-integrating human systems into broader natural systems, and, at their core, colonial perspectives lack the will to pursue universal outcomes, as they are not moved by the common good. By definition, they are morally and practically unequipped to undertake real change to achieve sustainable systems. They envisage the exploitation of all possible resources and the creation of bio/ techno-power to privileged actors.

STOPPING THE BOOMERANG EFFECT OF INJUSTICE

One of the main legal chokeholds behind the current scenario is the international protections to Intellectual Property (IP), which ironically enough were set in place to protect the same innovation they hamper in favour of the concentration of wealth and power. From selectively limited suspensions of IP protection during COVID-19 to the Special Drawing Rights waved to secure Western finance only, **there are innumerable examples of why international law is crucial and why it affects us all. It's just that its effectiveness and the concessions it makes rely on the will of its custodians.**

As exposed in previous sections, there is no questioning that international law and its institutions have convoluted origins and clear structural biases, but they also contain hard-fought mechanisms to contest injustice or, at least, hamper its advancement. The failed democratic bid for a New Economic Order back in the 1970s is

a testament to the hardships of this framework as much as the push for global taxation initiatives outside of the OECD—and the tensions they are rising—is to its untapped opportunities. Just the fact that tech corporations have opened lobbying offices in New York to push for their interests in upcoming negotiations for the Global Digital Compact should be eloquent enough. As we keep suggesting in these lines, while social majorities are not at the helm, those aligned with justice must do the work, clinging to the cracks and crevices of decision-making spaces that will affect our world regardless.

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Right after genuine, selfless solidarity, the ultimate moral argument to stand for justice in the face of genocide is that the events in Gaza are not an exception. Practical arguments should point at the fact that, even before COVID, the Ukraine War inflation and the latest trade wars, the economy was already shifting away from the hegemonic pattern it has been confined to. As exposed before, Western societies are swinging toward the authoritarian right due to the damage experienced by their material positions—by overlapping structural factors—. The American and European dream of middle-class welfare once so thoroughly exported worldwide is in crisis. Consumption as a lifestyle is not accidental but rather the most articulating factor of the entire global development model. For decades, self-sufficiency was out of vogue, and economies constituted themselves around exports. In the Global South meant entire nations would turn into suppliers of cheap labour and raw materials from depletable sources, which would gain value somewhere up the commodity chain, enriching someone else. In many ways, far-right supporters became so by having their national and personal economies gutted by the delocalisation of industries in search of these easy ways to deliver higher profit margins and shareholders. Despite appearances, it is hardly ironic that the corporations facilitating the rise of their far-right leaders remain the ultimate beneficiaries of the system that pushed them

there in the first place. Ultimately, it is colonial and neoliberal exploitation dynamics that have come back to bite them.

Shameless colonial double standards are also apparent in the animosity toward the Chinese model. By playing by the rules and achieving a stable consumption-based domestic economy, China seems to have become a threat to the system, exposing how it, in truth, is threatened by competition, not incentivised by it. In today's Western world, long-disproven laissez-faire attitudes are finally giving way to a rekindling of industrial policies and the planning and protection of strategic sectors in the name of national interest. Unfortunately, many of these debates seem co-opted by financial interests and directed to overt neocolonial interventionism, technological feudalism and even territorial aggression, with Global South nations standing first in line. This is why the impunity demonstrated in the genocide of Gaza should also be considered an immediate, practical concern for most. The Global South remains a ductile concept, lacking plans and spaces for unitary action, as vital as the latter will undoubtedly become.

The political aspect of the South, though, should not be confused with a misleadingly geography-based approach. Groupings like BRICS would add up because of their role in changing economic dynamics and leading by example. As nations, they find themselves facing different challenges and at different stages of development, yet something ties their interests together: development justice is counter-hegemonic by definition. This does not necessarily mean we should their unanimous vocal support for liberation struggles, but factoring their presence in issues like the redefinition of development or independent climate cooperation changes the game by changing the rules, contributing to the possibility of wider solidarity.



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CONCLUSIONS

Humanity is at the peak of an age of systemic frailty, from international relations to economics, from the planet as a whole to socio-psychological features. Amidst compounding challenges and a crisis of creativity and political depth, the world is being forced to explore its own shortcomings. As the illusions that shackled our mindset crack, crushed by their own weight, this frailty becomes as much of a risk as a liberating factor.

At this moment, the main practical and moral questions we must ask are:

- How to further promote non-aligned action among state actors as well as burgeoning political movements in the Global South in times of an intimidation-based US foreign policy hellbent on making an example of dissidents?
- How to reframe an overtly confrontational and evermore lawless and geopolitical landscape recentering it around the pressing need for climate action and the unfulfilled promise of social justice?

The threads connecting the Gaza genocide, rising reactionarism, economic and environmental injustice and ever-present colonial dynamics can only be cut by the decisive return of genuine global solidarity. To that aim and for those willing to take the mantle, there is ample room and urgent need for exhaustive bureaucratic and intellectual work, tracking, documentation, negotiation, capacity building, networking, organising, communication, public and civil engagement, and lobbying in the right instances, from farmers and industrial workers to council representatives and parliamentarians

The power-centric glance drives our pragmatic, realist approaches, keeping us pessimistic, focused and alert. Our human-centric glance, for its part, ever caught in the exploration of ethics and meaning, guides the probing of our collective mind in search of universal ideals. **In increasingly uncertain times, let our cold calculations and strategies be guided by the unrelenting possibility of hope, keeping us ever more human in turn. Gaza's local crisis offers insights into overcoming a globally-embedded colonialism, while the characteristically-global climate crisis reminds us we must strive to integrate with local environmental realities everywhere.**

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