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YEAR IN REVIEW 2023

Global developments from the past year
related to genocide and its prevention

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Lemkin Institute for
Genocide Prevention

FORWARD

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention publishes this report each year to reflect on the events of the past year that, in one way or another, are related to genocide and its prevention. The objective of this overview is to raise awareness about the risk of genocide in different regions of the world and to demonstrate how certain events that are commonly understood as human rights violations can contribute to processes that result in genocide. Although most of the news included here illustrates the prevailing violence in the world, the Lemkin Institute also wants to highlight the efforts made by grassroots and human rights organizations that have resulted in great achievements, both individual and collective. **All data in this report reflect statistics as of 31 December 2023.** We invite you to use this report in any way that may bring attention to threatened peoples all over the world.

- The Lemkin Institute Team





TABLE OF CONTENTS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Afghanistan | 8 Democratic Republic of Congo |
| 2 Anti-Roma Sentiment | 9 Ethiopia |
| 3 Anti-Trans Violence | 10 Femicide |
| 4 Artsakh | 11 India |
| 5 Attacks on Journalists | 12 Indigenous Rights |
| 6 Azerbaijan | 13 Iran |
| 7 Bangladesh/Rohingya | 14 Iraq |





TABLE OF CONTENTS

15 Israel	22 Sudan
16 Karakalpakstan	23 Somaliland
17 Migration to Europe	24 Syria
18 Myanmar	25 Threats to Free Speech
19 Nigeria	26 Tunisia
20 Occupied Palestine	27 Ukraine
21 Strengthening of the Far-Right	28 United States





TABLE OF CONTENTS

29 Uyghurs

30 Uzbekistan

31 Weapons Manufacturers

32 Yemen



Afghanistan

Since the Taliban regained power in August of 2021, living conditions for ordinary people have become increasingly oppressive and severe, with the Taliban [imposing](#) stricter laws limiting freedom of movement, prohibitions on employment, and bans on secondary and higher education. In September of 2023, Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [described the situation](#) in dire terms, stating that “[t]he Taliban have waged a systematic assault on the freedom of Afghanistan’s people, including women and girls experiencing immeasurably cruel oppression.” Since 2021 the Taliban has prohibited girls from education beyond the sixth grade and “transformed the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, tasked with safeguarding women’s rights in all 34 provinces, into the ironically titled Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue.”



Human Rights Watch determined in a September [publication](#) that “the crime against humanity of persecution targeting women and girls has been imposed through various written or announced decrees.”

The U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation human rights in Afghanistan has affirmed in a [special report](#) from June 2023 that the Taliban’s “large-scale systematic violations of women’s and girls’ fundamental rights in Afghanistan ... [constitute] gender persecution and an institutionalized framework of gender apartheid.”

In addition to its specific assault on the rights of women and girls, the Taliban has engaged in systematic persecution of members of the LGBTQ+ community and the Hazara community.



(c) Rally of Hazaras in Brussels, Hazara2022

The nature of both forms of persecution is highly suggestive of genocidal intent, that is, an intent within the Taliban to rid Afghan society of both LGBTQ+ people and ethnic and religious minorities like the Hazara. The Hazara are a predominantly Shia Muslim ethnic group, who have consistently been discriminated against by one Afghan government after another [for over a century](#). The Taliban previously targeted the Shia for mass killings in the 1990s, making the Taliban’s return to power in 2021 particularly worrisome for anyone who identifies with this ethnic group.

It is unclear just how many Hazaras there are in Afghanistan.



This is partially due to the fact that the group believes it is purposely underrepresented so that denial of adequate funding and political representation is more easily justified. However some estimates put the number “[between 20% and 30%](#) of Afghanistan’s population.” Following the Taliban’s return to power, violence against the Hazara population has dramatically increased, with attacks against the population taking place in schools, at wedding ceremonies, during peaceful protests, as well as on public transportation and in the streets – this is in addition to “[suicide bombings](#) as well as sustained attacks on mosques, girls’ schools and workplaces” according to Human Rights Watch. In August of 2023, the [Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development](#) issued a statement urging the international community to support the Hazara community in order “to prevent a possible genocide under Taliban rule.”



(c) VOA

The circumstances for the LGBTQ+ community in Afghanistan are similarly concerning. There have been various reports of members of the LTBTQ+ community being [tortured and killed](#) since the Taliban’s return to power in 2021. According to [Rainbow Afghanistan](#), a grassroots organization which advocates for rights for LGBTQ+ individuals living in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, there have been cases of trans and lesbian women being forced into marriage and, alternatively, being imprisoned due to their sexual identity.

There is also the extremely disturbing practice of “honor killing” one’s own family members who identify as LGBTQ+, according to [Americans for Afghanistan](#), a humanitarian start-up based in California that aims to save the lives of persecuted LGBTQ+ individuals living in Afghanistan. The organization has recounted various stories from those who have fled Afghanistan which capture the horrors experienced by LGBTQ+ Afghans, such as the case of two men who were on the run for five months, evading their father who was trying to hunt them down and kill them, or the case of a civil engineer who was issued a death warrant due to his sexual orientation.



(c) Todd Huffman

Importantly, if a man is determined to be gay, he is excluded from making a living. This means that if he is the primary breadwinner for his family, the family risks starvation due to a lack of income, as women too are excluded from making a living. Finally, Afghans who worked with US forces continue to be targeted for revenge killings, over two years after the U.S. withdrawal. Despite the initial promise for amnesty to former security force members, [revenge attacks and forced disappearances](#) are nonetheless continuing to take place.



While in today's international world it is difficult to imagine steps that can still be taken to ameliorate the situation for Afghans under the Taliban, we encourage all powerful states and international organizations to continue to place pressure on the Taliban to live up to Afghanistan's international obligations to uphold human rights. In particular, we urge the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other leading Islamic organizations to continue to work with the Taliban towards reforms that will benefit the Afghan population, including women, girls, the LGBTQ+ community, and ethnic and religious minorities.



(c) X | @YaldaHakimFund

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Anti-Roma Sentiment

Anti-Roma sentiment, also referred to as [antigypsyism](#), was on the rise in Europe in 2023. This phenomenon stems from historical prejudices and socio-economic factors that have made members of the Roma community vulnerable to discrimination, hate crimes, and the constant threat of persecution.

According to the [World Bank](#), there are an estimated 10–12 million Roma people in Europe, over two-thirds of whom reside in Central and Eastern Europe, making the Roma Europe’s largest ethnic minority. The Roma people are made up of various groups, including the Sinti, Calé, Manouches, and Kalderash, but have often been referred to across Europe simply as “gypsies,” a term that is generally used disparagingly to identify a group defined as antithetical to European civilization.



(c) Touam

In Central and Eastern Europe, discrimination against the Roma has [deep roots](#), with negative stereotypes from the past perpetuating misconceptions in the present. Roma [are frequently seen](#) as deceitful, criminal, dirty, prone to disease, lazy, and child abductors.

Economic disparities, social marginalization, and the political manipulation of society-wide antigypsyism contribute to the longevity of this sentiment against the Roma. Additionally, over the last few years, Europe has witnessed a [resurgence](#) of anti-Roma sentiment, driven by scapegoating practices linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. These trends highlight a concerning perpetuation of [discriminatory processes](#) reminiscent of those that contributed to the Porajmos, or Roma genocide, during World War II, particularly in [Eastern Europe](#) and the [Balkan region](#).



(c) Ivan Ivanov

Efforts to address these issues require public education to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive policies to combat discrimination against the Roma community. For instance, the European Union agreed upon a [Roma Strategic Framework](#) to address widespread anti-Roma sentiment and policies. The Framework is a comprehensive initiative designed to empower and provide equal opportunities for the Roma community to fulfill its potential. The framework is structured around a three-pillar approach, each addressing different aspects of Roma inclusion and participation in society. The first pillar emphasizes achieving equality for the Roma community by ensuring that they have the same rights and opportunities as all other members of society.



The second pillar focuses on social and economic inclusion, aiming to integrate the Roma community into various aspects of society, including economic activities. Lastly, the third pillar emphasizes participation in political, social, economic, and cultural life, encouraging active involvement and representation of the Roma community in decision-making processes at various levels.

As part of a concerted effort in Czechia to address longstanding Roma marginalization and anti-Roma sentiment in the country, the Prague Forum for Romani Histories at the Institute for Contemporary History, part of the Czech Academy of Sciences, released a [database](#) in August that tells the story of the Romani genocide during World War II. The searchable database currently has [115 curated testimonies](#) from Roma and Sinti survivors of the Porajmos from the lands of the Czech and Slovak Republics, which up to this point have been scattered across various libraries and archives. Over the next few years the Prague Forum plans to publish all 250 testimonies they have collected.



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Anti-Trans Violence

Transgender Europe's Trans Murder Monitoring Project recorded the [murder](#) of 321 trans and gender diverse individuals globally for the period between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023. This figure is slightly lower than the 327 murders documented in the previous year. This number does not include the murders of trans and gender diverse individuals whose gender identity was not reported or whose murder occurred in countries that do not specifically track the murder of gender diverse people.



A majority (94 percent) of the victims of fatal anti-trans violence were trans women, especially black trans women and trans women of color. Anti-trans violence is steadily increasing across the world, as authoritarian movements and governments gain ground with promises of demographic "cleansing" that rely, in part, on the inherently genocidal (and colonial) construct of gender within a strict gender binary.

Anti-trans violence includes the increase in the number of [anti-trans laws](#) being presented before multiple governments worldwide and garnering a significant amount of support from the transphobic, and [genocidal](#), gender critical movement. According to independent American journalist [Erin Reed](#), 550 anti-trans laws were introduced in the United States in 2023. These laws seek to destroy trans identity in various ways, such as by denying trans people appropriate medical care, banning the recognition of their identity in law or in schools, criminalizing efforts among parents, caregivers, teachers, and doctors to support trans youth, and barring transgender and gender diverse people from specific public spaces.



(c) Alisdare Hickson

In the United Kingdom, Parliament is seeking [an amendment to the 2010 Equality Act](#) that would legally erase trans and gender diverse identities; it has also [blocked legislation](#) that would protect the rights of transgender and gender diverse individuals in Scotland. Anti-trans murder is [highest](#) in Latin America and the Caribbean (74 percent), a fact that may in part be due to established monitoring systems in these countries. Almost a third of all recorded murders occurred in Brazil alone.



Rising anti-trans violence is of particular concern because the small global community of trans people is especially easy to target. Although certain countries, such as the [United States](#) and [South Africa](#), have made major gains in the public acceptance of trans identity, misconceptions and fear are strong in these countries as well as in the rest of the world, making trans people globally marginalized and anti-trans hate a global hate ideology like antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-black racism, and Armenophobia.



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Artsakh

2023 marked a turning point for the Republic of Artsakh, a semi-autonomous region in Nagorno-Karabakh (South Caucasus), where a unique Armenian civilization had thrived for over 3000 years. For nine months in 2023, Artsakh Armenians were completely isolated from the outside world due to a full-scale blockade launched by the Republic of Azerbaijan on 12 December 2022. Azerbaijan claims the territory as its own, though it has never directly governed the region and the region has always been populated by a majority of Armenians. The blockade was condemned by the International Court of Justice, by Genocide Watch, and by the Lemkin Institute in multiple Red Flag Alerts, Active Genocide Alert, SOS Alerts, and statements throughout the year.



On September 5, the Lemkin Institute issued a 127-page [report](#) on Artsakh using the UN's Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, which indicated an increased risk of mass atrocities, and especially genocide, against Artsakh Armenians.

It also documented the blockade itself as a form of genocide, falling under provision II.c. of the [Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#): “[d]eliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” The report predicted a military assault from Azerbaijan in the near future. On 19 September 2023, Azerbaijan attacked the region, conducting airstrikes, drone strikes, mass shelling of civilian areas, and brutal massacres in remote areas amidst an absolute blackout of electricity and internet.



(c) Dor Shabashewitz

During the latter half of 2023, two UN Security Council meetings were convened on the topic of threats to the Armenians of Artsakh. On [16 August](#) the UNSC met to discuss the blockade imposed on the Republic of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, which was beginning to result in deaths from starvation, and on [21 September](#), it met to discuss the Azerbaijani military attack and occupation. In both meetings, the majority of the Security Council's member states condemned Azerbaijan's actions, stating that they posed a threat to the security and well-being of the region's Armenians and discouraged any peacemaking efforts in the region.



In addition to these condemnations, the International Court of Justice had ordered Azerbaijan on two separate occasions (on [22 February](#) and [6 July 2023](#)) to reopen the Lachin Corridor—the humanitarian route connecting the Republic of Artsakh with Armenia.

Nevertheless, all ICJ orders were ignored by Azerbaijan. No effective action was taken by the international community to protect the Armenians of Artsakh. As a result, following the fall of Artsakh Republic on September 19, more than 100,000 Artsakh Armenians were [forcibly displaced](#) from their homes to Armenia. This makes the genocide in Artsakh one of the most successful genocides in history, completely destroying a 4000 year-old community in a few days. The international community's silence around Artsakh, especially in the face of warnings from experts, threatens to normalize certain patterns of genocide as fair play when committed by states with significant strategic and resource value. While Azerbaijan has [illegally detained](#) members of the Artsakh government and military, the Republic of Artsakh [still exists](#) in exile in Yerevan, Armenia. The restoration of Artsakh to the control of Artsakh Armenians is a matter of genocide prevention that should be pursued through international legal mechanisms.

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Attacks on Journalists

According to [findings](#) by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2023 proved to be a particularly deadly one for journalists, “with killings almost doubling compared to the last three years.” The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has [documented](#) 120 killings of journalists in 2023 as of December 31, 68 percent of whom have been killed in the Gaza conflict. On December 23 the Gaza media office [reported](#) the killing of 100 journalists since October 7. Palestinian journalists [have](#) “received threatening calls from people” purporting to be from the Israeli military “warning them that they are going to be targeted or that their families are going to be targeted in the coming days.”

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) [has noted](#) the number of journalist deaths in the first month of Israel’s war on Gaza made it the “deadliest single month ever documented by CPJ since it began recording journalist fatalities in 1992.”



Journalists are a protected class and the targeting of journalists and their families is a violation of international humanitarian law. The importance of journalism to genocide prevention cannot be understated – it is critical that journalists and other media workers are able to continue carrying out the very significant job of reporting what is going on in some of today’s most dangerous countries and conflict zones. Any state that threatens or targets these individuals is breaking international humanitarian law and must be held accountable.



The IFJ has proposed an [International Convention on the Safety and Independence of Journalists and Other Media Professionals](#) to confront the ever-increasing risk to journalists in the 21st century.

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Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan has a long history of denying Armenian territorial integrity and identity, which in 2023, was marked by Azerbaijan's military assault on the Armenian enclave of the Republic of Artsakh. While the international community has largely remained silent on Azerbaijan's genocide of the Armenian people, the Lemkin Institute has issued several statements, Red Flag Alerts, and an Active Genocide Alert. The most recent [Red Flag Alert](#), issued on October 31st, expresses deep concern with the alarming potential for an Azerbaijani invasion of Armenia's Syunik Province, in order to form a "Zangezur Corridor" to Azerbaijani-controlled exclave of Nakhichevan. The Azerbaijani government continues to refer to Armenia's Syunik Province as "Western Azerbaijan," completely invalidating and ignoring Armenian national identity and long history in the region.



(c) VOA

In October 2023, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned of an Azerbaijani invasion. Armenia's ambassador to the European Union has made similar warnings.

In this coming year, the Lemkin Institute urges the international community to monitor this developing situation in Armenia, remembering that genocide is also expressed through a denial of indigenous territorial integrity.

Notably, December 12, 2022, marked the commencement of a full-scale blockade by Azerbaijan, signaling an unmistakably disturbing genocidal agenda aimed at the Republic of Artsakh, with the apparent goal of eliminating the Armenian community through mass displacement or starvation.



The International Court of Justice (ICJ) [issued a decision](#) that Azerbaijan must "take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions." Azerbaijan did not comply with this decision, and thus, the adverse outcomes of the Azerbaijani blockade on Artsakh manifested in the following year, with a notable increase in malnutrition and a heightened occurrence of miscarriages. This grim reality became tragically evident on August 15th, marking the death of [K. Hovhannisyan](#), aged 40, due to starvation. [Vagif Khachatryan](#), who was detained at the illegal Hakari Bridge checkpoint in July while being evacuated by the ICRC, was also among those in need of urgent medical attention amid the Azerbaijani blockade.



Azerbaijani authorities falsely accused Khachatryan of committing war crimes during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War in the 1990s. He faced legal consequences on November 27th, when Baku's military court sentenced him to 5 years in prison followed by 10 years in a high-security correctional facility. Notably, on November 13th, prior to the final sentence, The Lemkin Institute [strongly criticized](#) this judgment as a profound miscarriage of justice. Mr. Khachatryan has since appealed against the decision of the Azerbaijani court.

Unfortunately, the sentencing of Mr. Khacatryan is only one example of the continuous imprisonment of Armenian officials of Artsakh by Azerbaijan. On May 29th, the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev [stated](#) that “the [Artsakh] ‘parliament’ must be dissolved, the element calling itself ‘president’ must surrender, all ‘ministers,’ ‘deputies,’ and others must already leave their post”. The true meaning and intentions of this statement materialized after the illegal arrests and detentions of the former Artsakh State Minister Vardanyan and eight high-ranking Armenian officials of the Republic of Artsakh. These events followed Azerbaijan's military assault on the Republic of Artsakh on 19th September, making it clear these officials were being arrested and detained simply for being Artsakh Armenian, reflecting Azerbaijan's Armenophobic policies and rhetoric. On September 27th, the Lemkin Institute issued a [statement](#) expressing deep concern about these arrests, which are an attempt to complete the genocide by destroying all remnants of an autonomous state.

Regional and international leaders must not ignore and should thoroughly investigate Azerbaijan's many international crimes and ongoing hate speech against Armenia and Armenians. Azerbaijan should face economic and diplomatic sanctions and isolation if it does not promptly and publicly retract the aggressive threats against Armenia and Armenians.

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Bangladesh - Rohingya

2023 marked the sixth year since the large-scale exodus of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh in 2017, where they were being subjected to genocide by the Myanmar army, called the Tatmadaw. The Lemkin Institute views the Tatmadaw as a [genocidal institution](#).

There are currently over 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, a tiny, relatively poor, and densely populated country of almost 173 million people. As conditions within the refugee camps worsen, and the international community's attention has shifted to other crises, the future of the refugee community in Bangladesh remains uncertain. Widely shared feelings of hopelessness among refugees has resulted in increasing criminal activity in the camps, which has further hindered efforts to help the Rohingya.

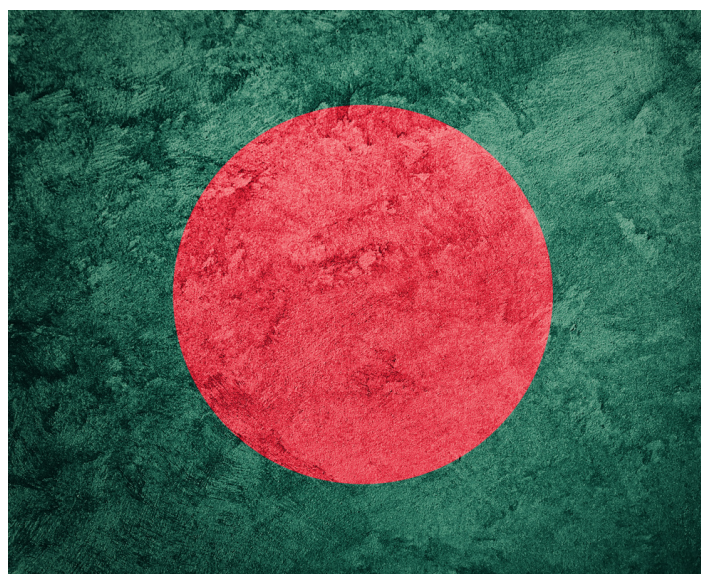


(c) VOA

Local authorities estimate that [14 distinct armed criminal gangs](#) operate in the camps and vie for control over arms and drug smuggling along the border with Myanmar.

The operation of these armed groups has been difficult for local authorities to quell, leading to a deterioration of security for Rohingya and the local host communities. The uptick in violence has also resulted in the [murder](#) of dozens of Rohingya community leaders and Rohingya youths suspected of being Bangladesh government informants.

Amidst these deteriorating conditions, Bangladesh continues its efforts to repatriate the Rohingya to their ancestral land in Myanmar's Rakhine State, where an estimated 600,000 Rohingya still live.



Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has made the repatriation of Rohingyas a key [goal](#) of her administration, as hosting such a large number of refugees for so long has placed enormous economic and political strain on Bangladesh. In March and October 2023, Myanmar officials visited Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh as part of a repatriation pilot project [brokered by China](#). Most Rohingya are, however, deeply concerned about returning to the country that so recently slaughtered them, particularly since the military junta responsible for the genocide is still in power and the Rohingya who remain in Rakhine state still experience persecution.



Human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, have [criticized](#) the Bangladesh government for pushing repatriation due to Myanmar's ongoing civil war and the Tatmadaw's control of Rakhine state.

The international community has worsened the situation of the Rohingya by [decreasing](#) financial support for refugees in Bangladesh for much of 2023. The United Nations was forced to [cut](#) food assistance by one third. In response to this, the US, the UK, and the EU all pledged further humanitarian aid for the Rohingya in late 2023, which will have an immediate positive impact on the Rohingya's quality of life.

The uncoordinated international approach to Myanmar, where the brutal junta government faces stiff armed opposition from a coalition of fighters linked to the [National Unity Government](#) (NUG), a pro-democracy movement that sought to topple the Tatmadaw military leadership after it staged a coup against Myanmar's civilian authorities in 2021, has also complicated the Rohingya's options. Coordinated international military and political support for the pro-democracy revolution in Myanmar would open up new possibilities for displaced Rohingya as well as other ethnic minorities who have been persecuted by the Tatmadaw since Myanmar's independence.



(c) John Owens | VOA

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Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) [conflict](#) has been ongoing for three decades and has claimed the lives of an estimated 6 million people. Currently, a record 6.9 million Congolese are internally displaced in Eastern Congo, many of whom are in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces. There are over 120 armed groups fighting over territory and resources as well as along ethnic lines. The East African Community (EAC) regional force and the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) force have begun their withdrawal from the country, leaving vast territories that militias, such as the M23, are quickly seizing. Like other armed groups, the M23 have been accused of [committing atrocities](#), particularly summary executions of men and boys suspected of being members of opposing ethnic militias.



M23 claims to defend the interests of Congolese Tutsi and Kinyarwanda-speaking minorities, who continue to struggle with security since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi of Rwanda.

The group identifies its *raison d'être* to be the protection of Tutsis from the Hutu militias that have operated in the DRC since the genocide and from the DRC government's ongoing inability or unwillingness to offer Tutsis protection. Rwanda has been accused of supporting M23, and, while it denies doing so, the UN [midterm report](#) indicated that Rwanda is supplying both military and operational support to the group. In response to the M23 offensive, the Congolese army (FARDC) have [used and supported](#) other armed groups, including the Hutu militias, acting as proxies in the fight against M23.



(c) VOA

These groups have, in turn, also been implicated in abuses and atrocities. One such group is the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a primarily Hutu group whose leaders participated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

In 2023 there has also been an [increase in hate](#) and xenophobic speech towards the Tutsi/Rwandophone population in North and South Kivu, especially on social media platforms. As M23 renewed its offensive, regional tensions have become increasingly aggravated, leading to increased incitement to discrimination targeting Tutsis and others believed to be of Rwandan descent.



There is a [long history](#) of anti-Tutsi sentiment in the eastern DRC, and Tutsis have often been subjected to systematic discrimination as a result. In some areas, Tutsi civilians have fled out of fear of reprisals stemming from the belief that they all support M23. A UN Panel of Experts [documented](#) incidents of targeted violence or public lynching of Rwandophone individuals.

In December of 2023, democratic elections were held, but they were colored by irregularities such as logistical problems, allegations of fraud, and violent attacks at polling stations. The DRC has seen only one peaceful transition of power in the last 63 years. While the Electoral Commission has [declared](#) that President Felix Tshisekedi is the winner of the election, it is unclear whether the results will be accepted by the public.

As conflict continues in the DRC, the international community must continue to support the country's efforts to guarantee security to its population. In particular, the long-standing insecurity of the small Tutsi minority in the eastern DRC must be addressed, in part through the final dismantling of the genocidal FDLR, in order to prevent a renewed outbreak of mass genocidal targeting of Tutsi civilians. Only after such an effort can the work of dealing with M23 and its Rwandan backers begin.



(c) Al Jazeera

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Ethiopia

2023 began on a hopeful note for Ethiopia. It entered the year having signed the Pretoria Agreement on 2 November 2022, which brought about the end of hostilities between the Ethiopian Federal Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Although this fragile peace held throughout 2023, Ethiopia became mired in more genocidal violence, this time against the Amhara ethnic community.

Just as an end to armed conflict was declared in Tigray, a high intensity insurgency against the government [broke out](#) in the Oromo region, where the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) took up arms against a government it felt was not adequately representing its interests. Alongside this insurgency, OLA fighters began an [apparently coordinated campaign](#) against Amhara in the region, to which the irregular Amhara regional defense force, known as Fano, responded with its own attacks, leading to massive loss of life and the displacement of thousands of Amhara from Oromia. Attacks on the Amhara aggravated distrust between Amhara groups and the central government, which was believed to be tacitly supporting Oromo attacks.



(c) Yan Boechat

Widespread clashes between federal troops and Fano [erupted](#) in April when Addis announced that the militia was to be assimilated into the national army. Assassinations and arrests of opposition Amhara politicians, journalists, and activists began in Amhara and Addis Ababa. As explained in a [statement](#) released by the Lemkin Institute earlier this year, the Amhara are “[o]ften viewed as ‘elites’ and, according to the ethnic federalism of Ethiopia’s constitution, as ‘settlers’ in regions outside of Amhara, [thus, they] are in a social position that makes them very vulnerable to genocide as unwanted, privileged ‘outsiders.’”



The situation quickly crescendoed throughout the summer with many civilian deaths and executions taking place at the hands of the regime. In August, Abiy took a page out of his Tigray playbook and [declared](#) a state of emergency for the Amhara region, imposing strict curfews, travel restrictions, and communications outages. His government continues to carry out [drone strikes on Amhara villages](#), while the ENDF and Fano clash in and around population centers.

Famine was widespread throughout the country due to ongoing drought conditions, and the aftermath of fighting in the country's breadbasket.



Famine was [particularly devastating](#) in the Tigray region, which has not recovered from the genocidal violence committed by government forces and Amhara militias from 2020–2022. To make things worse for Ethiopians, an aid diversion scheme by the Ethiopian National Defense Force caused both USAID and the World Food Programme to [cease their distribution operations](#) throughout the country for almost [six full months](#), with the post-war Tigray region being especially hard hit. In violation of the [Cessation of Hostilities agreement](#), Abiy's regime did not expedite aid to the region that had already [experienced deliberate starvation](#), a genocide, at the hands of the federal government.

Unfortunately, the world has decided to sweep the plight of Ethiopians under the rug. In the fall, the [United Nations Human Rights Council failed to renew the mandate](#) of its commission of independent experts whose oversight was providing valuable insight into the atrocities that have taken place since 2020. This development was met with celebration by Addis, as it had [campaigned extensively](#) for the commission's dissolution, while severely limiting the commission's activities within Ethiopia. This has left the Amhara and Tigray people without international observers as the Ethiopian government appears to enjoy impunity on the world stage.



(c) VOA | Baba Makeri

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Femicide

Femicide, the targeted killing of women and girls based on their sex and/or gender, is a growing global crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns in 2020. The latest [UN data](#) reveals a disturbing surge in femicide cases, with women and girls facing a disproportionate threat within their homes. They account for 53% of killings in homes and a staggering 66% of intimate partner killings. Africa now leads in both absolute femicide numbers and proportion relative to the female population, surpassing Asia. This necessitates urgent, targeted interventions to address the root causes across diverse cultural contexts.

Despite grim statistics, femicides are often preventable through timely interventions. Various initiatives have emerged globally, such as criminalizing femicide in some countries, improving risk assessments, and implementing protective measures.



(c) Juan Carlos Fonseca Mata

Additionally, femicide observatories have been established by many countries, monitored by international human rights mechanisms, to document and analyze cases, enabling a more informed and targeted approach to prevention.

One place where a [positive step](#) toward deterrence and accountability were taken in 2023 is the Mexican state of Puebla, where legislators unanimously passed a measure that would "remove, suspend or modify parental rights in cases of femicide" in May. This is a small move in the right direction for a country that experiences gender-based violence at such a high level that the government classifies many deaths of women and girls as "manslaughter" to [conceal](#) the true nature of the problem. In 2022, data showed that over 20 women and girls were killed a day, yet only 24 percent were reported to be femicides. Official action, even at the state level, signals that [demonstrations](#) by a public who are outraged with the impunity of offenders can make a difference.

As femicide casts a dark shadow globally, urgent, collaborative efforts are crucial to address root causes and implement preventive measures. The global community must unite against gender-based violence, working towards a safer, more equitable world for all.

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India

The current political and social dynamics in India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) raise alarming concerns from a genocide prevention and mass atrocity prevention perspective. The form of Hindu nationalism embraced by Modi and the BJP, often referred to as Hindutva, has been [called out](#) as genocidal by [Genocide Watch](#) and other organizations. In 2023, Indians from minority groups faced high levels of violence and discrimination from Hindu nationalists. This is particularly true for the significant Muslim minority in India. India has the third-largest number of Muslims in the world, who comprise over 14 percent of the Indian population. Harassment of Muslim women wearing the hijab is a [daily occurrence](#). A year after the high court of the state of Karnataka upheld a [ban](#) on wearing the hijab in schools, Muslim women and girls continue to be denied education throughout India through open discrimination and hate speech from teachers, administrators, and fellow students.



(c) Wikimedia Commons

Anti-Muslim hate often results in state-organized violence. In the northern state of Haryana, for example, religious clashes [broke out](#) in Nuh – the only Muslim-majority district in Haryana – on 31 July when a religious procession of [Hindu hardliners](#) was attacked by Muslims who felt threatened by the nationalists' message. As a consequence, in the first week of August, the Haryana state's government [bulldozed](#) 1208 structures in and around the town of Nuh, in an effort that [closely resembled](#) tactics used by Israel in the occupied territories of Palestine.



Though local officials claim that the majority of these were well-planned demolitions of illegal structures with ample notice given to residents, many observers claim that the destruction was indiscriminate save for one commonality – all the structures belonged to Muslim residents, including Rohingya refugees. While officials acknowledge some of the demolished structures belonged to people involved in the violence on 31 July, many suspect it was collective punishment of all the Muslims of Nuh due to the actions of a few.

In Uttar Pradesh, officials had to [close a private school](#) on 28 August 2023 after a video surfaced of a teacher instructing the class to slap a fellow 7 year-old student emerged in August.



Though the teacher [claimed](#) the student was being punished for not memorizing his lessons, she and another adult in the background were heard spouting blatant hate speech. “I have declared that all Muslim children should go,” the teacher is heard saying in the video. “You are correct, it ruins the education,” another male is heard saying as the victim stands in front of the class, crying. This incident sparked rage throughout the country, with many Muslim organizations speaking up to accuse the BJP of creating a political climate that is fertile for these types of incidents.

Alongside this growing animosity for minority groups, particularly Muslims, the Indian government has [rewritten](#) its history textbooks to erase crucial aspects of India’s history, such as Mahatma Gandhi’s opposition to Hindu nationalism and his assassination by a Hindu nationalist. These books also suppress the memory and exclude the contributions made by the period of Muslim rule in the country, underscoring a dangerous ideological agenda to erase Islam and Muslims from India in their entirety. Historian Sucheta Mahajan highlighted the government’s use of history as a tool to transform the nation into a Hindu-dominated state in a June [interview to DW](#): “[the] present regime and its ancestors have made [education] an ideological weapon or tool in their political project ...of turning [India] into a Hindu dominant country ...”



(c) Bharatiya Janata Party

Moreover, the Modi regime’s [hostility](#) towards journalists and the BJP’s alleged [involvement](#) in the assassination of Canadian-Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, along with plans for further targeted killings, point to the state’s willingness to violently silence dissent. Modi and the BJP’s chauvinistic Hindu supremacy has exacerbated the plight of India’s minorities as Muslims, Christians, and other non-Hindu groups [face violent discrimination, lynchings and home demolitions](#). The use of hate and [arbitrary power by Hindu nationalists](#) reveals a disturbing disregard for democracy. In regions like Manipur, where [inter-communal violence has erupted](#), the BJP-led government’s divisive policies, [promoting Hindu majoritarianism](#) over inclusive security measures, further escalate the risk of mass atrocities.

India’s authoritarian violence and [blatant disregard for democracy](#) is largely ignored by the international community, especially the [United States](#). The international community must recognize these warning signs and take action to uphold human rights and prevent the escalation of violence and persecution in India into the mass killing pattern of genocide.

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Indigenous Rights

▶ Brazil

2023 saw the first ever [minister for Indigenous peoples](#) in Brazil, Sônia Guajajara, take office, marking a positive development for the political representation of Indigenous Peoples in the country. Unfortunately, 2023 also saw the passing of [new legislation](#) upholding the “time-marker” theory, the idea that Indigenous Peoples may “only lay claim to land they physically occupied as of October 1988, when the current constitution was promulgated.” This law is problematic not only because it erases Indigenous peoples who were displaced prior to the 1988 date, and therefore invalidates countless legitimate claims for Indigenous land, but also because it places the [onus](#) on Indigenous Peoples to substantiate occupation claims. This legislation was passed by the senate just one week after Brazil’s Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional in a 9-2 vote in September, demonstrating the strength of the agricultural business lobby within the Brazilian parliament.

The Climate Observatory has dubbed the law “[the Indigenous genocide law](#)” as it will “open the door to activities such as road-building, mining, dam construction and agricultural projects on Indigenous lands – protected territories which serve as [an important safeguard against deforestation](#).” The minister for Indigenous Peoples has assured the public that her office would be appealing the legislation to the country’s top court.

▶ United States

The United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of federal protections for indigenous children in June of this year, in [Haaland v. Brackeen](#), which upheld, by a vote of 7-2, “[federal protections](#) for indigenous children against removal from their tribal communities for fostering or adoption.” Several tribal leaders [lauded](#) the court’s decision, saying afterwards that it is a “major victory for indigenous tribes, children, and the future of our culture and heritage”.



▶ Australia

In a major setback for the indigenous peoples of Australia, the country decisively rejected a proposal to recognize Indigenous people in the constitution in an October vote this year. Voters were asked to vote “Yes” or “No” in a referendum, which [proposed](#) altering the present Constitution to recognize Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people via the establishment of an Indigenous advisory body – the “Voice to Parliament.” Although the current Prime Minister conceded that this was not the result that was hoped for, he added that the country “would have to seek a new way forward for reconciliation.” It is unclear at this time what that alternative way forward may look like.





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Iran

In 2023, Iran executed the highest number of people in eight years, with [over 600 reported executions](#) as of late October. In November alone, over 120 individuals were put to death in Iranian prisons, [marking an alarming 56.5% increase](#) from the previous month. Reminiscent of the 1988 massacre of roughly 30,000 political prisoners in Iran, which current Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi [oversaw](#) as a death squad leader, the policy enacted on 8 November 2022 that legalizes the execution of arrested protesters is in full effect.

In September 2022, following the death of Mahsa Amini, a young Iranian-Kurdish woman arrested and violently detained by the morality police (Gasht-e-Ershad) for not properly adhering to the mandatory dress code, women-led protests in the name of “Woman, Life, Freedom” (*Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*) erupted across the nation.



The Islamic Republic is [the world’s top executioner of women](#) and the protests were a result of decades-long sexism and misogyny in public policy as well as long-standing state violence towards women.

The Islamic Republic has not only arrested anyone involved in or supportive of the “Women, Life, Freedom” movement. It also criminalizes any artistic and joyful public expressions, as demonstrated by the [arrest](#) reported in December 2023 of 70-year-old fishmonger Sadegh Bagheri following a viral video of him and his friends dancing in their local bazaar.

Iranians imprisoned by the regime are [subject](#) to torture, humiliation, sexual assault and harassment, beatings, solitary confinement, threats against family members, denial of medical care and legal resources, and even mock executions with the intent to extract false confessions that warrant the death penalty.



(c) Paul Becker

In August, prominent Iranian rapper Samin Yasin was arrested on fabricated charges regarding alleged involvement in the death of an officer during a protest. He had audio files, later [released](#) by the Kurdistan Human Rights Network, where he documents the forcible transfer of detained civilians to psychiatric centers.

As in the [tragic case of 16 year-old Abulfazi Amir Ataei](#), who died this past May after eight months in a trauma-induced coma, protesters in Iran are at risk of violent assault in public as well as behind prison walls.



While peacefully protesting in Shahr-e Ray, Tehran, the teenager was shot in the head by an IR officer with a teargas canister only a few feet away, leading to his immobilization and later death. [Recent reports](#) also note the use of ‘birdshots’ (rubber bullets and metal pellets) against crowds.

Apart from Iran’s mass executions and continued brutality against opposing voices, 2023 did see the global recognition of the courageous efforts by Iranian activists to bring about positive change at home. In October 2023, Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi, [rearrested](#) for publicly sharing his harrowing prison experience less than two weeks after his previous detainment on charges related to his support for the protest movement, was awarded the [2023 Arts Freedom of Expression Award](#) by Index of Censorship, an organization amplifying the suppressed and marginalized voices of people around the world. In December Narges Mohammadi received the [Nobel Peace Prize for 2023](#), crowning her twenty years of work defending women’s human rights in Iran and campaigning against the death penalty. She has been imprisoned in Iran’s notorious Evin prison since 2021. That same month the European Parliament awarded the 2023 [Sakharov Prize](#) posthumously to Mahsa Amini and the “Women, Life, Freedom” movement.



(c) Darafsh

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Iraq

In the last months of 2023 [US](#) and [Iranian-backed militias](#) launched military strikes against each other in Iraq, stoking fears that Israel's genocide in Gaza will spark an international war in the region. Iraq has [condemned](#) the retaliatory US strikes as infringing upon Iraqi sovereignty. Baghdad has [expressed](#) its desire to work towards ending the presence of US-backed coalition forces on Iraqi soil.

Iran remains the de facto political power in much of Iraq. In 2023 Pro-Iranian parties [emerged victorious](#) in Iraqi provincial elections, the first to be held in a decade. Pro-Iranian parties won a majority of seats in key provinces in southern Iraq and in cities such as Baghdad. Iran continues to exert influence on Iraqi parties to allow Iranian-backed militias to operate freely on Iraqi territory.



(c) CIVIC Photo | Paula Garcia

In Northern Iraq's Kurdistan region, Türkiye [continues](#) to conduct strikes against ostensible PKK targets along the border with Syria, complicating efforts to resettle Yazidi internally displaced people (IDPs) in their ancestral land in Sinjar.

Many Yazidi are afraid to leave IDP camps for Sinjar while security in the region is still compromised. Iraq's Christian community continues to live under existential threats from Islamist militias. In September, a Christian wedding in Nineveh was [plagued](#) by a fire that killed 100 people. The Iraqi government [attributed](#) the fire to negligence, but local Christian leaders [blamed](#) corruption and militia attacks for the disaster. Iraq's Christian community has dwindled from 1.5 million pre-2003 to just 150,000 today, in the face of ISIS and other militia attacks since the 2003 US invasion.



Despite recent [efforts](#) on the part of the government of Iraq to recognize and compensate Yazidi, Christian, Shabak-Shia, and Turkmen survivors of ISIS genocide, many members of these minority groups still hope to leave and find refuge in foreign countries.

Despite the ongoing struggles of religious and national minorities in northern Iraq, 2023 marked an important moment in efforts to memorialize the lives that were lost to ISIS genocides and to celebrate the ancient traditions and cultural contributions that have been made by Iraq's many minority groups to human civilization. In March, Iraqi Christians [celebrated](#) the Divine Liturgy in Mosul's Deir Mar Mikhael (Monastery of Saint Michael) church for the first time in 20 years.





(c) Mar Sharb

In June, the Iraqi Christian community launched a [Syriac-language television channel](#) to help save the Syriac language, an ancient Aramaic dialect spoken by Syrian and Iraqi Christians for over two thousand years that is now threatened by the rapid out-migration of Christians from Iraq. In October the Yezidi celebrated the opening of the [Solagh Memorial](#) in Sinjar, which stands on 10,000 square meters of land marked by almost 3000 gravestones symbolizing the Yazidi lives that were lost in August 2014 and after. The memorial was built by Nadia's Initiative and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

In January, Iraqi YouTube star Tiba al-Ali was subject to an "honor killing" by her family when she visited Iraq because her father was displeased that she had chosen to live alone in Türkiye since 2017. Ali had allegedly chosen to do so because she was being sexually abused by her relatives. Her father admitted to the killing. Honor killings continue to be an issue in the deeply conservative country (the Iraqi penal code treats such murders more leniently than others) and are one of many women's rights issues that have not been properly addressed by the Iraqi government.

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Israel

Often called the only democracy in the Middle East by its Western allies, Israel experienced successive challenges to democracy in 2023 that could fundamentally reshape the Israeli state for years to come. Prior to the events of 7 October, which we will address, the foundations of democracy in Israel were put to the test by a set of proposals championed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing Likud party. Before Netanyahu's election in late 2022, many critics already questioned Israel's status as a democracy, given the ongoing violent occupation of Palestinian land and a legal system within Israel according to which Jewish citizens are entitled to rights and privileges that are denied to Palestinian and Arab citizens. However, the proposals set forth by Netanyahu would fundamentally challenge the basis of democracy even for Israeli Jews by threatening the independence of the judicial branch of government and by rendering the courts effectively subservient to the Knesset, the Israeli legislature.



For better or worse, Benjamin Netanyahu has made a permanent name for himself in Israeli politics. He stands credibly accused of fraud, bribery, and breach of public trust.

If convicted of these crimes, Netanyahu could spend up to a decade in jail. His trials were paused for COVID and delayed by the 7 October attacks, but they [began anew on 5 December](#).

Despite these charges, Netanyahu has led Israel for the majority of the past fifteen years, acting as Prime Minister from 2009–2021, and briefly as opposition leader from 2021–2022. The 2022 elections brought into power the most right-wing government in Israel's history. Likud won a plurality of votes (32 seats) but its margin was well below the 61 seats necessary to govern.



(c) Chenspec

Netanyahu, as the Likud leader, created a coalition government that included the Religious Zionism party, which is led by West Bank settler Bezalel Smotrich. Smotrich and his followers believe the entirety of the West Bank should be annexed to Israel. Netanyahu also invited the West Bank settler Itamar Ben-Gvir of the small Otzma Yehudit party, who was once convicted of [inciting racial hatred and supporting a terrorist organization](#), to be Minister of National Security. Anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-liberal extremist Avi Moaz, was appointed as a deputy minister, enshrining the extreme far-right nature of the current Israeli government. Back in power with a far-right coalition supporting him, one of Netanyahu's first orders of business was to upend the levers of democracy in Israel.



The Netanyahu government sought a [package of four amendments to the judicial branch](#) in Israel: The first proposal would end the 'reasonableness doctrine,' a legal concept that allows the Israeli Supreme Court to oversee cases where the government's decision "disproportionately focuses on political interests without sufficient consideration for public trust and its protection." This doctrine is used by the Court to strike down laws that are overtly political and do not adequately consider the impact on social life. This concept is not unique to Israel and can be found in judiciaries across the globe. The second proposal would change the manner in which Israeli Supreme Court judges are nominated, allowing politicians to more readily influence the nomination of judges. The third proposal, which is perhaps the clearest attack on the balance of powers in a democracy, is the proposed override clause that would allow any judicial decision to be overridden in the Knesset by a simple 61-vote majority. Since a coalition government in the Knesset must always have at least 61 of 120 seats to govern, this proposal would effectively render the Supreme Court answerable to the Knesset, endowing the seated government with the power to overturn any ruling it wishes. Lastly, the fourth proposed change would change the role of Ministry of Justice Legal Advisors.



(c) Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine

Currently, legal advisors are appointed by and report to the Attorney General of Israel; they act as civil servants carrying out Ministry of Justice policy and ensure that the Ministry follows the law.

Under the new proposal, legal advisors would be appointed by Ministers in the Knesset, effectively politicizing judicial advisors meant to uphold and advise on the law. These changes would grant Netanyahu additional powers to avoid criminal prosecution. Indeed, some critics have pointed to this as the reason Netanyahu and his party have pushed so fervently for the changes.

The Israeli public has largely refuted the purported need for a judicial overhaul. From the announcement of the new proposals, demonstrators around the country took to the streets to voice their discontent.



(c) Khane Rokhl Barazani

These protests should not be confused with the much smaller protests demanding an end to Israeli occupation and apartheid. Protesters who demonstrated against Netanyahu and the Likud Party represented views from across the political spectrum and saw the judicial overhaul as a threat to Israeli democracy. In July 2023, the Knesset finally brought the "reasonableness" clause to a vote, over the boycott of the opposition, who dramatically stormed out of the Knesset. The Netanyahu endorsed amendment [passed](#) 64-0 in Israel's legislature. Protests continued until the 7 October attacks, when a unity War Cabinet shelved the changes to focus on the Gaza war.



On January 1st, 2024, an unprecedented sitting of all 15 judges of the Israeli Supreme Court [struck down the change to the “reasonableness” test by a vote of 8-7](#), underscoring the sharp divisions within Israeli society.

The attempts to reconfigure Israeli society point to a larger challenge within the Israeli political system. Similar destructive forces are nowhere more clear than in the words and actions of Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. Smotrich and Ben-Gvir represent the extreme right of Israeli politics, a position that seeks to expand illegal settlements in the West Bank, opposes any and all proposals for collective Palestinian self-determination, and often employs language meant to incite violence against Palestinians. Smotrich is a staunch supporter of expanding illegal Jewish settlement in the West Bank. In February 2023 the far-right government approved a proposal to build an [additional 7,000 housing units](#) in the Occupied West Bank. In the previous two years, a total of 8,000 housing units were approved. The dramatic increase represents the aims of the Israeli government under far-right stewardship.



(c) Basel al-'Adrah | BT'selem

During the same month Smotrich [called on settlers to “wipe out”](#) the Palestinian town of Huwara after gunmen there killed two Israeli brothers. Following 7 October, Smotrich has [restricted tax revenue that is owed to the Palestine Authority](#) from being transferred to the Palestinians.

Smotrich defended his refusal to release Palestinian funds by contending the Palestinian Authority was a terrorist group. Smotrich has raised the ire of fellow members of the War Cabinet with his [proposed allocation of \\$1.3 billion in funds for settlements](#) amid the war in Gaza. EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell said he was appalled by the allocation of funds for settlements amid Israel’s brutal war.

Singing the same songs as Smotrich is Itamar Ben-Gvir, now the National Security Minister in the Netanyahu government. Merging with fellow far-right demagogue Bezalel Smotrich’s party to form the Religious Zionism slate, the two have made extreme right-wing policies in Israel the norm. Ben-Gvir, upon entrance into the government, was given the role of National Security Minister, which includes control over Israel’s Border Police in the West Bank.



(c) Kufr Ad-Deek

Ben-Gvir is no stranger to controversy. In August, he made the inflammatory statement that he and his wife have superior rights to that of Palestinians in the West Bank. In an interview, Ben-Gvir proclaimed “My right, the right of my wife and my children to move around Judea and Samaria is more important than freedom of movement for the Arabs.” His [remarks sparked global controversy](#), resulting in a social media back and forth with Palestinian model Bella Hadid. Perhaps more concerning are the actions that Ben-Gvir has taken that underscore his bigoted positions.



Violence in the West Bank was worse in 2023 than any year on record. Israeli security forces killed 234 Palestinians while settlers killed an additional 9. Since 7 October, over 150 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces or settlers in the West Bank. In addition to those killed by Israeli forces, thousands of Palestinians have been arbitrarily detained by Israeli forces. Oftentimes those arrested are detained without charge and are subject to [widespread humiliation and torture in detention centers](#). Directly fueling the crisis in the West Bank, [Ben-Gvir has provided rifles](#), ammunition, and political cover to settlers and civilians seeking to arm themselves.

Alongside his bigoted comments in interviews, Ben-Gvir has also taken to political stunts meant to inflame tensions. In May 2023, the National Security Minister made an unannounced trip to the Al-Asqa Mosque (known to Jews as the Temple Mount). [Ben-Gvir led far-right and ultranationalist Israelis into the compound](#) as police forcibly removed Palestinians from the holy site. The raid led by Ben-Gvir was particularly inflaming due to the already tense nature of the site. While present, Ben-Gvir proclaimed Israel was “in charge” of the high holy site.



(c) David Denberg

Prior to the National Security Minister’s visit, throughout April [Israeli security forces regularly raided](#) the Al-Aqsa Mosque – April was the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. During the raids Israeli security forces fired stun grenades and rubber bullets into the compound, targeting worshippers.

After Ben-Gvir’s stunt, Amnesty International Regional Director Heba Morayef was quoted saying that “[s]hocking footage from the past two days shows Israeli security forces beating men, women and children, and dragging them out of the mosque where they had gathered to spend the night in peaceful prayer and reflection. Once again, [Israeli security forces have shown the world what apartheid](#) looks like.” Over 500 Palestinians were detained during the raids, further inflaming tensions in Jerusalem and through the Occupied Palestinian Territories. [UN experts condemned the Israeli](#) provocations at Al-Aqsa and demanded raids at the holy site cease.



(c) Peter van der Sluijs

Mere weeks before the now infamous 7 October attacks, Israeli security forces would again raid the [Al-Aqsa Mosque, attacking Palestinians](#) at the Bab as-Silsila entrance to the Al-Aqsa compound. The raid culminated in the allowance of Israeli settlers into the compound, the detention of several Palestinians, and the imposition of stringent restrictions on the entrance of Palestinians into the compound.

Hamas has claimed that raids on Al-Aqsa, assaults on Palestinians, and the expansion of settlements in the West Bank were the primary drivers of its assault on 7 October, which they named “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.”



According to Israeli sources, the death toll of the unprecedented assault includes 779 civilians and 385 members of Israeli security forces. With more than [1,100 people killed and over 240 taken hostage](#) to Gaza, the assault shook Israeli society to its core. Hamas's attack was the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and raised traumatic memories of that catastrophe across Israel and the Jewish Diaspora.



(c) Oren Rozen

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Karakalpakstan

Karakalpakstan is a semi-autonomous region in Uzbekistan, bordering Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Karakalpaks are a distinct ethnic group with their own language and culture who are indigenous to the region. The [Uzbek Constitution](#) recognizes the autonomy of Karakalpakstan and grants the region the right to secede. Nevertheless, Karakalpaks in Karakalpakstan are experiencing what is arguably an ongoing structural genocide within the state of Uzbekistan.

Three genocidal patterns are evident within Karakalpakstan. The first is the Uzbek government's growing [prohibition](#) against the use of the Karakalpak language in Karakalpakstan. The Karakalpak language is not used on official documents and forms or on public signs. Additionally, lessons in Karakalpak schools are no longer being taught in the Karakalpak language.



(c) Makan.uz | Telegram

The second pattern is the [effort](#) among Uzbek authorities to shift the demographic make up of Karakalpakstan in favor of the Uzbek ethnicity.

Finally, there have been [well-documented reports](#) that the Uzbek government has actively been reducing the Karakalpak population through coercive sterilization and forced abortions. This is all done with the aim of creating a monoethnic Uzbek state rooted in post-Soviet chauvinist Uzbek nationalism.

In 2022 [protests](#) broke out in Karakalpakstan in response to constitutional amendments proposed by Uzbek President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, that would have terminated Karakalpakstan's autonomous status. Since then, Uzbek forces have actively [silenced](#) Karakalpaks, in Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan, and abroad, who are speaking out against the persecution they are experiencing.



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Migration to Europe

In 2023, European borders have become increasingly securitized as Europe rejects a rights-based approach to migration. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) reported that in 2023 [3,546 migrants](#) had been killed or had gone missing when attempting to travel Mediterranean routes to Europe. These deaths can be directly attributed to Europe's policies, which [Human Rights Watch](#) has called "the real crisis." The EU's stance on migration is [operationalized by Frontex](#), the European Union's Border and Coast Guard agency, which has been criticized for turning back migrants and refugees, routinely committing violence against migrants, and denying asylum at EU external borders. The current European response to migration not only fails to address the root causes of migrants and refugees risking their lives to reach Europe (i.e. conflicts, political instability, economic instability), but violates the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) and the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#).



On June 14, 2023, a boat carrying 750 migrants sank off the coast of Pylos, Greece, killing 82 people and resulting in hundreds of missing.

This tragedy is an outcome of Europe's unjust immigration policies, as both Italian and Greek officials were aware of the state of the boat, yet failed to step in to prevent catastrophe. The Hellenic Coast Guard took a full 13 hours to respond. In a [statement](#) released in July of 2023, the Lemkin Institute called upon the "international community, governments, and relevant stakeholders to prioritize protecting human life and immediately prevent further calamities in the Mediterranean Sea and other migration routes."



(c) Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa | U.S. 6th Fleet

Four days later, the Titan submersible tragically disappeared off the coast of Newfoundland in the North Atlantic. The disappearance of the Titan resulted in a [multi-national search effort](#) with Canada and the U.S. Coast Guard deploying military equipment, and France sending rescue equipment, within hours. Aside from instigating a rapid and expensive mobilization of resources, the disappearance also [dominated international news coverage](#). This double standard was striking to many [observers](#) and seemed to underscore the dominant racialized and class-based understandings of belonging and deservingness in today's world, as most victims from the Pylos shipwreck were impoverished migrants and refugees from Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Palestine, while the Titan passengers were billionaires.



In July 2023, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's conservative government rolled out the ['Illegal Migration Act'](#) that targets migrants seeking to enter the UK by sea by imposing a re-entry ban and hindering the fundamental right to seek asylum through depriving claimants of a fair hearing. The Act, and the [language of invasion](#) surrounding it, [problematizes migrants and asylum seekers](#) themselves rather than the lack of a legal means of entry, the history of European colonization, incomplete decolonization, and neoliberal economic policies. Moreover, Sunak has repeatedly deployed the "stop the boats" slogan, which can be seen as a form of hate speech, if not incitement, and conjures up racialized imagery of a flood of migrants into the UK rather than humanizing them as people seeking refuge from war and persecution.

Unfortunately, Europe is increasingly criminalizing migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as solidarity towards undocumented migrants. Currently [in France](#), citizens who facilitate the "illegal entry, movement or residence of a foreigner in France shall be punished by imprisonment for five years and a fine of €30,000." Dehumanising language, which has manifested itself in exclusionary migration policies and anti-solidarity laws, directly contribute to the growth of fascist movements and genocidal ideologies.



(c) Irish Defence Forces

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Myanmar

2023 was another in a string of volatile years for a country that was thrown into chaos by a military coup in February of 2021. After overthrowing the country's civilian government, the Myanmar military, called the Tatmadaw, declared a state of emergency. Security forces and anti-junta groups have killed at least [4,177 people](#) in the nearly three years since. The Women's League of Burma has documented accounts of rape and conflict-related sexual violence committed by Tatmadaw soldiers at checkpoints; this is in addition to the [documentation](#) by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights demonstrating the "military's systematic denial of humanitarian aid to civilians and intentional blocking humanitarian access." During the first half of 2023, [24,000 homes were burned or destroyed](#), according to data from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as the group Data for Myanmar.



Numerous civilian militias have formed in response to the Tatmadaw's imposition of military rule; these militias have come to be known as the People's Defense Forces, or PDFs. On October 27 of 2023, various ethnic armed groups banded together to launch "Operation 1027" against the military junta.

The degree of fighting that has broken out as a result of this latest operation has displaced over [660,000 people](#), "adding to the nearly two million already displaced across the country," according to the UN. The [use of surveillance technology](#) and internet shutdowns by the Tatmadaw has allowed the junta to retain the loyalty of its military forces, surveil rebel formations, and spy on civilians.

According to a United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) [report](#) released in early December, Myanmar has overtaken Afghanistan as the world's largest producer of opium, the key ingredient in the drug heroin.



(c) Wikimedia Commons

Following the Taliban's imposition of a ban on opium production in Afghanistan in April, the cultivation there fell by 95%. When combined with the varying disruptions to Myanmar's economy, security, and governance since the coup of 2021, a UNODC representative [indicated](#) that such conditions "drive farmers in remote areas towards opium to make a living." The UN office has [emphasized](#) the "complex realities and vulnerabilities fac[ing] people living in opium-cultivat[ion] areas." The emergence of Myanmar as a key player in the international illicit drug trade has had an impact on refugee communities across the border in Bangladesh, where over 1 million Rohingya people now reside after fleeing from genocide by the Tatmadaw in 2017.





(c) X | Dawei Watch

Rohingya refugee camps have become increasingly violent as various criminal gangs seek to monopolize their control over this part of the drug trade.

With a coalition of fighters linked to the [National Unity Government](#) (NUG) – a pro-democracy movement that attempted to topple the Tatmadaw military leadership following its coup in 2021 – as the only opposition to the Tatmadaw, the Lemkin Institute encourages the world to support the efforts by the NUG to overthrow the Tatmadaw, which is a genocidal institution beyond reform. Supporting a pro-democracy revolution in Myanmar has the best chance of providing displaced Rohingya and other ethnic minorities relief from the persecution and oppression that they have had to endure for far too long now, and to pave a path for renewed hope in the country.

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Nigeria

Deadly attacks against Christians occurred in several villages in the State of Plateau, located in the center of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, between 23 and 25 December 2023. Carried out by unidentified armed groups – locally referred to as “[bandits](#)” – these assaults left at least 190 dead, scores of wounded, and more than 10,000 internally displaced, according to [TV5 Monde](#). In addition to the loss of human lives, homes were also [destroyed](#) during the onslaught. “Black Christmas,” as the incident was [called](#) by news outlets due to its occurrence on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, is [reported](#) to have begun in the Bokkos Local Government Area (LGA) and then bled into Barkin Ladi LGA and [Mangu LGA](#).

The Governor of the State of Plateau, Mr Caleb Mutfwang, [condemned](#) the attack, calling it “barbaric, brutal, and unjustified.”



(c) VOA | Nicolas Pinault

Furthermore, Mr Mutfwang [stated](#) that the assaults were “well-coordinated” and involved the use of “heavy weapons.”

Finally, the governor [called on](#) Nigeria’s security agencies to “do their job” to identify those who ordered the attack, as well as those funding and arming the assailants.

Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu [condemned](#) the attacks on December 26, stating that he had ordered the security forces to intervene immediately, to traverse the area, and to apprehend those responsible for these “atrocities.” The federal government, however, has come under heavy criticism over its response to the tragedy.



[According](#) to TV5 Monde, assistance to the victims of the attack came approximately 12 hours after the beginning of the armed groups’ assault. Columnists have [criticized](#) the security forces’ response to the incident and even [explained](#) that former government officials believed some individuals within the security agencies were colluding with the attackers. Similarly, Amnesty International (Nigeria) not only has condemned the government’s “[brazen failure](#)” to protect Nigerians, but also has [called](#) for an investigation on “the inexcusable security lapses” that allowed the attacks to occur.

Village residents have [identified](#) their assailants as Hausa and Fulani militias, which have a record of clashes with Christian farmers in the region.



According to an [article](#) by The Guardian, “North-west and central Nigeria have been long terrorised by bandit militias operating from bases deep in forests and raiding villages to loot and kidnap residents for ransom.” It added that “[c]ompetition for natural resources between nomadic herders and farmers, intensified by rapid population growth and climate pressures, has also exacerbated social tensions and sparked violence.” In addition, north-eastern Nigeria has been the theater of a jihadist conflict since 2009, where Boko Haram fights for supremacy with rivals linked to the Islamic State. Nevertheless, [according](#) to TV5 Monde, the scope of this event was unprecedented, and its motive remains uncertain. For Mr. Mutfwang “it is no longer just a conflict between herders and farmers, or between Muslims and Christians, but rather a large-scale criminality,” [explained](#) RFI.



(c) Mackenzie Knowles-Coursin | ICRC

During his New Year broadcast, Governor Mutfwang [explained](#), “for the avoidance of doubt, it is a misrepresentation of facts to describe these needless and unprovoked attacks on our people as a farmer-herder clash as has always been the traditional narrative. Let us call a spade a spade; this is simple genocide!” Similar genocide-related language has been used elsewhere to describe the killings, including [pogrom](#) and [ethnic cleansing](#).

Similarly, the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP), the opposition party to the President Bola Tinubu-led All Progressives Congress (APC), issued a [statement](#) that, among other things, invited the International Criminal Court “to commence an independent investigation to unravel the sponsors and perpetrators of this act of genocide.” “In this regard, special attention must be paid to prominent former and current leaders of the APC, who have at various times been alleged to have overtly encouraged, promoted, indicted and endorsed acts of terrorism and genocide,” explained a [piece](#) by The Vanguard Nigeria.



(c) Chatham House

In the same article, the Nigerian news outlet [stated](#) that the President of Evangelical Church, Winning All, and head of Denominational Churches on the Plateau, Rev. Stephen Panya, also characterized the attacks as genocidal in nature. “The horrendous and genocidal killings and destruction of property and other means of livelihood by very wicked, evil, criminal militias in over 20 villages of Bokokos and Barkin Ladi is reprehensible, ungodly, satanic, totally unacceptable and condemnable. As a church, we are pained that this attack was carried out against innocent and harmless Christians, who were climaxing preparations to celebrate Christmas.” The State of Plateau [is](#) “on the dividing line between Nigeria’s mostly Muslim north and mainly Christian south, placing it in the crosshairs of interfaith conflict.”



Rev. Panya also [stated](#) that, “If not for reasons of genocide and ethnic cleansing, what could be the reason for such unprovoked, premeditated, simultaneous and well-coordinated attacks on Christmas Eve against communities that are predominantly Christian? This speaks volumes of the evil intentions of the attackers and their sponsors. Some people have vowed never to allow peace reign on the Plateau.”

Taking into account the magnitude of the assaults, as well as the fact that the attacks took place against predominantly Christian communities, the Lemkin Institute believes that the current situation across the State of Plateau shows red flags for future atrocity crimes, including genocide, and may indeed be evidence of genocidal intent among the perpetrators. As a result, it calls on the Government of Nigeria to take appropriate steps to de-escalate the current situation in the region, ensuring the safety and well-being of its inhabitants, as well as the safe return of the more than 10,000 displaced civilians. Despite these atrocities, preventing the spread of genocide in Nigeria is still possible. However, it is necessary that all pertinent actors and entities engage in meaningful discussion and actions in order to prevent it.



(c) Imperative Initiative for Motivation of Global Care

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Occupied Palestine

Gaza

In 2023, Gaza was subjected to military assault by Israeli forces several times. From 2–3 May and again from May 9–13, Israel conducted the “Shield and Arrow” military operation in Gaza, [killing](#) more than 12 civilians, including 6 children. Over 5 days, as Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, [reported](#), Israel conducted 323 airstrikes against what it said were Palestinian Islamic Jihad military targets in Gaza. Nearly 100 housing units were destroyed, more than 125 were left uninhabitable, and more than 1,100 Palestinians were displaced. Israeli authorities closed both crossings between Gaza and Israel, preventing the entry of food, medical supplies, and fuel. On 30 July, the Lemkin Institute issued a [Red Flag Alert](#), condemning Israel’s disproportionate use of force that worsened the already challenging humanitarian situation in Gaza in violation of international humanitarian law and stating the hope that “the world will respond appropriately to the escalating violence of the Israeli state and society towards Palestinians by forcing Israeli authorities to pull back from their brinkmanship through the use of diplomatic pressure, including sanctions. A renewed peace process must be placed back on the agenda by Israel’s strong allies, particularly the United States.”



In the wake of Hamas’ unprecedented military operation against Israel on 7 October, Israel launched attacks on Gaza of an unprecedented lethal scope and scale. The Lemkin Institute issued multiple genocide alerts and statements on [13 October](#), [28 October](#), [8 December](#), [20 December](#), and [29 December](#) as well as special SOS alerts on [14 October](#), [17 October](#), [20 October](#), and [14 November](#) with regards to the situation in Gaza. In addition to this, the Lemkin Institute created a [timeline](#) of the situation in Israel–Palestine prior to the 7 October attack, to support and provide context for the [statement](#) made by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.



(c) Mohamad Safa | X | @mhdksafa

Israel’s current assault on Gaza is considered one of the most devastating military operations in recent history. [According](#) to the Associated Press, “In just over two months, the offensive has wreaked more destruction than the razing of Syria’s Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine’s Mariupol or, proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II. It has killed more civilians than the U.S.-led coalition did in its three-year campaign against the Islamic State group.” By the end of 2023, the death toll of Palestinians in Gaza had surpassed 22,000 ([two-thirds](#) of whom were women and children), with more than 57,000 injured, [according](#) to the Palestinian Health Ministry.



More than one million Palestinians have been displaced from northern Gaza to the South of the Strip since the 13 October Israeli military evacuation [order](#) – this is more than during the 1948 Nakba. The healthcare system is in total collapse. According to the Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaila, only [nine](#) hospitals continue operating in Gaza. Over two-thirds of all structures in northern Gaza and a quarter of buildings in the southern area of Khan Younis were [destroyed](#).



(c) Tetiana Gaviuk | Médecins Sans Frontières

[Hospitals](#) (Al-Shifa, Al-Ahli, Al-Quds and others), [UNRWA schools](#) (about 70% of school buildings across Gaza have been [damaged](#), at least 56 damaged schools served as shelters for displaced civilians), [refugee camps](#), and religious buildings (110 mosques and 3 churches were [damaged](#), including the [St. Porphyrius Church](#), the third oldest church in the world) are constantly targeted. Alarming video footage in which Palestinian civilians are stripped and humiliated, [is being shared](#) by Israeli forces. The IDF, despite initially announcing military activities in the North of Gaza only, expanded the area of the attacks to the south, shelling Khan Younes, which was previously marked as a “safe zone”. In early December, Israeli authorities [ordered](#) Palestinian civilians to evacuate from Khan Younes to Rafah City on the border with Egypt, which is also being occasionally bombed.

The constant push of the Palestinians to the border with Egypt constitutes forced displacement and ethnic cleansing. There is no safe place for Palestinians in Gaza.

The Lemkin Institute strongly condemns Hamas’s attack and the mass atrocities that Israel commits in Gaza and urges all the governments in the world to step in and take swift and precise actions to stop the ongoing genocide of Palestinians.

▶ West Bank

According to the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA), there have been 1,225 incidents of settler violence in the West Bank in 2023.



(c) X | @AneraOrg

This makes 2023 the “most violent year on record for settler attacks” [according](#) to an Israeli watchdog, which began monitoring settler violence toward Palestinians in 2006. Between 7 October and December 30 of 2023, “at least 198 Palestinian households of 1,208 people, among them 586 children, have been displaced due to settler violence and military restrictions”. These figures account for 78 percent of the 1,539 people who were displaced in such incidents in all of 2023.



It is important to keep in mind that this region consists of roughly three million Palestinians and 490,000 Jewish settlers who live among them. Due to the Israeli military's presence in the West Bank following the 1967 Six Days war, and its continued occupation of this territory, it is not uncommon for violence to erupt between Israeli forces and Palestinian civilians. Moreover, Jewish communities in the West Bank live an entirely segregated existence from Palestinians residing in the same territory, with writer Nathan Thrall, who spent a decade with the International Crisis Group covering Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza [describing the situation](#) in the following terms: "the settlements have gates at their entrances and [security guards](#) at those gates. Palestinians are not allowed to enter them unless they are coming as pre-approved workers, as cleaners or gardeners or construction workers. That's the degree of [segregation](#) that exists in the West Bank."



(c) Quds News Network | X | @QudsNen

Although most international attention was centered on Gaza following Hamas' Oct. 7th attack on Israel, settler violence in the West Bank [increased exponentially](#) as a result of Oct. 7th as well. Yesh Din, an Israeli watchdog organization, [documented](#) "242 settler violence incidents" in the first two months following the Hamas attack. These incidents included scenarios such as Israelis raiding Palestinian villages and setting fire to homes and vehicles. Even prior to October 7, the West Bank saw the [highest number](#) of Palestinian deaths occur within a ten-month-period since the United Nations first started keeping such records in 2005.

Israeli Security Forces have arrested more than 4,700 Palestinians in the West Bank, with some individuals being "stripped naked, blindfolded and restrained...while Israeli soldiers stepped on their heads and backs, were spat at, slammed against walls, threatened, insulted, humiliated, and in some cases subjected to sexual and gender-based violence" according to findings in a [UN report](#), warning "of rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in the West Bank", published on 28 December 2023.



(c) Hadi Mohammad

The City of Jerusalem

In 2023, not only were the West Bank and Gaza subjected to increased violence by Israeli authorities, but the situation escalated in East Jerusalem as well, particularly in the Armenian Quarter. The atmosphere of hatred and violence in the Holy City of the three Abrahamic religions was fueled by the far-right Israeli government.

The 1,600-year-old Armenian Quarter makes up about one-sixth of the City of Jerusalem and is a home for the tiny diaspora of Jerusalemite Armenians, the oldest remaining living diaspora of Armenians, and a diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Quarter represents huge historical and cultural significance.



In July 2021, the Armenian Patriarchate signed an agreement to lease the “Goveroun Bartz” (“Cows’ Garden”) area to Australian businessman Danny Rubenstein for 98 years at a low annual rent of a few hundred thousand dollars per year. Rubenstein planned to build a luxury hotel on the site, necessitating the destruction of many of the existing buildings. Under pressure from the local and diaspora Armenian and Palestinian communities, the Patriarchate [canceled](#) the deal on November 1, 2023. Despite this, Rubenstein refused to cancel the deal and decided to forcefully take the land.

Bulldozers, accompanied by private guards and radical Israeli settlers, were brought to the Cows’ Garden and began construction in the area. The residents of the Quarter have responded to the destruction of the site with peaceful protests in the form of public gatherings and a sit-in where construction had begun. Israeli police and civilians have met these protests with violence, using dogs and firearms to intimidate the peaceful protestors. On December 28 armed mobs attacked the Quarter, injuring several Armenians, including the priest and students of the Theological Seminary.



(c) Good Shepherd Collective | X |
@Shepherds4Good

In a recent [statement](#) on the significance of the Armenian Quarter in East Jerusalem, the Lemkin Institute strongly condemned the continuing attack on the Armenian Quarter and reiterated its support of the Jerusalemite Armenian community as they continue to resist the development of this land through peaceful demonstrations and by refusing to leave the premises.

The cultural heritage of the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem must be safeguarded from developers and the armed settlers who are enabling them, ostensibly with the aim of creating a homogenized Jewish ethnostate in Palestinian territories.



(c) Daniel Seidemann | X |
@DanielSeidemann

In addition to this escalation in the Armenian Quarter, attacks on Palestinian Muslim worshipers at Jerusalem’s Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan by the Israeli police have increased dramatically. There has also been a dramatic uptick in attacks on Christians by Jewish civilians. The Jerusalem Governorate published an annual [report](#), detailing violations against the residents of Jerusalem by the Israeli government and military. According to the report, 51 residents were killed and about 3,081 were arrested. Also, in support of Israel’s final expansion into remaining Palestinian lands, on May 21 the new Israeli National Security Minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, went to the Temple Mount (Al-Haram al-Sharif) for a second time since taking office, which was both a provocation and a humiliation for Palestinians. In addition to this, forced evictions of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem have continued -- and were ultimately [condemned](#) by the UN.



The Lemkin Institute, in its [Red Flag Alerts for 26 April](#) and [30 July](#), called upon Israel to honor and abide by the legally binding framework that regulates the administration of the holy Al-Aqsa compound as outlined in the status quo arrangement it has previously recognized.

► Genocide

While Palestinians in Occupied Palestine have been living under an [apartheid regime](#) for many years now, Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel has triggered the Israeli government to begin a systematic campaign of genocide against Palestinian civilians living in the West Bank and Gaza. On December 29, 2023, the Lemkin Institute released a [statement](#) entitled "Why We Call the Israeli Attack on Gaza Genocide," wherein we point to an "intergenerational massacre extend[ing] beyond the individual level, representing not only the actual loss of a human life, but also the complete erasure of a lineage, along with its history and contributions to their respective communities and, by extension, to the world." In its indiscriminate airstrikes, in the killing of Palestinian civilians in the West Bank, in its deadly ground operations in Gaza, in the genocidal statements of its leaders, the Israeli government is demonstrating, again and again, its intent to rid the territories of Palestinians.



(c) Hadi Mohammad

On November 13, 2023, the US-based Center for Constitutional Rights filed a lawsuit in federal court on behalf of Palestinian human rights organizations, as well as Palestinians in Gaza, the occupied territories, and the US, against US President Joseph Biden, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin for complicity in the crime of genocide in accordance with Article III of the Genocide Convention, and for the US's failure to prevent the crime of genocide, which is mandated by Article I.



(c) Eye on Palestine

As [described](#) in the case South Africa brought against Israel at the International Court of Justice on 29 December 2023, "Israel has engaged in, is engaging in, and risks further engaging in genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza." South Africa [accused](#) Israel of being in violation of Article II (a), II (b), II (c) and II (d) of the [Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#). In other words, South Africa accuses Israel of violating four of the five acts recognized in the Genocide Convention, including "killing members of the group" (II.a.), "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" (II.b.), "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part" (II.c.), and "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group" (II.d.).





(c) Hadi Mohammad

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Strengthening of the Far-Right

Germany

In Germany, the unsettling popularity of the far-right party, Alternative for Germany (AFD), has grown in the last year. A recent poll found that it now polls higher than any of the three parties currently [governing](#) the country, “[polling](#) between 19% and 23% nationally, according to data compiled across eight different platforms.”

Although originally founded in 2013, primarily as a protest against Chancellor Angela Merkel and the single European currency, the party veered solidly to the right following Germany’s acceptance of a large influx of refugees in 2015, [settling](#) on “an overtly nationalist, anti-immigrant, anti-Islam agenda.” The party is considered such a threat to German democracy that the country’s Office for the Protection of the Constitution put it under [domestic surveillance](#) two years ago.



(c) Oxfordian Kissuth

Despite this, the AFD has managed to poach voters from all the other major parties in Germany, with the exception of the Greens, while also successfully mobilizing non-voters.

The party, in line with the far-right in the US as well, “[questions](#) the notion that climate change is man-made, wants to uphold family values, and opposes diversity and gender issues.”

United Kingdom

Rishi Sunak, the current Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is responding to disapproval for his Conservative Party by adopting rhetoric and actions similar to those of far-right parties in Europe.



(c) PantheraLeo1359531

One of the most prominent shifts in policy has come at the expense of the environment, with the PM [backtracking](#) on “several of the government’s environmental commitments, including the goal of eliminating the sale of gasoline or diesel vehicles by 2030.” Sunak has also signaled a shift in policy on immigration concerns, allying with far-right leader of Italy, Georgia Meloni, at a meeting of [European leaders](#) in Spain in October, to force migration on the agenda.

In March of 2023, the Lemkin Institute [expressed its concern](#) over newly passed legislation in the UK, dubbed the “ban on boats,” which, in combination with other laws like it, “effectively cement the status of stateless people while simultaneously depriving them of any means of finding a protective legal identity...”



Europe, today, is laying the groundwork for a collapse of democracy under the weight of discriminatory and exclusionary laws and practices. Laws like the Illegal Migration Ban operationalize the language of fear and hatred. Once normalized and rendered 'respectable,' such laws contribute directly to the development of fascist movements and genocidal ideologies.

The UK Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, has also been at the center of much speculation regarding a potential sharp shift toward populism, following a [speech](#) she gave which presented a picture of "law-abiding, hard-working, common-sense majority against the few, the privileged woke minority with their luxury beliefs." It is unclear at this point in time how permanent this shift will be for the UK Conservative Party; however, if things continue along this trend, it is likely that the Tories could become another far-right party similar to what we have seen in many Western Democracies over the past decade or so.

Hungary



(c) Derzsi Elekes Andor

In his fourth term as Prime Minister, Viktor Orban has continued to promote right wing populism that undermines progressive policy and seeks to divide the population into an "us versus them" schema.

Hosting the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Hungary's capital in May of last year, Orban [proclaimed](#) Hungary as "the place where we didn't just talk about defeating the progressives and liberals and causing a conservative Christian political turn, but we actually did it." Included among his remarks at this conference was the fact that Hungary was "world-famous" for its hardline migration and cultural policies, stating "no migration, no gender, no war" to his international audience, encouraging them to focus on these issues within their own countries as well.

The rotating EU presidency is of increasing concern moving into 2024, as Hungary is expected to take over the position this coming summer, [granting](#) Orban "agenda-setting powers for a six-month term," unless other member-states decide to either block Hungary's turn or suspend its voting rights in the bloc altogether. Hopes for these options remain low given the unwillingness of top EU officials to even threaten taking such action. Due to Hungary's reliance on Russia for energy supplies, and given its support for Russia in previous votes, the future of EU funding for Ukraine's war with Russia may be in peril if Orban takes over as EU president.

The factor that is seen as the common denominator driving the shift toward the right in many Western countries is the issue of migration. The author of a recent [Washington Post op-ed](#) summed up the issue of rising extremism on the right: "Across the continent, neither centrist nor leftist parties have devised an effective response to the gusher of asylum seekers, let alone a long-term strategy that might blunt the far-right's growing appeal. Without that, the waves of far-right gains might swell to a tsunami." Importantly, migration is the underlying cause for a proliferation in "us vs them" thinking, making it all the more concerning that none of these countries have been able to devise an empathetic and just solution to the challenge.



United States

Hungary's Viktor Orban has a very close relationship with parts of the United States Republican Party, seemingly inspiring them to [target](#) topics such as "immigration, LGBTQ rights and – at least for some – the war in Ukraine." Increasingly over the course of 2023, bipartisan support for Ukraine has turned lopsided, with more and more members of the GOP questioning the value of continued investment.

In line with the Republican Party's turn to the far right, over the course of 2023 there was a record-breaking number of legislative attempts to curb the rights of the LGBTQ community in the US. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) [recorded](#) at least 508 bills targeted at individuals identifying as LGBTQ. Of these bills, 84 were passed into law. The areas which receive the most attention from legislators [include](#) gender-affirming care for minors, blocking trans youth from gender-appropriate sports and from accessing gender affirming medical care, and the so-called "bathroom bills" that would block trans people from using gender-appropriate facilities.



(c) Elvert Barnes

With so much legislation being drafted to supposedly "safeguard" the future of trans children, it is important to note that [major medical associations](#), such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and over twenty others agree that gender-affirming care is safe, effective,

beneficial, and medically necessary, revealing that these legislators' actual intent is discrimination and restriction of rights for those in the LGBTQ community.

2023 also saw a surge in hate crimes more generally in the United States, with most of the country's ten largest cities [experiencing](#) major surges in such crimes. Houston, Texas saw the largest uptick, with the city witnessing a 193% increase in hate crimes from the year before. Alarming, 2023's statistics are fully in line with a 23-year trend of increasing hate crimes nationwide. Anti-Jewish hate crimes saw a substantial increase in the nation's ten largest cities in 2023, with such crimes [rising](#) by 12.6% in New York, 48% in Los Angeles, and 10% in Chicago. In the same cities, anti-Muslim hate crimes increased by 22%, 40%, and 300%, respectively. These numbers are deeply troubling when considering the way that Israel's war on Gaza has influenced such sentiments, and the fact that the conflict does not appear to be coming to an end anytime soon.

With 2024 being a presidential election year, much attention in 2023 was on the primary contenders for the Republican Nomination, with no candidate [coming within 20 percentage](#) points of former president Donald Trump's favorability numbers. Support for the former president has remained steadfast despite his being indicted on charges related to a 2016 illegal hush money payment, as well as [indictments](#) over his attempts to overturn the 2020 election both at the Georgia state level as well as at the federal level. The voters are likely to have a rematch on their hands in 2024, with Joe Biden and Donald Trump facing off once again for the Presidency.

The steadfast loyalty to Donald Trump by his base of supporters demonstrates the appeal of his strongman platform to large swaths of the population, particularly in respect to border security and growing resentment of "liberal elites."



Although there remains a chance that the former president will be prosecuted before the November 2024 election, it is unclear whether such action would ultimately make a difference to his base of devoted followers.

Complicating matters has been President Joe Biden's full-throated and unquestioning support for Israel's genocide in Gaza, support that may amount to complicity in genocide. The United States enters the election year with two candidates who seem comfortable with genocidal violence, differing perhaps only on their willingness to use it at home. Donald Trump's cruel policy of family separation at the southern border was an act of genocide on domestic territory that bodes poorly for the future of the US.

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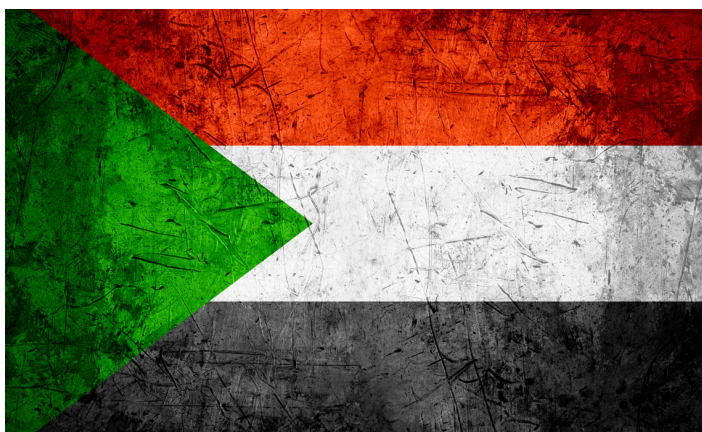
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Sudan

2023 proved to be a disastrous year for the people of Sudan. The conflict that broke out in the capital of Khartoum between two factions of the ruling junta in April quickly spread into a country-wide conflagration, rekindling a genocide in Darfur and creating a humanitarian crisis in an already insecure region. According to the United Nations Organization for International Migration (IOM), 5,942,580 Sudanese people had been displaced by 31 December 2023. Multiple international attempts at negotiating a ceasefire have failed in the intervening seven months, and indeed, more factions within Sudan have deepened the conflict by choosing to side with either Hemedti and the Regional Support Forces (RSF) or Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Both of these leaders are deeply implicated in the genocide in Darfur from 2003–2004.



The Masalit people of Darfur have been subjected to the most intense and gruesome atrocities at the hands of the RSF and their allies, who have taken [almost total control](#) of the West Darfur region since the start of the war. In the capital city of West Darfur, El Geneina, Reuters [described](#) a “rolling ethnic killing campaign that lasted for weeks.”

During attacks, Arab militia fighters reportedly referred to the Masalit population as “anbai,” which is a derogatory term meaning slaves. Men and boys were systematically killed and women and girls raped. Furthermore, sexual violence, ethnically-driven killings, terrorization, massacre, forcible recruitment of child soldiers, looting, and the deliberate destruction of villages were rampant.



(c) Russian Kremlin

In July 2023, the ICC prosecutor Karim Khan informed the U.N. Security Council that his office had started investigating atrocities in West Darfur. He [told the Council](#) that “we are, by any analysis, not on the precipice of a human catastrophe but in the very midst of one.”

The RSF [launched](#) another killing campaign in El Geneina in November, targeting the remaining Masalit population, many of whom were internally displaced people from the previous campaign. Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, [described](#) these atrocities as part of “a wider ethnic cleansing campaign conducted by the RSF with the aim to eradicate the non-Arab Masalit community from West Darfur.”

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Somaliland

2023 has seen a [rise](#) in tension and violence in Somaliland, stoked by neighboring Somalia in an effort to reclaim the semi-independent enclave. Somaliland is a de facto independent state that regained its independence from Somalia in 1991 after a brutal genocide against the Isaaq clan overseen by Somali dictator Siad Barre. Since then, Somaliland has experienced a noteworthy three decades of relative peace. This is in stark contrast to Somalia, which has grappled with civil war, terrorism, and instability. Somaliland has earned recognition for its safety, stability, and the harmonious coexistence of diverse clans.

However, recent violent [events](#) in the city of Laascaanood have shattered that peace. The international media has depicted the violence as an ethnic clash between various clans in the region. In particular, there have been conflicts between the Somaliland army and militias associated with the Dhulbahante people in the Sool region, especially in the capital, Laascaanood.



The conflict, which began in February 2023, is rooted in the Dhulbahante [expressing](#) a desire to join Somalia rather than be governed by Somaliland.

Some Dhulbahante, primarily belonging to the Darood clan family, resist inclusion in Somaliland's state-building project, viewing it as serving the interests of the Isaaq clan.



(c) The Centre for Justice & Accountability

It is crucial to understand that the conflict is more nuanced, however, involving political, economic, and potentially ideological dimensions. At its core, the strife revolves around the issue of Somaliland's self-determination, primarily associated with and championed by the Isaaq people. Nevertheless, independent Somaliland also garners support from the Gudurbirsi clan in the Awdal region, as well as the Cisse, Dhulbahante, Warsengeli, and other factions of the Darood clan. Much of the violence in Laascaanood was stoked by persons who had vested economic and political interests in promoting Somalia's violent retaking of Somaliland.

The complexities of the situation, involving political dynamics and security challenges, emphasize the urgency of diplomatic efforts and interventions, especially with clan elders who have cultural resources to bring to peacemaking in the region, to address the root causes of tension and promote stability in Somaliland, ultimately safeguarding the security, safety and well-being of its people.



The Lemkin Institute's [statement](#) published in March 2023 serves as a call to action for the international community to collaborate in preventing further violence and fostering conditions conducive to peace and security in Somaliland as well as in the wider Horn of Africa region.



(c) VOA

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Syria

The plight of the Syrian people has been one that is routinely ignored, politicized, or made materially worse by international and regional powers. As 2023 came to a close, we have seen upwards of twelve years of constant conflict, slaughter, and a complete disregard for the well-being of everyday Syrians. Russian direct involvement and backing of the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad continues into its ninth year. Rebel groups who once held large swathes of the north have been primarily reduced to conservative Islamist bands, some backed by Türkiye. The two most influential groups outside of the Islamists are the Free Syrian Army/Syrian National Army (FSA), backed by Türkiye and several Gulf nations, and the Syrian Defence Forces (SDF). The SDF comprises primarily Kurdish fighters, known as the YPG, but also includes Arab fighters, Armenians, and Turkmen. The SDF enjoys backing from the United States and has engaged in joint anti-ISIS operations with Syrian government forces.



The UN [estimates](#) over 306,000 civilians have been killed in the fighting, mainly by indiscriminate regime and Russian airstrikes.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in the UK, estimates the [death toll](#) of the war since 2011 to be over 610,000. There are few places in the world to have undergone the horror that everyday Syrians have experienced for over a decade.

Consistent neglect by the international community has rendered the nation constantly on the brink of collapse. The February earthquakes that rocked Türkiye and northwestern Syria created a humanitarian disaster on top of the already dire humanitarian conditions faced by those sheltering in rebel-held territory. Russia, Türkiye, Iran, and the United States, among other regional and international powers, have sent arms, fought, or intervened in one way or another throughout the conflict.



(c) Salem Mohammadi

Russia and Iran have steadfastly supported the Assad regime, supplying weapons, diplomatic cover, and, in the case of Russia, active participation in the form of indiscriminate bombing. Türkiye has taken advantage of the destabilization to pursue an expansionist vision of an ethnonationalist Turkish state in northern Syria, reviving the ideals of the [Young Turks](#), the group that perpetrated the Armenian genocide in 1915–1923. The Turkish state supports elements of the Syrian rebels that are typically conservative Islamists, some with alleged ties to terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda.



Türkiye [invaded](#) northern Syria in 2019 with the express aim of defeating and destroying Kurdish armed groups that had been the backbone of the fight against ISIS. In 2020 Türkiye [sent](#) Syrian fighters to Azerbaijan to aid in its genocidal war against the Armenians of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh. Since then, the Turkish air force has conducted hundreds of airstrikes by drone and fighter jet against Kurdish-held regions in northern Syria. The Kurds received support from the US in the fight against ISIS, though the United States has left its Kurdish allies to fend for themselves in the face of the Turkish onslaught.



(c) SSgt. William Howard

In 2023, Türkiye continued its war against the Kurds, with the express aim of removing all Kurdish influence from the Türkiye-Syria border. Northeastern Syria has been under the control of the SDF, YPG, and a [democratic, multi-ethnic, Kurdish-led statelet](#) for a significant part of the twelve-year civil war. It is this influence Türkiye seeks to remove. It has targeted Kurds as terrorists for their alleged allegiance to the PKK, a Kurdish group that has been waging a low-intensity armed struggle for greater autonomy within Türkiye. Turkish assaults against Kurds in Syria, Iraq, and within Türkiye itself have genocidal attributes, as Türkiye has shown a [flagrant disregard](#) for civilian life and uses [demographic engineering](#) to shift the ethnonational make-up of territories it controls. In particular, it is moving displaced Arabs into territories in northern Syria from which it has displaced Kurds.

Israel's bombardment of Gaza seems only to have emboldened Türkiye in its strikes on Kurdish targets.

The Syrian people are in dire need of reprieve from the vicious war waged by Bashar al-Assad and his allies, a genocidal Turkish invasion aiming to eliminate Kurds, and the damage wrecked by mother nature. Unfortunately, a lasting peace seems nowhere in sight.

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Threats to Free Speech

Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are under threat in the world's democracies, especially in the wake of the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas and Israel's genocidal response to this attack. The crackdown on protest and speech poses a serious threat to genocide prevention work as it criminalizes necessary criticism of Israel and sets the stage for broader speech and assembly controls.

Palestinians and their allies across the West have experienced restrictions to and violations of their right to peacefully organize against genocide and peacefully express their views. This restriction of speech is especially strong on college campuses, in schools, and within governments in North America and Europe.



Certain phrases, such as “from the river to the sea” and “intifada,” which are commonly chanted during anti-genocide and pro-Palestine protests, have been speciously misidentified as “antisemitic” and charged with calling for a genocide of Jews by organizations such as the [American Jewish Committee](#) and the [Anti-Defamation League](#).

The meanings of “from the river to the sea” and “intifada” are complex. While Hamas has used them, and while they can be used by antisemites, their histories are not tied to anti-Jewish mobilization but rather to the long Palestinian struggle against displacement and occupation. Furthermore, most Palestinians and their allies [do not believe](#) the terms are antisemitic. Rather, they are [viewed as](#) an anticolonial call for justice and freedom for the Palestinian people, which may include either a one-state or a two-state solution, but that do not call for genocide and are not incitements for violence against Jews.



(c) Leonhard Lenz

Nevertheless, in October, police in Vienna [banned a protest](#) for Palestine, pointing to the phrase “from the river to the sea,” which was included on protest flyers, as a justification. The authorities claimed that the slogan was a “call to violence.” Germany and France imposed [blanket bans](#) on protests that supported Palestinians. In France, the blanket ban was eventually [overturned](#) by the Conseil d’Etat, but the authorities continue to ban individual protests. Berlin schools have [banned](#) wearing the keffiyeh, a Palestinian scarf, arguing that it poses a threat to peace. German cultural institutions have [engaged in a flurry of firings and rescinded prizes](#) related to the opinions of targeted employees and award recipients.



The German state of Saxony-Anhalt has made recognition of Israel a [requirement](#) for naturalization. A similar law is being [debated](#) in the Bundestag.

Misinterpretations of Palestinian protests, slogans, and political mobilization have been used against politicians who have called for a ceasefire. On 7 November 2023, the United States House of Representatives voted to [censure congresswoman Rashida Tlaib](#) in a 234-188 vote following claims that she was spreading “antisemitic rhetoric” by speaking out against Israel’s bombing of Gaza. Many of her colleagues, such as Representative Brad Schneider, cited her use of the slogan “from the river to the sea” in casting their vote for censure. Tlaib, who is Palestinian-American, stated in response that “[i]t is important to separate people and government. The idea that criticizing the government of Israel is antisemitic sets a very dangerous precedent. And it’s been used to silence diverse voices speaking up for human rights across our nation.”



(c) United States Congress

Tlaib is the only person in Congress who has been censured for their views on Israel-Palestine, despite the fact that several politicians have made openly genocidal remarks about Palestinians with impunity. On 9 October GOP Presidential Candidate Nikki Haley [wrote on Instagram](#), as Israel rained bombs down on civilian neighborhoods in Gaza, “Finish them @Nethanyahu.”

On November 1, in a speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, [Representative Brian Mast](#) stated “I think when we look at this, as a whole, I would encourage the other side to not so lightly throw around the idea of innocent Palestinian civilians, as is frequently said. I don’t think we would so lightly throw around the term ‘innocent Nazi civilians’ during World War II.” Although there was initially a move to try to censure Mast, nothing ultimately came of it.



(c) Owen Blacker

Misrepresentations have additionally been used to crack down on freedom of speech at universities. In December, during a US congressional hearing on antisemitism, US Representative Elise Stefanik, a pro-Trump Republican, intentionally misrepresented the word “intifada” as a calling for “genocide against Jews” and [peppered](#) the presidents of three elite US universities with the question of whether “calling for the genocide of Jews violates” their institution’s code of conduct. Although MIT President Sally Kornbluth pointed out that there have been no calls for “genocide against Jews” on her campus, Stefanik refused to abandon her line of questioning. The presidents of the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard were forced to resign in the wake of these hearings due to what was considered to be their failure to condemn genocide against Jews.



There have been [no reported calls](#) for “genocide against Jews” on any campus in the United States.



(c) Owen Blacker

The heavy restrictions placed on Palestinians and those who support their cause are clear violations of the right to freedom of speech and assembly. These restrictions are also normalizing political doublespeak by ennobling state attacks on democracy as efforts to fight hate, which weakens democratic institutions and values and sets the stage for authoritarian demagoguery. It is imperative that peaceful resistance to genocide be protected by laws, governments, and democratic institutions.

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Tunisia

Following the 2011 Tunisian Revolution, Tunisia was recognized as North Africa's first democracy. In October 2014 the country held its [first free parliamentary elections](#). More recently Tunisia has begun to take steps backwards towards its authoritarian past. In [July of 2021](#), President Kais Saied dismissed the Tunisian parliament, suspended the Tunisian Constitution, and dissolved the Supreme Judicial Council of Tunisia. In 2022, President Saied also [seized control of the independent electoral commission](#), further consolidating his rule.

2023 has seen the Tunisian government further crackdown on civil liberties, for example by [rounding up critics](#) of President Saied, including journalists, lawyers, political opponents, and activists, and by [banning protests](#). Furthermore, xenophobia and anti-black racism have been on the upswing in Tunisia, where an [estimated](#) 21,000 sub-Saharan Africans reside, often as they await the treacherous journey by sea to the shores of Europe. Many of these refugees are fleeing conflict and genocide at home, including [Darfuris](#) who have faced genocidal killing in 2023 from the Sudan's Rapid Support Forces.



On February 21, 2023, Tunisian President Saied made [racist and xenophobic comments](#) during a speech, stating that “hordes of irregular migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa” had come to Tunisia “with all the violence, crime, and unacceptable practices that entails.” Saied argued that sub-Saharan African immigration was an “unnatural” situation and part of a criminal plan designed to “change the demographic make-up” of Tunisia and turn Tunisia into “just another African country that doesn’t belong to the Arab and Islamic nations any more.”



(c) AlQalamTV TUNISIA

This speech sparked a [wave of racist violence](#) targeting black African migrants in Tunisia, who are often blamed for Tunisia's [economic troubles](#). Some of the language being used by political parties in Tunisia is indicative of emerging genocidal patterns. In July the Nationalist Party [claimed](#) that “Tunisia has been colonized by sub-Saharan Africans.” Claims of racialized ‘reverse colonization’ are red flags for the presence of genocidal ideology. According to [Human Rights Watch](#), migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Tunisia have faced arbitrary evictions from their homes and termination from their jobs since February.



They have also faced arbitrary arrests and detention by the Tunisian government, as well as a severe reduction in humanitarian aid and expulsions from Tunisia into the harsh Libyan desert. As Tunisia faces severe economic strains, black African migrants and refugees are vulnerable to increased persecution.



(c) European Commission

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Ukraine

As the world approaches the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, many analysts are speaking of a [stalemate](#) and speculating that Ukraine may be forced to cede territory to Moscow in 2024. Others, however, are [more optimistic](#) for the prospects of a Ukrainian victory, pointing to the successes of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in forcing Russia out of the Black Sea.

2023 brought mounting evidence of the genocidal nature of Russia's campaign. In August 2023 the New Lines Institute and Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights released a [legal analysis](#) of evidence of genocide in Ukraine, which [identified](#) not only "systematic and coordinated genocidal tactics against Ukrainians" but also an increase in genocidal incitement against Ukrainians from the highest levels of government in the Russian Federation.



On 17 March 2023 the ICC [issued](#) arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova for the war crimes of "unlawful deportation of population (children) and that of unlawful transfer of population (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation."

While the ICC has not yet accused Putin or Lvova-Belova of genocide, an amendment of the indictments to include the crime of genocide in 2024 is not unlikely. The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has written [three ICC communications](#) with its partner organization, the Ukraine-based Regional Center for Human Rights, arguing that Russia's forced removal of Ukrainian children, and especially the expedited naturalization and adoption of the children in Russia, constitutes the crime of genocide under Article II.e. of the Genocide Convention.



(c) President of Ukraine

Ukraine authorities have [documented](#) over 19,500 Ukrainian children who have been forcibly deported to Russia and who face forced naturalization and adoption once there. Russia has stated that it has removed hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian children, arguing that it has done so for their own safety. However, once in Russian territory, children's names are often changed and they are prevented from speaking Ukrainian. On December 9, 2023 the government of Ukraine [convened](#) the first meeting of the International Coalition of Countries for the Return of Ukrainian Children in Kyiv. Over 60 countries have signed on to this coalition, which aims to create a mechanism that will accelerate the return of the children to Ukraine.



So far, only a [few hundred children](#) have been returned to Ukraine through the efforts of organizations like Save Ukraine and the government of Qatar.

The war has been devastating for Ukraine. The United States [estimates](#) that Russia and Ukraine together have suffered a combined 500,000 military casualties, of which 70,000 are Ukrainian soldiers killed in action and 100,000 to 120,000 are Ukraine soldiers who have been wounded. While these numbers are lower than Russian casualties, they comprise a more significant part of Ukraine's military manpower and population. In November the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) [determined](#) that at least 10,000 civilians have been killed since February 24, 2022, including 560 children.



(c) Ministry of Internal Affairs Ukraine

Whatever emerges on the battlefield in 2024, it is clear that Ukraine's military success is directly [threatened](#) by authoritarian parties in the West, specifically the Republican Party in the United States and Victor Orban's right-wing Fidesz party and coalition government in Hungary. Republican opposition to Ukrainian aid in the first half of 2024 and a victory for President Donald Trump in the US presidential election in November could have devastating consequences for Ukraine's efforts to defend its sovereignty, return Ukrainian children, and counter Russia's genocidal campaign.

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United States

As the world enters 2024, the image of the United States as a shining city on a hill has taken several serious hits. While the US government continues to claim its exceptional moral standing in the world, the Biden administration's support for genocide in Gaza dispels the myth of the US as a global arbiter of peace and morality, to the detriment of its future security. The United States does, however, continue to support the Ukrainian people in their fight against a genocidal, imperialist Russian invasion, though this support has been hindered by the right flank of the Republican Party.

While commendable in fighting against genocide in Ukraine, the United States is concurrently supplying and arming the genocidal Israeli state in its quest to eliminate the Palestinian people in historical Palestine. Solidarity with those experiencing genocide must be uncompromising and non-discriminatory. In this sense, the United States has failed completely in upholding its responsibilities under the Genocide Convention.



At the time of writing, the US has provided both arms and unwavering diplomatic cover to the Israeli state as it has [killed over 23,000 people in Gaza, including nearly 10,000 children](#).

Israel's war on Gaza, claiming to target the militant group Hamas, has demolished entire neighborhoods, reducing Gaza City in the Strip's north, to rubble. Of the 2.3 million residents, over 1.9 million have been displaced, including many forced to move multiple times. Israel has received continuous arms shipments from the United States as well as other Western nations, such as the United Kingdom. The [Biden Administration has on multiple occasions bypassed Congressional authority](#) to supply Israel with weapons, most recently on December 30th.



(c) Gage Skidmore

In his capacity as one of the most powerful leaders in the world, President Biden has, at multiple junctures, [parroted the propaganda](#) of a foreign military (the IDF) and [repeatedly asserted debunked and false information](#) as fact. It has become abundantly clear that the United States' opposition to genocide rests on whether or not that genocide supports or infringes upon US national interests. In the case of Ukraine, the US is fervently anti-genocide. In the case of Palestine, the United States is unfortunately fervently pro-genocide. The Lemkin Institute denounces the United States for prioritizing its perceived national interests over the rights of Palestinians. There can be no exceptions in the fight against genocide and genocide is in no state's long-term self-interest.



In fact, unwavering and uncritical US support for Israel risks embroiling the world in a regional – or even a global – war, an outcome that serves nobody except perhaps weapons manufacturers. Arguably, US unwillingness to deescalate in the tense days after October 7 have put Israelis and Jews at greater risk as well.

At the United Nations, the United States has been a steadfast defender of the Israeli genocide, watering down the language of multilateral resolutions, delaying votes, and twice using its all-powerful veto at the Security Council. The United States opposes the South African legal claim at the International Court of Justice that Israel is committing “genocidal acts against the people in Gaza.” US officials have [called](#) the case brought by the government of South Africa “meritless” and “completely without any basis in fact.” The US government has in fact largely ignored the [80+ page filing](#), including the genocidal statements made by Israeli officials.



(c) U.S. Embassy of Tel Aviv

Domestically, the United States continues to struggle with the consequences of its history of genocide and slavery. Police violence continues to ravage the United States. Efforts to force police departments to use body cameras, undergo sensitivity training, and use “less than lethal” tactics when engaging with the public have not had the promised effect of reducing killings by police. These attempts to quell police violence in the United States fail to address a critical part of American policing: institutionalized racism and police impunity.

In 2023, [police officers killed 1,293 people in the United States](#), the most ever, an increase of 43 killings from 2022. Manuel Esteban Paez Terá, known as Tortuguita, was [killed by police on 18 January](#) outside of Atlanta, Georgia. Terá had been protesting the planned construction of a police training complex, known colloquially as ‘Cop City,’ among other “forest defenders.” Police initially claimed Terá was armed and fired on officers; however, no evidence of these claims have been produced. Conversely, an autopsy revealed Tortuguita had their [hands raised](#) at the time of their death.



(c) Tyler Lahti

The assault that killed Tortuguita is an “[example](#) of strong-arm techniques being used by the American security apparatus to destroy all efforts to reign in the growing police state and to imagine more transformative futures in the country.”

The struggle for equality and human rights in the United States remains ongoing, especially as right-wing politicians ingratiate themselves with members of the “gender-critical” transphobic movement. Transphobia has risen sharply in the United States over the recent decade as fascist and far-right politicians have targeted trans folks as a wedge issue in their “culture wars.”



Right-wing politicians have proposed and passed laws to exclude trans individuals from participating in sports, accessing healthcare, and even seeking medical care for gender dysphoria. With respect to attacks against the trans community and their access to appropriate, gender-affirming healthcare, it is especially salient to remember that research [shows](#) that gender-affirming healthcare for trans youth and adults improves the quality of life and overall life outcomes. Despite studies that support the necessity of access to gender-affirming care, American legislators have introduced hundreds of anti-trans bills. According to independent American journalist [Erin Reed](#), 550 anti-trans laws were introduced in the United States in 2023. From February through May, in a show of remarkable courage and morality, [Nebraska Senators Machaela Cavanaugh and Megan Hunt filibustered](#) an outwardly transphobic bill that purposefully targeted trans youth, parents, and medical staff for assisting trans youth in accessing gender-affirming care.



(c) Ted Eytan

In many ways, the two parties seem to be out of ideas, leading to a demoralized and fractured electorate. We call on our leaders to reimagine American society as one that genuinely champions the rights and liberties of all while fighting against the scourge of discrimination, enormous economic injustice, police killings, and support for genocidaires. This will require a courageous reckoning with the mass atrocities of the US past and their enduring impact on the present, but there are few other options to stem the tide of widespread pessimism and anomie, which make the US ripe for violent fascist takeover.

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Uyghurs

Since 2017, the Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang have been under attack by the Chinese Government. The Uyghurs face “mass arbitrary detention, torture, forced disappearances, mass surveillance, cultural and religious persecution, separation of families, forced labor, sexual violence, and violations of reproductive rights” according to an [article](#) by Human Rights Watch.

In August 2022 the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a long-awaited report stating that the Chinese government’s rights violations against both these minority populations [potentially](#) “constitute crimes against humanity.” In 2023 China significantly [expanded](#) one of the institutions critical to its genocidal persecution of the Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims: the state-run boarding school system in Xinjiang.



[According to](#) the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, China’s boarding school system forcibly removes children of Uyghur descent from their families and communities, resulting in their forced assimilation into Han Chinese culture.

The OHCHR [describes](#) “Uyghur children [being] placed in these boarding schools reportedly hav[ing] little or no access to education in the Uyghur language and [being] under increasing pressure to speak and learn only Mandarin (Putonghua), as opposed to education aimed at achieving bilingualism in both Uyghur and Mandarin.” Section II.e. of the Genocide Convention recognizes “[f]orcibly transferring children of the group to another group” as an act that can constitute the crime of genocide.



(c) Malcolm Brown

Despite condemnations of the Chinese government’s policy towards Uyghurs and other Muslims from the international community and the imposition of sanctions on Chinese government officials, agencies, and companies, it does not appear that Beijing is looking to change course anytime soon. For this reason it is important that international actors work together to put pressure on the Chinese government for the abuses it has inflicted upon Uyghurs and other Muslim minority populations in the country.

In August 2023 [Human Rights Watch](#) called for, among other things, “the successful adoption of a UN resolution to set up an investigative mechanism, with a mandate to investigate



alleged violations in Xinjiang, identify those responsible, and make recommendations to advance accountability” as well as the pursuit of “criminal cases under the concept of ‘universal jurisdiction,’ which allows a country’s domestic judicial system to investigate and prosecute certain grave crimes, such as torture, even if they were not committed on its territory.”



(c) Elvert Barnes

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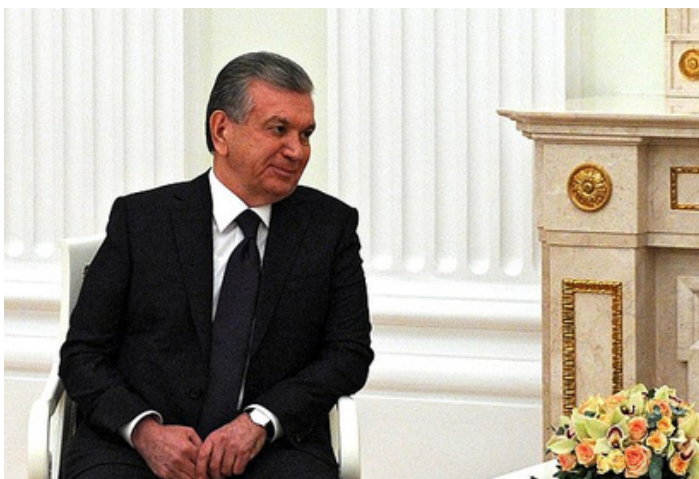
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Uzbekistan

There have been numerous reports of human rights abuses in Uzbekistan for several years, [including in 2023](#). There are no free or fair elections in the country, including the most [recent election this past year](#). Strict state control of the political sphere also explains the lack of political pluralism. Media is heavily censored. There are frequent government crackdowns on the [freedom to practice religion](#). Religious orders must be registered with the Uzbek government and receive permits acknowledging this state approval. If these permits are not given, then the existence of [religious leaders, organizations, and their practices are criminalized](#). Academic freedoms, as well as the [expression of political and personal beliefs](#), are also heavily curtailed by the Uzbek government. The Uzbek government severely limits the [freedom of assembly](#) and protests that occur are often met with [violent repression by Uzbek forces](#).



(c) Russian Presidential Executive Office

There are limited freedoms for the existence and operation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Uzbekistan, especially NGOs focusing on promoting human rights.

[LGBTQIA+ Uzbeks](#), specifically gay men and transgender women, face arbitrary detention and forced sexual assault by Uzbek authorities.



The rights of minority groups in Uzbekistan are frequently [ignored and violated](#). The state has various techniques of repression, including ones that verge on violating the Genocide Convention: the erasure of the languages and cultures of ethnic minorities, the use of demographic engineering to weaken the hold that ethnic minorities have over their indigenous land, and [enforced sterilizations](#) and abortions as forms of population control. These groups, which are already facing oppression, persecution, and genocidal violence in an authoritarian government, are at risk of further genocidal violence in the future.

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Weapons Manufacturers

As instability, military conflict, and genocide are on the rise around the world, weapons manufacturers are experiencing soaring profits. This is particularly true in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. [According to Reuters](#), "[s]ince February 2022, the Invesco [Aerospace & Defense ETF] total net assets have nearly quadrupled to \$2.37 billion from \$632 million as the war in Ukraine boosted military spending and aid. Assets further climbed 19% since the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas that killed 1200 people, followed by Israeli military strikes on Gaza that have killed more than 13,000 people [as of November 20, 2023]." Lockheed Martin showed the [highest market capitalization on record](#) in 2022, a result of the war in Ukraine.



(c) Vitaly V. Kuzmin

The world's top five weapons manufacturers are US corporations Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman Corp., Boeing, and General Dynamics Corp. Since 2013, the United States has steadily emerged as the single largest exporter of arms.

Between 2013 and 2022, "[t]he United States' share of global arms exports increased from 33 to 40 per cent while Russia's fell from 22 to 16 per cent," [according](#) to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).



(c) Ank Kumar

Weapons companies have a dangerous influence on Western democracies, especially in the USA. [According to](#) William Hartung, the director of Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy in Washington, DC, "the arms industry has promoted an increasingly "streamlined" process of approval of such weapons sales [in the US], campaigning for numerous measures that would make it even easier to arm foreign regimes regardless of their human-rights records or support for the interests Washington theoretically promotes."

The outside influence of weapons manufacturers on political institutions in the Western democracies is a particular threat to genocide prevention initiatives, as genocides are profitable enterprises for an industry that, without strict regulation, has no reason to limit its potential markets. [Only 1 percent](#) of the licenses for US arms sales are checked by the US State Department. The militarization of politics reduces chances that peaceful, diplomatic solutions will even be attempted, which, especially in a superpower like the USA, places people all over the world at risk.



In May 2023 Hartung [told](#) AnalystNews that “the diplomatic, economic and cultural instruments of statecraft are underdeveloped [in the USA], whereas the military [and weapons manufacturers] gets the bulk of the money.”

Weapons manufacturers are preparing for 2024 to be [another year of record sales](#), with Lockheed Martin, Grumman, and General Dynamics each expecting profits to increase by 5 to 7 percent during 2024. Weapons manufacturers have increased production steadily since 2022, and plan to continue increasing production to meet the estimated demand in the coming year. “Each day the munitions are being fired reinforces the need for substantive stockpiles,” Tim Cahill, who runs Lockheed’s Missiles and Fire Control business, said in a [Reuters interview](#). “And I don’t see that going down.”



(c) GDC

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Yemen

Positioned on the southwestern corner of the Arabian peninsula, Yemen, like Syria, has been embroiled in a civil war that has lasted nearly a decade. In 2014, Ansar Allah, also known as the Houthis, launched a rebellion in response to a popular revolt against the autocratic government of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Ansar Allah is a [Zayid shī'ia group](#) that originated in the 1980s as a community organization, originally receiving government support. Following American intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Houthis took a sharply anti-US and anti-Western stance, often coming into conflict with the Yemeni government. Persistent crackdowns on the Houthis by the Saleh government led to open conflict with the group before it swept into the capital in 2014. Similar to Syria, the country has become a battleground for regional hegemony between regional powers, in this case Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



Today, the Houthis control the northern and eastern regions of the nation, including the capital.

Nearly [80% of the Yemeni population](#) live in territory controlled by the Houthis. In contrast, another group, the Southern Transition Council (STC), backed by the UAE, controls large parts of the southern and southwestern coast alongside the island of Socotra. The [Presidential Leadership Council](#) (PLC), formed in 2022 as an outgrowth of the internationally-recognized government, controls parts of the south, southeast, and some areas in central Yemen.



(c) Henry Ridgwell | VOA

After over thirty years of ruling Yemen, Saleh was forced into signing a transition agreement in which his decades-long deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, would assume power. Hadi was sworn in as President for a two-year term in February 2012, after running in an unopposed election. Hadi was then unable to navigate the political situation deftly, creating an even worse political vacuum. The Houthi armed resistance, who in late August of 2014 had already made gains toward Sana'a, seized and controlled the capital by the end of September of that year.

After rejecting a power-sharing agreement and a new constitution drafted by the Hadi government, the Houthis took control of Yemen's government.



By February 2015, President Hadi had fled to Aden with the international community denouncing the Houthis.



(c) Almgdad Mojalli | VOA

From 2015–2022, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and several other nations, backed by the United States, waged a brutal air campaign alongside funding and arming anti-Houthi proxies in Yemen. In 2019, the UAE claimed to disengage from the conflict; however, this is likely a change in tactic from direct to indirect intervention as the UAE maintains sway over the STC and other groups in the South. Following years of war, in April 2022 the Houthis and Saudi Arabia agreed to a truce in hopes of finding a durable, long-term peace. However, the war began as a localized conflict before growing into a regional war. Treaties between the Saudis and Houthis are welcome, [but these alone](#) will not end the civil war. A multitude of actors in Yemen remain opposed to the Houthis – attaining peace and power sharing agreements with anti-Houthi factions like the STC and PLC will be necessary components to long-term peace.

Nearly a decade of war, blockades, and airstrikes have rendered Yemen one of the most acute humanitarian disasters on the planet. All parties to the conflict have committed human rights violations, including the Houthis, Saudi Arabia, Yemeni Government Forces, the United Arab Emirates, STC, and other armed groups.

As recently as this past year, both [Houthi and Government forces have weaponized water access](#), restricting municipalities from access to necessities to coerce locals into supporting respective war efforts. While the [Chinese-brokered normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran](#) is welcome in diffusing tensions in the region, it will not provide a road map to peace in Yemen. As the Houthis have expressed, they are not subservient to their Iranian allies. Extensive work is yet to be done on the ground to mend the disparate rivals that are at war across Yemen.



(c) Khamenei.ir

Saudi-Houthi direct talks are a move in the right direction. However, contemporary realities may jeopardize the peace talks mediated by Oman and the UN. At the close of 2023 the [UN estimated that over 223,000 people](#) had died as a result of over nine years of civil war. The Campaign Against Arms Trade claims the death toll is [closer to 400,000](#), if not more.

The ongoing Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza threatens to [destabilize](#) Yemen's fragile truce. The Houthi movement has pursued a policy of area denial for Israeli-flagged/bound vessels in the Gulf of Aden/Red Sea.



As Yemen is located along a critical juncture in the Red Sea, seabound cargo headed to Israel must traverse the waters adjacent to the Yemeni coast, lest they option for the much further route that spans the entirety of the African continent, through the Mediterranean, and into Israel.



(c) Felton Davis

While solidarity with Gaza is commendable, the deterrence of civilian ship traffic in international waters is illegal. The Yemeni policy is a [de facto sanction policy](#) enforced with violence in the form of hijackings and drone/missile strikes. Predictably, this policy has drawn the ire of the United States and the condemnation of the Western world. Tensions in the Red Sea are now very high as a US-led anti-Houthi [coalition](#) to secure shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden/Red Sea has threatened the Houthi leadership. For the time being, the US is not striking inside Yemen but instead shooting down missiles and drones launched from Houthi territory.

It is imperative that the genocide in Gaza not spread conflict throughout the Middle East and imperil the pause in armed conflict in Yemen that has allowed humanitarian aid to reach vulnerable populations. The United States should pivot in its blind support for Israel and pursue a lasting peace in the region with Arab partners. At the very least, the United States must refrain from striking Houthi targets in Yemen and pursue a policy of non-interference in Yemeni affairs.

For its part, the UN must remain actively engaged in finding a long-term solution to the conflict in Yemen, one that centers Yemeni agency, human rights, and the representation of Yemen's people.

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