

CONTRASTING ATTITUDES OF WESTERN COUNTRIES TOWARDS UKRAINE AND PALESTINE.

Introduction: Same Story, Different Narratives

The invasion of Ukraine by Putin has brought up some interesting values, perspectives and dark reality regarding the conflicts around the globe. Indeed, the determination of Ukrainians for freedom of sovereignty has called for applause, especially in Western hemisphere, but this applause is limited to Ukraine— or more broadly Europe. Places elsewhere like Palestine, don't enjoy the same attention as Ukraine.

There are plenty of ways in which the attitudes of Western countries differ when it comes to Palestine and Ukraine, even though both of these entities are independent bodies being occupied by an invading force. In the case of Ukraine, it is Russia, and for Palestine, it is Israel. Both Israel and Russia have illegally occupied the other for their self-interested goals. The settler colonialism and Occupied Territories of East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza are all used by Israel to develop its colonies as part of the Judaization process, meanwhile Russia invaded the independent country of Ukraine as a 'special operation' against 'neo-nazies', extremists and NATO. Both of these cases are different, just like any other geopolitical scenario, but one resemblance between these are the "occupied" and the "occupier", not to mention the human atrocities that are perpetuated by both occupiers.

Despite the similarities between the two situations, the attitudes are very different. Western media is in favor of Ukraine, overwhelmingly in favor. On the other hand, the attitudes of the same media towards Palestine is considered "controversial", where both parties are shown as equal. The oppression of Palestine is called "conflict" undermining the injustice and growing authoritarianism of Israeli authorities. There is a stark difference in the treatment of Ukraine and Palestine, in terms of economics, military, and social narratives of the media.

Economical Double-standards:

The economical assistance for Ukraine after the invasion of February, 2022 has been overwhelming from the Western countries. The USA has pledged to provide 13 billion dollars in humanitarian, security, and economic assistance for the fiscal year of 2022-23. Moreover, the USA spent 302 million dollars in humanitarian aid to Ukraine and affected countries this year. This is quite remarkable, and a sign of good gesture. But it also shows the stark double-standards, when we see that the financial aid to Palestine is only \$417 million—

including the COVID relief for Gaza and West Bank. The difference between \$13 billion and \$417 million is staggering, especially when you consider the dire situation of Palestine for the past few decades.

The hypocrisy is apparent when observing US's actions towards both invaders. On one hand, Russia is heavily sanctioned. Top Russian banks and financial institutions are all terminated from the US, and the exportable resources needed to run Russian gas are also reduced. The Russian economy is undoubtedly challenged. But this 'punishment' is only limited to Russia. Israel enjoys full economic partnership with the USA. In fact, the US provides Israel \$3.8 billion plus additional loan guarantees. It is truly heartbreaking to see such hypocrisy, where an invader is paid more than the victim.

Similar patterns can be seen in other European countries, such as the UK. The UK Export Finance has pledged to retain £3.6 billion in financial assistance to Ukraine, but the support to Palestine is only £38 million. Ukraine is provided with 100 TIMES more support than Palestine! Just like the USA, the UK has also sanctioned Russia, but enjoys great economic partnership with Israel. One absolutely devastating fact is that the UK provides arms to Israel worth £387 million. The occupier is given 10 times more money than the victim. This hypocrisy of the UK completely nullifies any financial aid to Palestine.

Military Support:

The US has invested \$6.3 billion in security assistance since February 2021 to Ukraine, and a total of \$8.3 billions since 2014 for training, security and protecting its borders. Now, compare this to the security assistance provided to Palestine: ZERO. Instead of helping Palestine, the US has strengthened Israel and its aggressive ambitions. \$38 billion in military aid, where \$5 billion are for missile systems only. The F-35 jets, the latest-generation planes, are 'purchased' by Israel through US financing. The same jets that bombarded Palestinian villages in May 2021. This hypocritical position, where the US supports the victim in one position as 'peacekeeper' and provides billions in military aid to invader against a foe that is already occupied, deserves harsh criticism.

The UK is no different. It has strong arms-deal with Israel that is worth \$387 million. Similar to the US, the UK does not provide any support to the Palestine Liberation Army, something that they definitely deserve. Any words of support are worth nothing when the devastation brought upon Palestine is through their own financing.

Social & Media Attitudes:

The Western media was quick to follow the Ukraine situation, denouncing Russia, praising the resistance and heroic actions of Ukrainian citizens, soldiers and politicians. All of which were deserving as Ukraine showed true bravery and created an example for patriotism. The problem arose when the Western media praised Ukrainian citizens for the same thing, yet criticised Palestinians for another. For example, Ukrainian citizens used Molotov cocktails as explosives

against Russian troops. The videos and images of this circulated around the internet, calling it heroic. However a situation where Palestinian teenagers use Molotovs are never shown in Western media. There are numerous examples of Israeli soldiers brutally shooting teenagers over Molotovs, especially in annexed territories that Israel has illegally occupied. For example, Muhammad Shahada, a 14-year old was shot for throwing Molotovs. His shooting was justified by blaming Shahada for throwing Molotovs on bypassers, even though there was no evidence for it. This story was never as viral as Ukraine ones.

Moreover, a more prominent media hypocrisy came from Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram. At the start of the Ukraine invasion, Meta announced that *“As a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine we have temporarily made allowances for forms of political expression that would normally violate our rules, like violent speech such as ‘death to the Russian invaders’*. This decision allowed Ukrainians, and surrounding countries to express their political sentiments far more openly than before. This situation would normally be fine and understandable but Meta showed double-standards towards Palestinians.

“Facebook has suppressed content posted by Palestinians and their supporters speaking out about human rights issues in Israel and Palestine,” said Deborah Brown, senior researcher at Human Rights Watch. The Israeli forces led a brutal suppression in May 2021, where Palestinians were forcefully removed from their houses in Sheik Jarrah. Palestians, as a result, went to social media to demand justice, spread awareness, and criticize the demolitions. Sadly, Meta ‘accidentally’ suppressed their voices. The double-standards are very apparent here.

Furthermore, in Premiere Leagues, several football teams showed their support for Ukraine, by wearing bands on arms in the colours of Ukrainian flag, wearing shirts that said “No War” and shirts with Ukrainian flags were also very common. The stadiums had yellow and blue colours at screens, fans held Ukrainian flags and sung songs praising Ukraine. It was truly a remarkable sight, showing brotherly love. But, once again, the double-standards showed up. In the UCL match, Celtics raised Palestinianian flags in solidarity, but they were fined £8,616 for this over the reason of “use of gestures, words, objects or any other means to transmit any message that is not fit for a sports event, particularly messages that are of a political, ideological, religious, offensive or provocative nature.” It’s truly astonishing how supporting one occupied country is praised but the other is punished.

Similarly, different sports organizations banned Russian teams, players or in some instances the flags were hidden. FIFA, FIDE, and the Olympics all banned Russians from participating or hide their flags. But in the true hypocritical fashion, none of these organizations banned Israeli players or teams.

To conclude, Western attitudes towards Ukraine and Palestine are very different. Where one country is praised for resistance and bravery, the other is shunned, suppressed, ignored and negatively labelled.

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