



Let me begin my paper with a famous quote from the renowned British philosopher and logician Bertrand Russell: “War does not determine who is right - only who is left.” He also added that “It is possible that mankind is on the threshold of a golden age; but, if so, it will be necessary first to slay the dragon that guards the door, and this dragon is religion.” Very often religion plays a major role in the cause of wars. In the case of Israel-Palestine war the confrontation between two religions is evident. Jews want to establish their supremacy and Hamas wants to spread Islamic presence. Instead of spreading peace and harmony many religions teach intolerance and inject in the believers the venom of enmity to other religions.

As you all know Russia-Ukraine conflict started in 2014 annexing Crimea from Ukraine and on 24th February 2022 Russia started a full scale invasion of Ukraine and began occupying the country. 7.4 million Refugees have fled Ukraine. According to an estimate published by The New York Times, the number of Russian troops killed and wounded in Ukraine is more than two lakhs. Violations of human rights and atrocity crimes have both occurred during the war. Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russian authorities and armed forces have committed multiple war crimes in the form of deliberate attacks against civilian targets, massacres of civilians, torture and rape of women and children, and indiscriminate attacks in densely populated areas. Ukrainian forces have also been accused of committing various war crimes, including mistreatment of detainees, though on a much smaller scale than Russian forces. The Russian invasion was internationally condemned as a war of aggression. United Nations General Assembly resolution demanded a full withdrawal of Russian forces, the International Court of Justice ordered Russia to suspend military operations and the Council of Europe expelled Russia. Many countries imposed new sanctions, which affected the economies of Russia and the world, and provided humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine.

The disinformation propagated by the Russian government that the war is to defend and protect the civilians along with the patriotic feeling of ‘my country right or wrong’ led to the public opinion in favour of the war and the Russian President Putin’s rating rose from 71% on the eve of the invasion to 82% in March 2023. The New York Times reports that the total number of Ukrainian and Russian troops killed or wounded in the war so far is nearing 500,000. Both Russia and Ukraine do not disclose the exact number of casualties. Russia’s military casualties, the officials said, are approaching 300,000. The number includes as many as 120,000 deaths and 170,000 to 180,000 injured troops. The Ukrainian figures, which the officials disclose is around 70,000 killed and 100,000 to 120,000 wounded. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that more than 10000 Ukraine civilians have been killed and nearly 20000 injured during these 20 months of continuous war. The casualties of the civilians are less compared to the two months old Israel-Hamas war. That is mainly because millions of refugees have fled Ukraine and the battle is between the troops of Russia and Ukraine.

As we know, there is no justification for Russia's conquest of Ukraine. It is only Russia's thirst for power and supremacy and arrogance to show its might to its less military potent neighbor. And for this, Russian government has already sacrificed nearly three lakhs lives of its soldiers. The governments consider the soldiers just like robots and never feel any compassion for their lives and their families that depend upon them. The soldiers who sacrifice their lives for their nations have dreams like us. They eagerly long to meet their parents, wives, children, siblings and kith and kin immediately after the end of the war when they are granted leave. Instead their mortal remains are brought to their houses flooded with tears and wails.

Let us now go through the Israel-Hamas war which started on 7th October 2023 when Hamas led Palestine militant groups attacked southern Israel and killed 1400 people consisting of Israelis and foreigners, mostly civilians. Over 240 Israelis and foreign nationals were taken hostage and brought into the Gaza Strip. After clearing Hamas militants, the Israeli military retaliated by conducting an extensive aerial bombardment campaign on Gazan targets, and followed up with a large-scale ground invasion of Gaza. More than 32,000 Palestinians, the majority being women and children, have been killed in the fighting.

There has been widespread killing of civilians, and human rights groups and a panel of United Nations special rapporteurs have accused both Israel and Hamas of war crimes. Fears of a humanitarian crisis were heightened on 11 October, after Israel announced that it would cut off food, water, electricity, and fuel supplies to Gaza, on top of the existing blockade by both Egypt and Israel. Israel urged 1.1 million Gazans to evacuate northern Gaza, while Hamas called on residents to stay in their homes. The UN reported that around a million Palestinians, nearly half of Gaza's population, have been internally displaced. On the main road, a steady stream of people could be seen fleeing southward, clutching children and bags of belongings, many on foot and some on donkey-drawn carts. Just imagine the pangs and agonies when we are ordered to leave our houses or we will be killed! Our houses are going to be bombed and we can never come back. How unbearable and heart-breaking would be our mental state! More than a million Palestinians are facing this harsh reality.

A vote at the UN General Assembly on 27 October saw an overwhelming majority of nations calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The present coalition government of Israel consisting of seven parties is led by the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The government has been described as the most right-wing government in Israeli history, as well as Israel's most religious government. The Zionist nationalism of Israel stands for the establishment of homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine and it supports the ideology of the development and protection of the State of Israel.

Let us now go back to the root cause of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. After the First World War, Palestine came under the British rule. The British Empire allowed the scattered Jews to come back to Palestine. Britain wanted to leave the place after dividing Palestine into Jews and Arab nations and informed its intention to the UN. But the Jews agency that made a parallel rule there ignored the UN plan of division and declared the land as Israel nation in 1948. Then started the Arab-Israel war and Israel conquered more territories occupied by the Arabs, more than 23% that UN planned to allot. Of the balance Palestine territory, the West Bank and East Jerusalem came under Jordan's control and Gaza came under Egypt's control. In the 1967 six day war these areas also came under Israel's control. Israel was requested by the UN to retreat to their original land, and the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza territory should be treated as independent Palestine nation. But Israel rejected this demand. They have already occupied East Jerusalem

and they continued insurgency in the West Bank. The current war, which is the fiercest, is the fifth war in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Palestine. It seems that the international community has almost given up the idea of Palestine nation. Even the Arab nations have ignored Palestine people and they support Israel for economic, military gains.

The Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says that Israel will stop war if Hamas releases the two hundred plus hostages kept under control by Hamas in Gaza and Hamas responded that they are willing to stop fight if the 6000 plus Palestine prisoners are released. It means that the war will continue for long days. As Netanyahu has stated the war will continue till all the Hamas militants are killed and Gaza is freed from the Hamas administration. In the name of destroying Hamas troops and the underground tunnels where they have sought refuge, several hundreds of innocent civilians are killed every day. The majority killed and wounded are children and women. It is reported that every ten minutes a child is killed.

Around one million people of North Gaza left their hard earned properties and houses seeking refuge in the South. Since Israel has cut off supply of food, water, electricity, and fuel to Gaza the refugees get just single meal a day in shelter homes. They are forced to drink filthy water, resulting stomach upset and dysentery. They have sleepless nights in damned darkness. Deafening explosions tremor the buildings and children shiver and shriek. Children are the majority wounded. Thousands lie with bandages in hospitals. Amputated children cry in the hospital to give back their lost legs. They say that they want to play with their friends. Many will die and those who survive will be bed-ridden for long time. They cry for their parents' presence. And loud shrieks echo the walls when they know their parents are killed. They are destined to live with trauma injected by the war. Surgeries are done without anesthesia due to the lack of medicines. Imagine the pain and screams of the patients and the mental agonies of the doctors and nurses! Several hospitals have been bombed and destroyed killing hundreds of patients and others who have sought refuge. At least 500 people were killed in an explosion at al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City on 18th October. Israel troops have encircled Al Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest hospital which is a haven to 20000 people consisting of patients, hospital staff and refugees who have lost their houses. There is no electricity. Medical devices stopped. Patients, especially those in intensive care unit, started to die. The Israeli troops were shooting at anyone outside or inside the hospital, and prevented movement between the buildings in the compound. As per 14th November news report 179 dead bodies, many of them decayed were buried in a single large pit.

More than half of the hospitals in Gaza are closed due to the lack of medicine and electricity. Gravediggers have no rest at all since burned dead bodies of innocent civilians are brought one after another and multiple bodies are buried in each grave. Israel justifies bombing of hospitals and schools telling that Hamas has used the civilians as human shield and their militants are seeking refuge in those buildings. But there is no justification of killing and wounding thousands of innocent civilians and destroying their houses and shelters in the pretext of hunting the Hamas militants. It is reported that of the 2.2 million civilians of Gaza one out of 57 is either killed or seriously injured.

Children dead and living ask the fighters and war mongers: "What harm have we done?" It echoes and bleeds every humane mind. Isn't this a war for revenge? Revenge against whom? Thousands of innocent civilians who lost their lives, dear ones and properties?

The war kills not only human beings but destroys plants and animals, rivers, oceans, air, and the earth itself. The toxic metals used in bombs and missiles like

TNT, DNT, RDX, LEAD, MERCURY, URANIUM etc. spread in the atmosphere and affects brain, heart and lungs. The dust created from the debris pollutes the underground water. Earth becomes useless for agriculture. The remnants of ammunitions take 100 to 300 years to dissolve in the earth. The unexploded bombs on earth create other threats. The developed countries like Russia and the USA emit more toxic gases to the atmosphere and cause environmental damage through the wars than the third world countries that pollute the air for their survival.

Fortunately, a truce for six days was made due to the peace talks and involvement of Qatar, Egypt and USA and it came into effect on 24th November. 50 hostages, mainly children and women, will be released by Hamas and in return 150 Palestine prisoners will be released and trucks carrying medical aid and food will be permitted to get into Gaza strip. Unfortunately, the promise for a continued truce has not been fulfilled.

As on 25th March 2024 when this article is drafted, more than 32000 civilians have been killed by the Israeli troops in Gaza. Even during this Ramadan month Israel is not willing to stop the war. It is reported that almost every day those hungry civilians—mainly children and women—thronging for the food packets dropped from the UN aided helicopters are shot down by the Israeli soldiers. It is warned by the UN that that famine is imminent in northern Gaza and that continuation of the war could push half of the territory's 2.3 million people to the brink of starvation.

There is no hope of a truce in the near future and the war will continue killing thousands and thousands of civilians leading to the worst catastrophe of famine death of millions. May God forbid it is our prayer!

War is never a solution to any problem. Only bilateral talks can solve the issues between two countries. In fact war is a byproduct of petty selfishness, enmity, thirst for power and wealth and arrogance. The warring countries want to continue the wars unendingly and the reason I think is mainly the weapon business. Thus wealth and profit motive is a major reason for the prolonged wars.

Let me wind up my paper quoting a few lines from my poem “Martyrs at the borders” taken from my collection Multicultural Symphony published in 2014:

How much of a country's revenue
allotted for its defence every year!
Total money spent on defence
can wipe out poverty from the planet for ever
Is human species so belligerent and destructive?
Aren't the masses peace lovers,
benevolent and compassionate?
Why then such a huge waste
for defence unnecessary?
Why create tension at the borders?
A means to divert subjects' attention
and muffle mass' protest against corruption?

As to bring peace and harmony into this world what we need is to have kind hearted rulers like Emperor Asoka. Unfortunately most of the rulers of the mighty nations are selfish and business minded.

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