

Palestine: Blinken Blinks on Human Rights

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On March 3, the US State Department has put on its website a hilarious statement titled [The United States Opposes the ICC Investigation into the Palestinian Investigation](#).

In a nutshell, the statement exposes that the Joe Biden Administration has blinked for a second time on the human rights situation in West Asia by refusing to even acknowledge that the ICC investigation into the “Palestinian situation” is about human rights first and foremost.

The State Department’s argument essentially narrows down to a bureaucratic point questioning the ICC’s jurisdiction to investigate the human rights violations issues that involve the state of Israel and, secondly, that “Palestinians do not qualify as a sovereign state and therefore, are not qualified to obtain membership as a state in, participate as a state in, or delegate jurisdiction to the ICC.”

Human rights issue ought to be felt in the blood and felt along the heart. They are not the stuff of cold reasoning from legal angle or of political expediency. The State Department statement on the hapless Palestinian brings to mind what Pablo Picasso once said, “Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist.”

Such sophistry to quibble over the tragic plight of the Palestinians will reduce the American diplomats to con artists on the global stage. The fact of the matter is that The State of Palestine is recognised by 138 UN members, and since 2012 it has a status of a non-member observer state in the United Nations. Palestine is a member of the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the G77, the International Olympic Committee, and other international bodies.

The US is punishing the messenger — ICC’s prosecutor — for showing the audacity to rake up the Palestinian issue when she is due to retire in June!

The State Department claims that it “remains deeply committed to ensuring justice and accountability for international atrocity crimes” but ICC happens to be “a Court of limited jurisdiction. Moreover, the United States believes a peaceful, secure and more prosperous future for the people of the Middle East depends on building bridges and creating new avenues for dialogue and exchange, not unilateral judicial actions that exacerbate tensions and undercut efforts to advance a negotiated two-state solution. We will continue to uphold our strong commitment to Israel and its security, including by opposing actions that seek to

target Israel unfairly.”

It is a laughable contention riddled with contradictions and paradoxes. What does it all amount to? Succinctly put, the state department says, “Show me the Face and I will show you the Rule.” But what is it that unnerves the Biden Administration when it comes to the ICC investigation on Israel? From an Israeli perspective, read the report by Axios titled [*International Criminal Court opens Israel-Palestine war crimes probe*](#).

Fundamentally, it is the very same cynical mindset that made the Biden Administration duck for cover when in all propriety it should have sanctioned the Saudi Crown Prince for ordering the murder — and indeed executing it with such ghoulish relish — of Jamal Khashoggi who, incidentally, also happened to be a resident of the US apart from being a “strategic asset” of the US security establishment.

The Biden Administration is lost for words to explain its cowardice. On top of it, it changed its mind sheepishly and decided on second thoughts to delete three Saudi names that were originally listed in the CIA report on Khashoggi’s murder rebased by the White House last Friday. Apparently, that is because those 3 top henchmen in the Saudi security apparatus also happen to be interlocutors with whom the US security agencies continue to do business. How could the US possibly sanction its own Saudi collaborators, isn’t it?

Both in the case of Israel and the Saudi Crown prince, if the US is in such an acute predicament caught between a rock and the hard place, it is solely because Washington has been complicit in the human rights violations by Israel and Saudi Arabia all along. The US has so much blood on its hands that all the perfumes of Arabia cannot wipe them clean.

Surely, Israel wouldn’t have got away with murder all this while with such impunity without the certainty that it could hide behind the US if an hour of reckoning ever came its way. As for Saudi Arabia, it committed horrific crimes from a human rights perspective only because it has been the US’ preferred geopolitical tool for the past several decades.

Pray, why did the CIA confer on the former Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayef the George Tenet medal in 2015? Mike Pompeo as CIA chief travelled to Riyadh to [*personally confer the medal*](#) on Prince Nayef! Simply put, top US officials in successive administrations swam the same river of blood that Prince Nayef took in the unspeakable “war on terror.”

Today, the Biden Administration dare not annoy the 35-year old Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who is highly likely to succeed his father when the crunch time comes as the next monarch and may go on to rule the kingdom for decades — although the noted expert on Saudi Arabia and ex-CIA hand Bruce Riedel at Brookings Institution may know better [*when he maintains*](#) that MBS is in actuality less secure than the administration thinks.

On March 3, in his “first major speech as Secretary” titled [*A Foreign Policy for the American People*](#), delivered from the Ben Franklin Room, a venue full of history in the State Department, Blinken shied away from claiming to be a crusader for human rights. The cold shower of realism after the Khashoggi fiasco probably explains it.

Blinken had previously claimed that human rights topic will figure as the centre of the US foreign policy. But in a chastened mood, he listed yesterday the “eight top foreign policy priorities of the Biden administration” as follows: Covid-19 pandemic and global health

security; economic recovery; “shoring up” democracy from authoritarianism and nationalism; “a humane and effective immigration system”; “revitalising” the ties with allies and partners; climate crisis and green energy revolution; America’s “leadership in technology”; and, relationship with China.

Blinken decided that a human rights crusade won’t fly when it stands exposed as doublespeak and hypocrisy. Despite such robust canvassing by the White House, the [ASEAN has refused to back](#) the Anglo-American regime change agenda in Myanmar.

Even the US’ closest ASEAN partner [Singapore has counselled](#) “national reconciliation and stability” and a “negotiated compromise to the current situation” in Myanmar, and, above all, stressed the need to “engage, rather than isolate” that country.

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Featured image: Blinken meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem on June 16, 2016 (Public Domain)

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