

Civilised nations must wage war on Israeli terror

N.S.T 23/01/09 M/S 17



A Palestinian sitting in front of buildings destroyed during Israel's military offensive in Gaza on Wednesday. UN officials speak of 'war crimes' committed by the Israeli leadership in Gaza and activists around the world say that international law should be brought to bear on those responsible. — AFP picture

EVEN as Americans and the world are on a high with the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States, the world cannot ignore the plight of the Palestinians. The world has seriously failed the Palestinian people. It talked and watched as the genocide continued.

With its power of veto, the leader of the most powerful nation, and the so-called champion of freedom and democracy, prevented the United Nations from stopping the brutal murders of babies, children, women, the aged and the sick.

The civilised world appeared helpless in the face of naked aggression, blatant murders and killings of civilians, in a land that has been described as "hell on earth".

Life for those trapped in the strip of land, which some say is akin to a modern-day concentration camp, was already difficult following an 18-month blockade.

UN officials are beginning to speak of "war crimes" being committed by the Israeli leadership in Gaza. Activists around the world have also said that these are "crimes against humanity" and that the international law should be brought to bear on those responsible.

If the former Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic and others can be tried for war crimes, why not those responsible for the crimes against humanity in Gaza?

The atrocities committed in Gaza are no less repulsive than those committed during the Bosnian war. The same standards should be applied in dealing with the perpetrators.

The Tel Aviv government and its ardent supporter must be made accountable and brought to trial for the genocide. The so-called modern civilised world cannot have double standards, one for the most powerful and another for the weak and helpless.

They have slaughtered innocent babies, children, women and civilians, and bombed aid workers and UN officers.

Three UN schools have been shelled, killing children and destroying equipment and supplies meant for the Palestinians in Gaza. All this after Israel promised that it would not target civilians. Even so, it targeted hospitals and used white phosphorus that burns the flesh to the bone.

Medical doctors are reporting injuries they have never seen before, from "pinhole bombs" that enter the body and explode internally. The invaders have destroyed whole villages and razed homes, schools and hospitals; entire neighbourhoods have disappeared.

The world must stand up and not allow the Israeli terrorists to go scot-free. They thumbed their nose at the UN, confident that the Bush administration would guard their interests and give them full backing in the Security Council. Washington has done so by using its veto more than 40 times.

There is no excuse. Just as the US waged a war on terror, the civilised world, too, must take similar action against the Israeli terrorists and murderers. They must be made to account for the slaughter of innocent civilians. They cannot violate international law and expect the rest of the world to stand by and watch.

As Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, president of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, said, the violations of international law had been well documented, with collective punishment, disproportionate military force and attacks on civilian targets, homes, mosques, universities and schools.

He said these actions amounted to

genocide. The civilised world must act accordingly to bring the violators of international law to book.

The 43rd president of the US, George W. Bush, has stepped off the world stage. But sadly he has left destruction, carnage and a world far less safe than when he took office eight years ago.

Bush came into the White House amid a lot of controversy and left amid just as much, if not more. He has left a legacy for us to remember him by for a very long time, and for all the wrong reasons.

Paul Krugman, the Nobel Prize winner writing in the *New York Times*, pointed out that the abuses of Bush "extended from environmental policy to voting rights" and these in-

cluded "using the power of government to reward political friends and punish political enemies".

But there is a new man in charge in Washington, and a lot of hope is pinned on the new president. There is a sense of idealism and great expectations as Obama enters the White House. His approval ratings are the highest of any US president-elect. Even with such high approvals and the goodwill of Americans and people around the world, he has a very steep and bumpy ride ahead to fix all that has been broken, including the economy and foreign policy.

He has set a tone for his administration that departs from Bush's unilateral approach. Obama stressed that "our power alone cannot protect

us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please". The world will "judge you on what you build and not what you destroy", he said at his inauguration on Tuesday, adding that the "greatness of our nation... is never a given. It must be earned".

He has a lot of work ahead to earn and restore the respect and rebuild the faith of people around the world, and "make the hard choices". Even as the US remains the most powerful nation, "we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders", he said.

And that, President Obama, must include the suffering of the Palestinians.