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This newsletter aims to chronicle the major events and developments in the societies of emerging nations with the potential to impact their future. This publication offers snippets of news analysis that might be advantageous to academics, policymakers, social and political workers, students and various organisations.

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## Special Article

# Making Sense of the Senseless Chaos and Violence in Post-revolution Bangladesh

- *Nousheen Sharmila Ritu\**

Last month, the youth of Bangladesh created history by toppling down a decade-long deadly fascist regime. Following August 5, the people of this country witnessed a new Bangladesh – a Bangladesh that has been unseen and unheard of in more than a decade. Overnight, the people were swept off with a sense of ownership, belongingness and patriotism that was missing in the country for a very long time. Each individual from different social groups suddenly wanted to take responsibility and contribute positively in the reformation of this newly freed country.

However, there were also challenges that were more or less anticipated. In the absence of any functioning law enforcement and with the pent up frustration of decades, people were also overcome with fervor manifesting in vandalism, conflicts and violence. The incidents of vandalism that caught the most attention was probably the destruction of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib's sculptures and arson of his house in Dhanmondi 32. These arbitrary acts of violence soon took over a narrative of pessimism causing a sense of disappointment and foreboding among the people. But is this post-revolutionary violence or chaos really that senseless? Or does it root back to decades of intimidation, helplessness, frustration and vengeance?

For more than a decade, the ruling party, Awami League, politicized the history of independence and created a culture of polarization and marginalization. The fascist regime established themselves as the flag-bearers of independence while symbolizing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the epitome of this sentiment. Each year millions of money was spent in building his sculptures and naming infrastructures after him while the people languished in poverty and inequality. The monopolization of Bangabandhu's glory not only obliterated the contribution of thousands of other martyrs, but also ultimately caused resentment among people. Essentially, the forceful glorification and monopolization of Bangabandhu embodied the fascists' repression of the weak and opposition. And hence, the moment the fascists fell over, the people tarnished this symbol of repression, monopoly and perjury. Was it out of pure hatred against the man, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman? No, it was the amalgamation of both his opposition and the resentment of being suppressed under his name and glory.

The attacks against Awami League leaders, vandalism of their properties and mob justice against the former leaders stem from similar anger and vengeance. While mob justice is never acceptable, however it is also understandable that such acts of violence cannot be fully warded off, especially during this vacuum of law and order. Even when the law and order is restored, it needs to be considered that state institutions have lost their moral legitimacy. The law enforcement agencies, judiciary institutions and governing bodies had an active contributory role in perpetuating the mass killings and violence against innocent civilians under the fascist regime of Sheikh Hasina.

These institutions and representatives need more than consoling and reassuring words to win over people's trust and so far, they have done nothing of that sort. Hence, the people will be angry, reactive and violent, at least for now. It is also important to note that this kind of violence following war or revolution is not uncommon across the world's history and Bangladesh is no exception. The next couple of years, hence, is going to be chaotic, uncertain and reactive until people find reassurance of law and order being restored duly. Until then, we will have to brace ourselves with patience, sensibility and optimism so that we can make sense of the seemingly senseless chaos around us.

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## Israel-Gaza war continues past 10 months

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has not gotten any better whatsoever 10 months into the war. Gaza is currently on the brink of a polio outbreak that could affect thousands of newborns and young children who have not received proper vaccinations in the midst of this genocide. Among the monstrous acts committed by Zionist forces is an attack on Tabin school in central Gaza where at least 100 Palestinian civilians, including women and children, were killed at dawn whilst displaced people were performing morning prayers. In response, Hamas reported that one of its members responsible for guarding Israeli captives had opened fire on his captives, leading to the death of one Israeli captive and wounding two others. Following last month's assassination of Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh by Israel, the group's newly elected leader is Yahya Sinwar, who currently resides in Gaza, and was a long-time victim of the unjust Israeli prison system. Following the death of Haniyeh, negotiations have not resumed, and Palestinians have accused Netanyahu of actively sabotaging the talks, even to the detriment of the Israeli economy which is collapsing in the face of the irresponsible actions of its war cabinet. Observers have noted that the main objective of Israel is land grabbing and colonisation, as well as the erasure of Palestinians, and stalling and sabotaging talks while Israel commits genocide is part of that strategy, in which the US is actively complicit.

Meanwhile, the material and human catastrophe of the war has been piling up, with no end in sight. The number of Palestinian casualties in Gaza as of September 1 is at least 40,738 dead, including more than 16,500 children, while the number of Palestinians wounded has reached more than 94,154. The number of missing people is more than 10,000. In the Occupied West Bank, there have been at least 676 deaths, of whom more than 152 are children, while more than 5,400 are injured. According to the latest data from the UN, WHO and the Palestinian government as of September 1, more than half of Gaza homes have been destroyed or damaged, 80% of commercial facilities, 85% of school buildings, 17 out of 36 hospitals are partially functioning, while 65% of roads and cropland have been damaged. Every hour in Gaza, 15 people are killed, of whom 6 are children, while 35 people are injured and 12 buildings are destroyed. As of July 31, more than 125 journalists, predominantly Palestinians, had been killed since October 7. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), 120 Palestinian, three Lebanese, and two Israeli journalists were killed.

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## A new beginning in Bangladesh under Nobel Laureate Dr. Yunus

The victory of the August revolution came after long-running Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India in a helicopter after coming under pressure from weeks of anti-government protests. Following that, the Students Against Discrimination movement, which was the main force coordinating the protests, suggested the name of internationally renowned Dr. Mohammad Yunus as the Chief Advisor to lead a post-revolution interim government. A 16-person interim government was sworn in on August 8 and included the names of two conveners associated with the student movement. An initial period of chaos ensued, as Awami supporters in the government, military, police, judiciary and political spheres attempted to overthrow the nascent post-revolution administration. Among measures taken to thwart them included the abolishment of the previous parliament, the resignation of the Chief Justice and the entire Appellate division, as well as the arrest of leading figures associated with Awami misrule - ministerial figures such as Salman F Rahman, Anisul Haque, Arafat Rahman, Junaid Palak, Dipu Moni, Hasanul Haq Inu and Rashed Khan Menon, as well as others such as DGFI's Ziaul Ahsan, ex-chief justice Manik, among others.

Beyond the above, Bangladesh has had to contend with a massive disinformation campaign led by various Indian media in the initial days regarding attacks on Hindu citizens. There were also media statements by ex-PM Hasina's

son Joy, which threatened to destabilise the political and social landscape in Bangladesh. Following that, massive flooding in the southeastern areas of the country led to many deaths and overwhelming loss of property, which threatened to burden the government and dangerously stretch its resources. Another big challenge in the initial weeks was the absence of police, who were closely identified with the previous regime – this led to a deteriorating law and order situation which the students and army had to intervene to tackle on more than one occasion. Public demonstrations of violence against Awami League leaders, as well as Awami national symbols such as Sheikh Hasina's statues, Sheikh Mujib murals and statues, as well as properties such as Dhanmondi-32, showcased how much hated the Awami regime had become to the general public, while also resulting in the mass desertion of service-holding posts by officials and people close with the previous regime. Moreover, the fact that India continues to shelter Hasina has put the current government in a difficult position regarding how to proceed in terms of bilateral ties, more so after having already cancelled the former Prime Minister's diplomatic passport; some have been calling for closer ties with Pakistan in the meantime.

The new interim government has taken a string of actions that speak of a break with one-party rule and repression of the past. Thousands of political detainees arrested in the fast few weeks of Hasina's rule were released, while several high-profile detainees of enforced disappearance from the notorious Aynagar, such as Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem and Abdullahil Aman Azmi resurfaced after 8 years of detention. All restrictions on press freedom have been removed, and there is talk of previously banned or silenced media such as Naya Diganta and Amar Desh beginning to work again. The government also removed a ban on opposition party Jamaat-e-Islami and announced the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry into enforced disappearances. In the meantime, questions are being raised by major political parties such as the BNP as to the roadmap to be followed for power transfer to a civilian elected government through credible elections, with some saying that it is still too early to speak of elections amidst numerous structural challenges and need for reform of institutions which the current government says must be tackled before elections can be held. Observers have noted that there is still a lot of confusion, especially considering that the government still has been unable to exert complete control over various branches of the state (where many Awami sympathisers are still entrenched) and resume normal functions and provision of public service.

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## Race riots reveal ugly side of UK society

Race riots erupted in parts of the UK following a reported stabbing in Southport on July 29, 2024, where three children were killed. Initially, misinformation circulated online falsely suggesting that the attacker was a Muslim immigrant, which fuelled tensions and led to violent actions by far-right groups. Riots and protests spread to multiple cities, including London, Manchester, Bristol, and Belfast, among others. Rioters attacked mosques, set buildings on fire, and clashed with police, resulting in injuries to police officers and bystanders. A hotel in Rotherham housing asylum seekers was targeted after rioters attempted to set the building on fire and blocked exits. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer condemned the violence and announced that those involved would face severe legal consequences. While the government did provide additional security measures to protect targeted communities,

particularly mosques, from further attacks, anti-racist groups organised large counterdemonstrations in various towns to oppose the far-right actions, which were instrumental in minimising violence, and saving lives and property.

Experts have also drawn up a list of what Starmer's Labour government needs to do to prevent further such riots. The government must actively fight against dangerous far-right ideologies and Islamophobic bigotry. It should defend the rights of asylum seekers and migrants, and create a new, humane asylum and immigration system aligned with international law. It should formulate a clear Stance on Islamophobia and acknowledge that hatred towards Muslims, migrants, and refugees is a form of domestic terror threatening British society. The government must also recognise and thank the efforts of British citizens who have opposed the far right. By defending multiculturalism and addressing inequalities and injustices affecting the UK's multiracial working classes, Starmer and his cabinet can strengthen British multiculturalism, and further prevent far-right ideologies from taking root. Some authors have pointed out the need to learn from the lessons of these UK race riots in order to counter future such incidents in the US, particularly when Trump's divisive rhetoric is widely pervasive in US media, and Democrats have shown a lax attitude in dealing with Islamophobic narratives.

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## Paris Olympics 2024: Saga of Imane Khelif showcases western hypocrisy

Algerian boxer Imane Khelif was at the centre of a global controversy regarding eligibility regarding her gender at the Olympics. Controversy arose regarding her gender after Khelif defeated Italian boxer Angela Carini in the round of 16 bout, who abandoned her fight against Khelif after just 46 seconds, stating she was hit harder than she had ever been hit and feared her nose was broken. Following that, media highlighted reports that the International Boxing Association, which is not recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), had disqualified Khelif along with Taiwanese boxer Lin Yu-ting from last year's world championships for failing an unspecified gender test, albeit in dubious circumstances. In light of these reports, Khelif was subject to a harsh wave of online backlash, where it was falsely claimed that Khelif was actually a transgender woman. Despite repeated statements by the IOC in her support, the outpouring of public outrage caused Western public figures such as author JK Rowling, former US President Donald Trump, and Italian far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to unite in condemnation.

However, the 25-year-old silenced her critics after defeating world champion Yang Liu in the women's 66kg category in a unanimous decision, winning Algeria's first-ever Olympic gold medal in women's boxing in the 15,000-capacity arena packed with Algerian diaspora in France. In her victory speech, she labelled her critics "enemies of success." The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had stripped the IBA of its recognition as boxing's governing body and expelled it from the Olympics prior to Paris 2024, over corruption, poor governance and a lack of financial transparency. The IOC described the failed eligibility tests as an "arbitrary decision taken without any proper procedure" and "contrary to good governance". Following the events, Khelif's lawyer filed an online harassment lawsuit against multiple people who had spread misinformation, including Elon Musk and J. K. Rowling. Scholars have opined that the attacks against the Algerian boxer reflect not just the West's distorted notions of race and womanhood, but also its dark imperialist past and present.

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## Harris accepts Democratic nomination; maintains hawkish stance on Gaza

Vice President Kamala Harris has officially accepted the Democratic Party's nomination for President at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) held in Chicago this August. She had already made history in 2020 as the first female Vice President of the United States and the first woman of colour to hold the office. Many are hoping for history to be made this November in the elections, where Kamala Harris if elected, will be the first woman President of the United States in its long history. To date, the 2024 US election year has been one of the most tumultuous on record - a shockingly lacklustre performance from President Joe Biden on the debate stage with Trump, followed by his subsequent withdrawal from the ticket, an assassination attempt on former President and current Republican nominee Donald Trump, and the elevation of Vice President Kamala Harris to the Democratic nomination. In this regard, while domestic policies will undoubtedly inform voter choices, foreign policy is also fast turning out to be crucial, especially concerning the Ukraine-Russia war and the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Unsurprisingly, solidarity with the people of Gaza has emerged as the single most important issue for American Muslim voters, a group no candidate can afford to ignore. Sadly, however, there does not seem to be much that the two candidates are willing to offer in this regard, highlighting the near complete hold of AIPAC on policies related to the Gaza genocide.

Although Harris has drawn a contrast with Biden through her slightly tougher rhetoric towards Israel on the growing death toll in Gaza, these choices do not hint at a deviation from ongoing, mainstream Democratic policy - she has publicly reaffirmed her ongoing support for Israel. In a campaign rally, when Harris was interrupted by individuals protesting the war in Gaza, she deflected from their voices by saying, "if you want Donald Trump to win then say that. Otherwise I'm speaking". Moreover, Harris' campaign's refusal to allow a Palestinian American to speak at the Democratic National Convention has removed any illusions she was sympathetic towards Palestine. However, the public stance of many pro-Palestine supporters, mostly backed by Muslim Americans, expressed through the "Abandon Harris" and "Uncommitted" campaigns will be seen as a worrying sign for Democrats, especially since Biden won by narrow margins in several states in the 2020 elections, and these campaigns detract from the Democratic support base, not Republican. The impact of the campaign is visible in American politics - third-party candidates Jill Stein and Cornel West have both been vocal in their support for the people of Gaza. West chose Melina Abdullah, a Black Muslim woman as his running mate, while Stein chose Muslim activist and academic Rudolph "Butch" Ware. Even Republican candidate Donald Trump's campaign is reaching out to Arab American voters, and there are indications that his support has increased among them.

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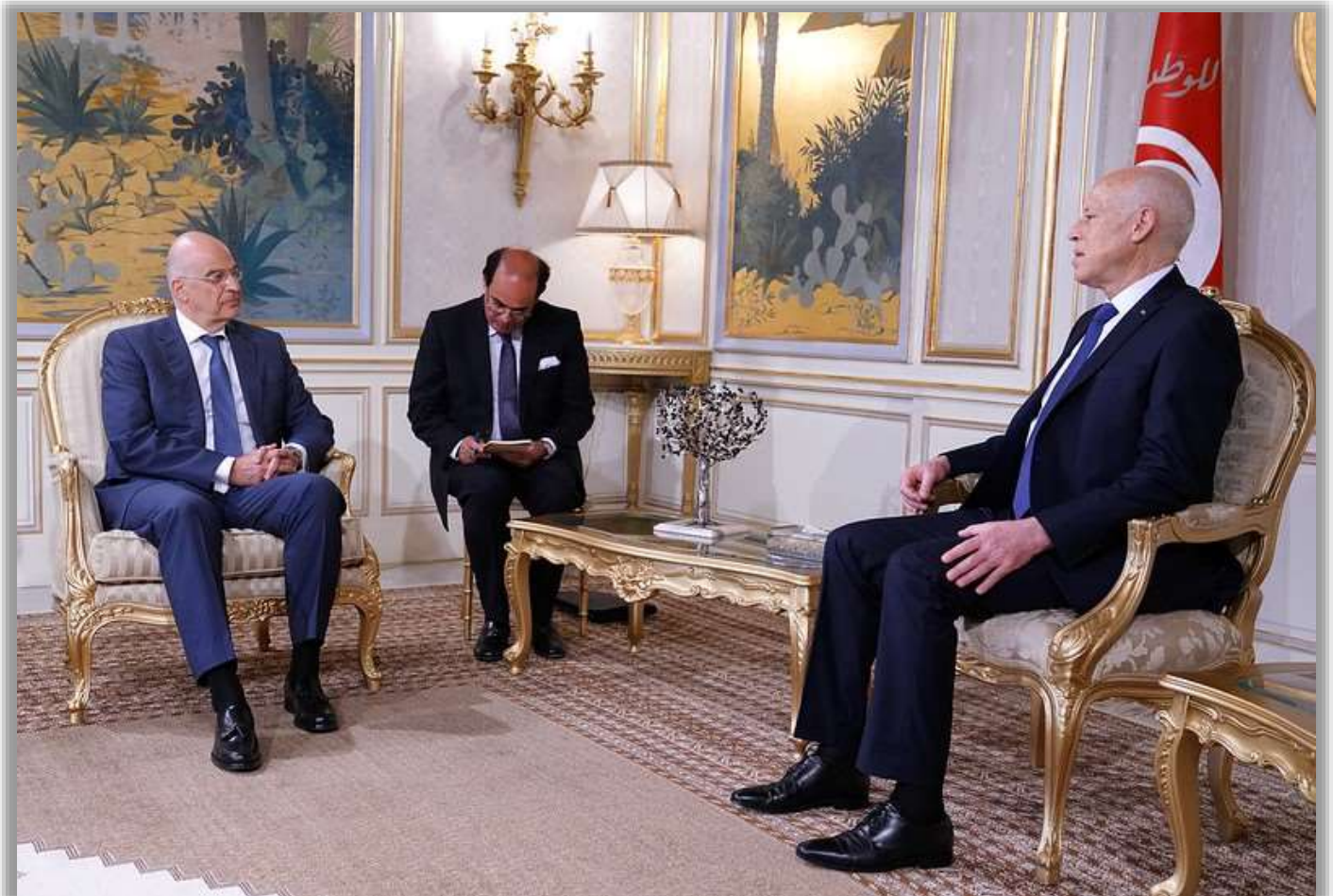
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## Tunisian elections to be held amidst autocratic turn

Ahead of the Presidential elections scheduled for October 6, Tunisian authorities have been accused of using arbitrary detention and administrative obstacles to ensure the re-election of Kais Saied. This comes as a Tunisian court earlier sentenced four potential presidential election candidates to eight months in prison and banned them from running for office on charges of vote buying - Abdel Latif Mekki, media personality and activist Nizar Chaari, judge Mourad Massoudi, and Adel Dou. Meanwhile, a prominent opposition figure and potential candidate, Abir Moussi, was sentenced to two years in prison. Several prominent presidential hopefuls said authorities denied their requests to access their criminal records, a new requirement for registering as a candidate, while others complained about obstacles in obtaining the necessary endorsement forms to collect the required number of signatures or endorsement of local officials or lawmakers.

According to the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT), over the past 18 months, more than 60 critical voices have been prosecuted under Decree 54, legislation enacted by Saied in 2022 to combat "false news", while additionally, more than 20 of Saied's opponents have been detained since a flurry of arrests began in February 2023, among them the famed Muslim democrat and head of Ennahda, Rashed al-Ghannouchi. Two years after his election in 2019, Saied, now 66, dissolved parliament, seized wide-ranging powers and began ruling by decree in a move the opposition has described as a coup. As part of Saied's consolidation of power, Tunisia's constitution was rewritten in 2022 to establish a presidential regime with a parliament that holds extremely limited powers. Saied is now seeking another term in office in the upcoming elections, in which the other two candidates are former lawmakers Zouhair Maghzaoui, who has supported Saied's power grab, and Ayachi Zammel, who leads a little-known party. The High Authority for Elections (ISIE), which oversees the process, was accused earlier by opposition voices and activists of speeding the country's authoritarian drift after barring 14 presidential hopefuls from the race for allegedly "not collecting enough endorsements".

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## Massive flooding affects Bangladesh; India blamed for irresponsible behaviour

Severe monsoon floods in Bangladesh have killed 18 people and forced hundreds of thousands to evacuate to shelters. The flooding, exacerbated by heavy rains, has impacted around 4.5 million people across the country. Bangladesh's Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief said on August 23 that approximately 190,000 people were taken to emergency relief shelters. Of Bangladesh's 64 districts, 11 were hit by the flooding, the ministry said. Many regions are submerged, leading to widespread displacement, damage to homes, and disruptions in daily life. Emergency response teams provided aid to affected communities, but the situation remains challenging due to damaged roads and broken communication systems following continuous rainfall and high water levels. When the floods hit, Bangladesh was recovering from weeks of civil unrest that culminated in the August 5 toppling of autocratic ex-leader Sheikh Hasina. Ordinary Bangladeshis stepped up to crowdfund relief efforts. Crowds were seen visiting points set up at Dhaka University to offer cash donations as students loaded rice sacks and crates of bottled water onto vehicles for areas affected by the floods.

Asif Mahmud, a leader of the student protests who is now in Yunus' caretaker cabinet, accused India on Wednesday of "creating a flood" by deliberately releasing water from dams, echoing social media claims of India's deliberate opening of the Dumbur Dam, which is upstream of the Gumti River in India's Tripura State. Hundreds of students and general people also gathered at Dhaka University to protest against India's "water aggression", featuring a banner showing Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi supposedly delighting at the sight of drowning people. India's foreign ministry has rejected the charge, saying Tripura had experienced the "heaviest rains of this year" and that the flow of water downstream was due to "automatic releases". Officials at Bangladesh's Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre in Bangladesh have, however, told Al Jazeera that unlike in the past, India did not issue a warning to its neighbour on the release of water, which would have saved lives and helped prevent some of the large-scale destruction. Although New Delhi and Dhaka have long shared strong diplomatic and trade relations, blind Indian patronization of Hasina and her authoritarian politics at the cost of democratic and human rights norms has pitted public opinion against India. This has been exacerbated by New Delhi's willingness to provide Hasina with refuge following the August revolution and is sure to escalate if the former refuses to hand her over to face justice for her crimes committed during her tenure in Bangladesh.

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## Military occupation is deeply connected with climate catastrophe – from Papua to Gaza

Military occupation exacerbates climate change and causes environmental destruction, ultimately harming the most vulnerable populations, as evident from examples in Papua and Gaza. In Papua, Indonesia's military presence has led to deforestation and the displacement of Indigenous communities. The military has supported logging and mining operations that devastate local ecosystems, contributing to biodiversity loss and greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the Indigenous people of Papua, who are stewards of their land, have been forcibly removed, undermining traditional environmental management practices that are essential for sustainability. Similarly, in Gaza, the Israeli military occupation has resulted in severe environmental damage. Israel's blockade and repeated military assaults have decimated infrastructure, polluted the environment, and restricted access to resources. Gaza's water supply has been critically affected, with more than 96% of its water now undrinkable due to contamination by sewage and seawater intrusion, a situation worsened by the destruction of infrastructure during conflicts. Furthermore, the Israeli military's frequent bombings have released harmful pollutants into the air, water, and soil, causing long-term ecological harm.

Similar to the above cases, military activities also play a substantial role in global climate change. Militaries worldwide are among the largest consumers of fossil fuels, contributing significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions. The U.S. military, for example, is one of the world's largest institutional emitters of carbon dioxide. Military operations and exercises, including those in occupied territories, exacerbate these emissions through the consumption of fuel, the destruction of ecosystems that act as carbon sinks, and the long-term impacts of conflicts on regional environmental stability. Military occupations often coincide with resource extraction, which is a major driver of environmental destruction. As such, ending military occupations and reducing global military activities are crucial for addressing both human rights abuses and environmental crises. Only through a global reassessment of militarism and its role in accelerating climate change by global leadership can real peace and sustainability be achieved.

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## US and UK skip atomic bomb ceremony in Japan's Nagasaki after Israel not invited

On July 31, the city of Nagasaki revealed its plan to refrain from inviting the Israeli ambassador to the ceremony, drawing criticism from the United States, Britain and other countries. After this was announced, the US embassy in Japan sent out a statement saying that the US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel would sit out Nagasaki's peace ceremony over Israel's exclusion from the annual commemoration of the 1945 atomic bombing of the city. While the US ambassador touted the decision as a political one, Nagasaki Mayor Shiro Suzuki said that the city had decided not to invite Israel for reasons of peace and security and that it was not a political decision. In light of this, top envoys

from all the Group of Seven major industrialized countries other than Japan – the two Western nations along with Canada, France, Germany and Italy, as well as the European Union – skipped the ceremony held in the city. The logic of the ceremony boycott by the Western nations was that not inviting Israel was akin to seeing it the same as Russia and Belarus, the only other two countries not invited to the ceremony for their role in perpetrating the war in Ukraine.

On the other hand, the city of Hiroshima went ahead and invited Israel to its August 6 ceremony marking the 79th anniversary of the A-bomb attack there with a message calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza. Residents of Hiroshima have accused the Hiroshima city government of having a double standard, as Russia and Belarus have been barred from the ceremony for three consecutive years over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, just as in Nagasaki. The Nagasaki mayor said that the city office received some 1,500 instances of critical feedback in English regarding its decision not to invite the Israeli ambassador to Japan, 1400 of which had the same title and same content. On the other hand, the city also got more than 2,000 phone calls, emails and online messages in Japanese, mostly in support of the city's decision. On August 9, 1945, the US dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, killing 74,000 people including many who survived the explosion but died later from radiation exposure. The attack came three days after the US dropped the world's first nuclear bomb on Hiroshima killing 140,000 people and devastating the city. Japan announced its surrender on August 15, 1945, ending World War II and the country's nearly half-century of aggression in Asia.

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