



Statement on Genocide and the US Presidential Election

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Citizens in the USA will be heading out to their polling places tomorrow to cast their in-person votes for US president. While many issues are of concern for American voters, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security wishes to take note of the dispiriting promotion of genocide that has characterized this year's presidential campaigns. The American people are faced with two main parties that have endorsed genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh and Israel, and one — the Republican Party — that has used genocidal language towards specific populations throughout the campaign.

We are particularly alarmed by ongoing hate speech from the Republican candidate for President, Donald Trump, who has consistently demonized immigrants and trans* people in the USA, blaming them for the myriad struggles faced by Americans that are very real but that have absolutely nothing to do with immigrants and trans people. The personalization of perceived large-scale threats, such as a global economy that serves only billionaires and a government that is increasingly unresponsive to ordinary Americans, and particularly the scapegoating of particular identity groups for these things, are key features of genocidal speech and genocidal ideology. *They almost always, when spoken by contenders for power, lead to mass atrocity.*

Needless to say, Americans' problems will not be solved by targeting immigrants or trans* people. The violent language towards these groups is a means of hiding the Republican Party's commitment to policies that result in yawning class divisions and anti-democratic vertical political and economic hierarchies. In fact, Americans' problems

will only grow if they embrace a politics of hate that allows the state to infiltrate every private sphere imaginable in a quest to “cleanse” the country of the supposed “sources” of all pain and evil. We believe that Americans know better and that they deserve better, no matter who they vote for tomorrow.

We wish to stress again the insidious nature of the dehumanization of groups, which can so easily create the conditions in which the governed consent to mass state violence. Such consent can take different forms, from active support and participation in mass atrocity to passive “bystanderism” expressed as a refusal to act to protect threatened groups or as a denial of the horrific nature of their persecution. We remind everyone that societies perpetrating genocide at home or abroad often go on with daily life as if nothing terrible is happening to the targeted group. One can see this clearly, for example, in the US-Israel sponsored genocide against Palestinians, the horrors of which hardly register among Israelis and are celebrated – or at least tolerated – by many Americans, especially members of government. It is important for perpetrators and their supporters to remember that no perpetrators or perpetrator nations are immune from the consequences of their actions, particularly not in our interconnected world. The ability of Americans to commit or ignore the mass atrocities sponsored by the US government will at some point be compromised. Unless significant changes are made to US foreign policy towards Israel, the country’s complicity in genocide will cost it dearly.

No matter which candidate wins tomorrow, US government support for genocide abroad will continue to have a toxic impact on American society at home, emboldening fascist modes of thought in which constitutional law is a technicality and might makes right. It will continue to marginalize the large Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim populations in the US, and continue to make them a target for lethal attacks. It will normalize violence against populations seeking justice and redress and hamper all efforts to speak the truth. It will embolden state overreach and erode democratic institutions even further. It will normalize the darkest forces in the human heart, laying waste to all that is worthwhile in America’s already frayed social fabric.

The US is caught in a series of policy boomerangs in which its unconflicted genocides at home have accustomed it to the commission of genocide overseas, while the commission of genocide overseas is empowering and concentrating the most destructive and violent aspects of US history into totalitarian state tendencies and violent fascist movements at home.

There is, however, always a way out of impending and actualized genocidal processes. In the United States, the way out will require an enhanced respect for the Constitution,

adherence to international law, restoration of the principle of the comity of nations in foreign policy, and the revitalization of US democracy through deep reforms to the political, economic and electoral systems, reforms that place the perspectives and the interests of ordinary Americans at the center of the state's policies, well over and above the demands of private companies, global monopolies, and the very rich. Such transformation will require a shift away from the military-industrial complex, that is, an economy that relies on destruction, to a society that finds wealth in creation and in the universal support for life.

To the next president, we emphasize that it is in the interests of the US polity to cease its military support for Israel, show leadership in a sustainable peace process in Israel-Palestine, withdraw support for genocide overseas no matter where it is happening, and take measures to avoid the proliferation of genocidal patterns in the USA. Regarding the latter, the next president should institute a whole-of-government national mechanism for genocide prevention, begin a long-term transitional justice process that helps our country come to terms with our genocidal past, and invest heavily in the wellbeing of ordinary Americans.