

Tourism, War and Peace in the UN 2030 Agenda - Implementing SDG 16 or Scrapping the Idea of Sustainable Development



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*This article is a reflection on where we really are on the path to sustainable development, highlighting the escalation of a globalized nationalist war economy as the major threat to tourism development and overall socio-economic and prosperity and environmental conservation. Underlining the imperative need to implement the just, equitable and peaceful value system of Agenda 2030, it argues for tourism stakeholders to take a moral and active stance on **SDG 16 -Peace Justice and Strong Institutions**, calling for the BDS (Boycott, Divest and Sanction) tool to become part of tourism stakeholders formal response to those countries and corporations involved in immoral and unjust economic and political actions, focusing on its immediate application to support a ceasefire in Gaza this Christmas.*

Background- A Polarizing Cruel World at War

The current genocide of the Palestinian people is one of five genocides being perpetrated at this moment throughout the international community against the gloom and doom backdrop of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, American hegemony in Syria, Taiwan and Latin America and India's Hindu nationalist ethnic cleansing against its own Muslim and Sikh minorities. Myanmar, Sudan, Nigeria and the Congo are the other destinations in which the principal governments are waging war on their own people and where you won't find much tourism going on in the body count, measured now in hundreds of thousands.

However, as ever, the first casualty of war in this long list of conflict hotspots is the truth, and we have been awash with false news and nuanced partisan perspectives on the nationalist rationale behind the slaughter of innocent civilians in front of our very eyes on screen. Clearly this is not good for the tourism industry as a whole, and the recent Peace And Tourism conference held at the highest international level on this issue showed concern for regional tourism effects around the Palestinian conflict but did not cover the use of tourism as a tool for sustainable development.

The Lack of Agenda 21's Moral Value System

The aim of this article is rather than see the tourism industry as a victim of war, there are tourism stakeholders who are able to actively bring us to more sustainable economic activity instead of fuelling or ignoring a frenzied war machine horrifying us all. There are many of us who see that the *fundamental moral human code of Agenda 21 i.e. fairness, equality and justice* are absolutely being totally subverted or neglected by those in power, who should both know better and do better.

The lack of a humane moral code in politics is one of the key hindrances to achieving the UN 2030 agenda. This was highlighted in the Agenda 2030 review of the 50 years since Stockholm in the 70s in which the lack of a heart for sustainability was highlighted, not just the misuse of the head when it comes to planning and managing the currently tragic global socio-economic and environmental fabric.

I have long argued for the equitable value system of sustainable development to be put forward as a priority to cultivate alongside the development, measurement and management of people and resources in the myriad plans for an international sustainable consumption and production system fit for the purpose of stewarding planet earth and the 8-10 billion people on board. Governments and corporates sorely need this humane value system built into their systems of governance.

The Rise of the Military-Industrial Nationalist Global Economy

However, we can see that they are as one when it comes to self-preservation of their rapacious nation state system and acquisitive business empires which are currently purposefully disabling the inevitable development of a peaceful, just and equitable global community. The world is being run on a near-feudal fascist national - interest war footing. It should instead be based on an alliance of civil society and government, implemented through a functioning United Nations reformed from its Bretton Woods origins into a shared inter-national governance process following a true sustainability path involving the peace-based green circular economy.

Political spin unfortunately actually describes rhetorically a head-first guns, oil and misinformation business-as-usual reality, headed by the Orwellian named UN 'Security' Council which has licensed every major conflict in the last 75 years. Each nation state has become part of a global military-industrial system, fashioned from war in 1944 by the Allies at Bretton Woods and now powered by America's \$1 trillion annual spending in an overall global 'defence' budget spending total of over \$2 trillion internationally.

That eye-watering sum is corruptly spent on first stockpiling weapons of war and then on the strategic execution of low-level wars to use up those weapons and therefore create a truly viscous circle of governments, companies and workforces building more and better munitions to boost regional economies and national interests, with each stakeholder then benefitting from the manufacture, sales and use of such arms. The ruling governments then benefit from all the conflicts and their war theatres so necessary for this barbarous but glorified process to continue.

Orwellian Double Speak and Double Dealing

A closer look at the Israeli situation offers clarification of how this machine works. The media war is controlled by an Orwellian propaganda machine that America, Britain, Israel, and the European Union, alongside the vast bureaucracies of Russia, China, and India and evident in all our nation states. The 'news' is only cleverly nuanced propaganda and doublespeak from nation state spokespeople, informing us of their twisted version of reality in which stories are being created that are in fact, based on their *squealeresque* truth.

These so-called factual statements are in fact there to contain the truth, to stop any criticism of the nation state system, whilst protecting actors who wish to act in the interest of and benefit from the nation state either through the banking system; the investment in the arms industries; and all of the multinational corporations -a military-industrial complex of global businesses that derive income from products used in war and from services delivered to wage war and then to manage information about the wars they perpetuate.

All armies need an enemy. Hamas as a radical religious faction was in fact funded and nurtured by the Israeli state to undermine the secular PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation) be the enemy needed as the adversary requiring a militarized society so that the right wing elite can sharpen their war machine. This has as ever back-fired, bringing their own Jewish citizens in danger; creating an occupied state in which millions of people were taught through brutal repression to hate the oppressors; where the vote for Hamas took place 18 years ago, and 1 million children living in Gaza would never be 18 at the moment so have never voted for Hamas, who stated 'extermination' is the Zionist rationale behind the killing, which in reality strengthens the military budget, marks a further Gazan land grab, a more Israeli illegally-settled occupied west bank, and another step closer to a Palestine-free Israel.

War, Peace and Tourism Stakeholders

The arms industry and national war machines with their propaganda apologists and surveillance technology have become the most severe threat to overall sustainability and in particular for us:- the sustainability of the tourism sector itself. To move away from the abyss of global travel and destination meltdown, many of us who have been working as consultants or government employees or in the private sector or for NGOs related to tourism sustainability can play some part in exposing state propaganda and redirecting the funding of our nations taxes towards more moral human and in fact much-needed socio-economic and environmental development.

Furthermore, the travel and tourism industry has an open communications channel through holiday advertising to millions of consumers who can vote with their wallets for sustainability. Never more has been the time for travel and tourism stakeholders to unite around **SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**. For all of us who have been concentrated on climate change or biodiversity; or women's equality or economic growth; poverty or networking communities, etc ... we now need to focus on SDG 16, in order to meet all the other targets that are failing miserably as we speak. We have just witnessed the debacle of CoP 28, running concurrently with the war-

fuelled slaughter of civil society in occupied Gaza and the West Bank, where in both cases the UN have been usurped by the energy and armaments industries. So much for justice and strong institutions, let alone peace.

In our contemporary world at war, we should not just fear the potential nuclear capability of bringing Armageddon in our lifetime as an absolute possible reality in our End Game times. The Middle East theatre of war opens up an even clearer picture of how tactical nuclear weapons can be employed as we escalate towards the possibility using AI (sic) to guide us. That war is not about when winners and losers, but the return to barbarism and all that means for international travel. Now the world is at war within nation state and between nation states across all continents.

You can only remember the Vietnam military air and sea travel log or look at a country like Croatia to see how the views across the beautiful Mediterranean bays can be filled immediately with someone else's military hardware floating in the sunset. Or one day, perhaps soon, a plume of nuclear smoke fogging the western frontier of Europe or Middle East will make the news. It's something that has happened before, and could happen again on an ever greater scale, given the escalation in the armaments power on display in Gaza, where the US, UK and EU members supply the Orwellian-titled Israeli Defence Force (IDF), who in the 'defence' of Israeli citizens dropped the equivalent of two nuclear bombs, mega tons of explosives, dropped on innocent civilians; to completely erase the infrastructure of human existence; to shock a refugee population under occupation into submission.

Scenario Planning the Future Apocalypse

I had the privilege to be part of the UN's global scenario -planning in their Millennium forecasting program 20 years ago, and the scenario of '*Sustainability First*' - which the tourism sector and all our destinations and workforces absolutely need - has been cancelled even from the conversation as we career into not just '*Business First*', but the nightmare '*Security First*' scenario heralded by Covid Lockdown and tourism industry near-annihilation, with the lockdown model militarized in Gaza on a caged in and innocent captive population. It is self-evident that where there is war, there will be no tourism.

As much as we wish to remove ourselves from the politics of left or right; of Conservative or labour; Republican or Democrat in our need to be politically correct and impartial, the dialectic of capitalism and socialism is the reality of hard times and hard choices around money and morality must be made.

Re-evaluating the Agenda for the 21st Century

The recent failure of CoP 28, occurring in parallel at the moment alongside the failure of the UN Security Council in the Palestinian-Israeli war, and the now-relegated Russian-Ukraine conflict, provides the mirror to see the USA, UK, and EU Gorgon of forked-tongued double standards and Orwellian doublespeak - these realities should create a feeling in each of us to see the need for a total re-evaluation of the Agenda 2030 SDG's and the final 6 years of work for their positive realisation.

A superb analysis by UN sustainability specialist from Columbia University - Dr Jeffrey Sachs - has been able to specify a simple scenario in which all governments immediately and urgently relinquish 10% of their overflowing defence budgets to a global sustainability implementation fund that can truly - not just on paper or for statistical purposes - but can truly implement sustainable development for those who need it, first through a UN fit for purpose created by simply transferring the power of the Security Council to the General Council.

The need for this has been amply demonstrated in the way the UN Security Council and General Assembly has voted on the Ceasefire and humanitarian relief program for Gaza. *Our Common Agenda*, the 2015 UN document behind the Agenda 2030 programme states that bureaucrats should work tirelessly for the achievements of peace, equality and justice for those for all with no one left behind emphasised - no one left behind.

The Zionist Project – A Callous Model for the Global End Game for Civil Society

And that means the Palestinian people currently being bombed by the Israeli state army of occupation - at least 20,000 killed in two months, 20,000 *civilians*, including women and children, over 8000 children, 7,00 women, with 35,000 maimed and damaged children left in suffering as part of 1.6 million people scrambling for their life. They have been killed and displaced in an ethnic cleansing genocide plan by the Israeli State, backed by 50 years of political and military complicity of the US, UK, Germany and the EU - a callous and morally indefensible internationally organised plan already set in motion in most war theatres – but none so brutal as the Zionist model - to use siege and blockade strategies to starve Palestinian civil society, to make these caged citizens thirsty by cutting of water supplies, make them sick by damaging sanitation structure, attacking even the in-firmed and elderly who are now cold and homeless, deprived even of clothes and family joy this Christmas as they cower in fear in the last corner of Gaza deemed 'a safe zone' in Israeli doublespeak.

The occupation, apartheid ethnic cleansing and genocide is the spoken policy of the Israeli Zionist state. It is not antisemitic to say this. Many Jewish voices for peace exist with the same message, and it was the same moral standard held up to the Russian attacks in Ukraine on citizens, the homes, hospitals, schools and residential districts, which the US, UK and EU were quick to denounce as war crimes there. This article is not an attack on the Jewish people. This is an attack on the Zionist project to create the Israeli state, itself a sub-project of the Imperialist American Dream of International Empire, which affects and infects every last corner of the globe.

The Israeli citizens are themselves a misled but complicit product of the brutality of the global military- industrial complex which frames the conflict and whose existence runs through a 200 year historical line of bankers, politicians and businesses who have funded war through the centuries to make the most profits for their business and national empires, the Rothchilds, being at the head of this, and the nation state of America, currently leading all nations in the way of empire that is built on war. They need to be exposed to other information sources to see their own state indoctrination. The disgraceful logic of equating anti-semitism with anti-zionism is the case in point that has led us to this current genocide.

The manipulation of those citizens and the global community by a horrific level of indoctrinating propaganda that has been spread throughout the world to the Jewish diaspora calling 300,000 of them to come back to their god-given erroneously sloganed 'Land with No People for a People with no Land'.

Filled with Zionist ideals, they fight a war of unequals to execute their ethnic cleansing, having manufactured consent for their October 7th victim narrative, mobilising all tools of media and communications, as well as their ambassadors and international politicians, particularly in the United Nations, to launch an attack on anyone that is critical of the colonial apartheid settler project borne in the same post-war Bretton Woods-Balfour Declaration work of The US-led UN Council - delivering the wish of Pro-Zionist investors to create the Israeli state in 1948.

As we reach 2024, we are nothing short of the full truth of Orwell's 1984, and Huxley's Brave New World heaped upon us this Christmas - 50 years into the sustainable digital humanitarian development agenda, and one minute from the midnight of nuclear Armageddon.

The Active Stakeholder -Standing up for a Humane World

To truly recognise the position of tourism and its sustainability we must understand that this event and what is likely to follow next year is incredibly dangerous for the continuation of global travel and communication. A warring world of warring nations will lead to a travel and tourism industry that is militarised to meet the security-first world.

The word attack is chosen because we need to fight a war of words rather than weapons - we should not be relegated to spectators as they wish us to be sitting on the sides in the stands whilst we watch two players go to war in some macabre modern *Squid Games*. This is not a reality show to shock us as infotainment on our silver-tongued screens. The game in Gaza is not fair and it need not even be played in our civilized world in this epoch of plenty, nor should we acquiesce in liberal complicity and wring our hands offering charity without condemnation. There is no equality or fairness or justice when a government turns lethal weapons on its own women and children. We need to be able to participate - take a side on the basis of our moral conscience.

The Role of Tourism Stakeholders – Fighting the War for Hearts and Minds

This is then the potential role of the travel and tourism stakeholders at this time: to bring the moral and ethical value system of sustainable development to all people around the planet in every nation through the various aspects of the travel and tourism value chain and our diverse and unique products and services.

As it is such a global industry, reaching out to every citizen on the planet. *There is no better vehicle for the morality of sustainability to be circulated among us.* America has shown the double standards of calling out one war crime by a dictator in the case of Russia, yet not Israel, where in both cases women and children are caught in the crossfire and have been mercilessly sacrificed as 'collateral damage' and rebranded as 'human shields'.

With this brutality in mind, a message of resistance and solidarity should be sent to those who are in the front line. In this case, it is not only the Palestinian people but UN colleagues their co-workers who are being killed - 120+ to date as we end the year, or perhaps we should think of the journalists in this war in two months when over 90 to date have been murdered whilst reporting on war.

Taking Personal Action on Israel – Supporting the BDS Movement

This is both the unimaginable and unconscionable slaughter going on before our eyes this Christmas. I come from the point of view however, that we will not just ring our hands and cry inside or wish that it would go away, but believe for those that share with us a moral code that values human life, not just one's own, but every single one of us, a code that holds us all as equals, compassionate and fair. In my powerless individual self I would still want to do something. And whether that is to give a donation at Christmas as the least I could do for example, currently giving directly to the *Red Crescent* ambulance services in Gaza Strip.

This would directly help those children or make a Christmas donation to UNICEF or to UNRWA, and their UN staff who are doing such an amazing job of really being the good Samaritans when Goliath is now smashing through the civil society of the Palestinians in search of a modern incarnation of the rebellious military wing of the Sons of David against an occupying force (how mixed up and ironic can that biblical fable of the oppressor and underdog get)

As a vector for sustainability, an active tourism policy to achieve sustainability - to be implemented by an individual or a business or company or corporate, or perhaps a governmental body - *would be the boycotting, divestment and sanctioning of any Israeli products and services* to give extra momentum to the existing BDS campaign called for by the Palestinians in 2006, when the occupation and Siege of Gaza started. Israel currently spend 70 million USD a year fighting the Boycott Divest and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which targets companies such as arms companies eg BAE and food sector companies such as McDonald's and Starbucks. We can focus on mounting a boycott of Israeli travel and tourism products and services to make Israeli public opinion and government action more humane.

Currently the Israeli hotel base is being used to host citizens who have been currently evacuated from the border zones not to protect them but in order to create a country-wide panic feeling of insecurity using tourism infrastructure for the purposes of this mass mobilisation of a fearful and panicked Jewish people. The owners of these hotels should push their governments for a ceasefire and end to military conflict.

The collective action should be to disinvest in Israeli companies and sanction their government through the EU and UN. Specifically these means working towards:

- **Boycott travel to Israel on Air Israel and other air lines flying into Israel**
- **Cancelling all holidays to Tel Aviv and the Israeli coastline**
- **To ban Israel from participating at the ITB Berlin, Fitour and the London Travel Market and other travel and tourism trade shows**
- **To ban Israel from major sports events such as the Olympics**

- **Remove their vote in the UN general assembly to observer status.**

A boycott of Israeli goods and products in this economic climate should not be seen as extreme, but necessary. It worked in South Africa in the 80s where there was also an apartheid regime. Similarly countries such as the United States and Britain or Germany, Italy and the EU, who take the position that it is ethically sound and morally justifiable to send bombs and weapons, munitions and expertise and sophisticated communications technologies to Israel to conduct its murder of civil society now to the tune of 20,000, as we reached this last month in December, with only two months of a war having passed.

Those politicians who have not called for a ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid should be pilloried against their own standards, and starved of votes when it comes to their next election, just as the boycott should starve Israel of money to invest in the machinery of the death of innocents.

A Personal End Note this Christmas

This year our family has chosen to cancel Christmas in line with the Christian decision taken in the church of Bethlehem in Jerusalem in Palestine in view of the mass slaughter of innocence which is taking place on their streets and on our screens in front of our own eyes not just in Gaza but also in the West Bank. In a world where we wish Peace on Earth for all humankind, the reality is truly a totalitarian nightmare with a Christmas veneer of white phosphorus, instead of snow, thousands of dead children instead of one angelic birth, misery of millions, instead of the joy of all who witness the Christian miracle of Christmas.

And we can pray for a miracle for those children this Christmas - here in our Forest Retreat in Portugal far from Gaza we still feel the suffering of those trapped this minute in Gaza and are setting up a vigil on the night of the 24th just to spare a moment for the Palestinian people and be the guardians of the Palestinian children. We will then go on to support the BDS campaign against Israel in 2024, which will work better when industry and destination stakeholders take up this common action.

We hope you too can take this SDG 16 path for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. In this way, tourism stakeholder can offer a positive contribution which we as stakeholders in the tourism sector can make, should we choose to act in 2024 for the real implementation of the sustainable development agenda for this 21st century, which should be a century of global peace and prosperity, not genocide and atrocity.

Gordon Sillence is ICT Direct of the Tourism 2030 Portal and runs the Peace Parks Music Movement to campaign for an Olympic Truce under the slogan: ' Paris Olympics '24 – Make Ukraine the Last War – Apartheid and Genocide No More ! – Cease Fire in Gaza Now!

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