JOURNALIST NAOMI KLEIN WARNS OF HYPOCRISY

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One of the foremost critics of Israel's Gaza policies turned her guns on Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Monday for ignoring human rights violations both domestically and internationally.

Activist and journalist Naomi Klein criticized the Turkish government for ignoring the rights of its own Kurdish and Armenian population while voicing solidarity with the plight of Palestinians. She said it is easy to stand up for Palestinian rights in Turkey because it is "popular, populist."

Speaking at a seminar at Istanbul's Boğaziçi University where a part of a conference was held in memory of slain Turkish–Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, Klein talked about activities to boycott Israel in order to uphold the rights of Palestinians.

"Demonstrating a commitment to universal standards makes the argument for Palestinian rights stronger not weaker. Not only is it simply just, but it takes away Israel's most potent political tool, which is the claim that its critics are hypocrites," she said.

"This principal needs to be understood everywhere in the world including here in Turkey. Because as difficult as it may be for me to voice solidarity with Palestinians in the strange North American context, voicing solidarity with Palestinian is as easy here as it is difficult in North America. It is popular, it is populist, it's a way to get votes, it isn't a risk," said the Jewish Canadian, who has written books critical of the Western economic and political system.

It was enormously important for the Turkish Prime Minister to speak out in Davos against Israel and its Gaza war crimes last year to pierce that little bubble, said Klein, in reference to when Erdoğan walked out of a discussion panel in the Swiss town after voicing serious criticism in the face of Israeli President Shimon Peres.

It was also important that the government intervened in the Gaza Freedom march to help secure passage for humanitarian goods, according to Klein.

"But how can we simply cheer that solidarity when it comes out of a system that persecutes Kurdish citizens or denies the existence of the Armenian genocide? How can we simply cheer when it comes from a government that claims with regards to Sudan, and this is a quote, 'that it is not possible for those who belong to the Muslim faith to carry out genocide?'" she said.

Turkey is not accepting claims that the World War I killings of Armenians at the hands of the Ottomans amount to genocide. Meanwhile, Turkey has many times hosted Sudan's President Omar al Bashir, despite accusations that he has committed war crimes that some claim amount to genocide.

"How can we cheerfully defend freedom of speech for Turkish TV to show the brutality of Israeli

soldiers, and they should have that right despite the outrageous Israeli insults and bullying that we've all witnessed in recent weeks, but how can we simply cheer when Hrant Dink lies dead because of state prosecution and persecution of his freedom of speech here in Turkey. How can we simply cheer?" she said.

In further explaining what Klein calls "the power of consistency," the journalist also touched on how without universal standards the Israeli humanitarian aid efforts in Haiti seem hypocritical. Tearing up, Klein asked, "How can we simply cheer for the soldiers who have rushed to Haiti to provide much needed aid, medical care. And to me it is so painful to see this propaganda of Israeli soldiers delivering babies and having those babies be named Israel in at least one case. Haitians need that help. They need all the help they can get but how can we cheer even if we want to when at the same time it's Israel that blocks humanitarian aid from coming into Gaza, where people who have desperately needed operations are prevented from leaving Gaza.

"Hypocrisy is collectively corroding us making us suspicious of gestures we would so love to simply celebrate," she said.

"Consistency is not an intellectual exercise it's not about making ourselves feel good," Klein said. "It is about building a movement that is actually credible enough to win some victories for some people who desperately need them."

And for that we need not look further than Hrant Dink's legacy of commitment to human rights, Klein said.

Naomi Klein claimed that the effort to achieve justice for Palestinians has entered a new phase.

Recalling the international movement to isolate and boycott South Africa successfully ended the country's Apartheid regime, she said a similar movement called "boycott, disinvest, sanctions" could be used to influence Israel. The way Israel and its allies are reacting is proof that the movement has potential, said Klein, adding that Israel's crack down on non-violent human rights activists has been growing.

Klein said the movement does not advocate any specific solution to the Palestinian issue, it is not affiliated with a political party or ideology that accepts or denies the existence of Israel, but simply demands that Israel complies with international law. Talking about the South African model, Klein said it was the changing economic dynamics that brought the end of the Apartheid system.

"There was a cost of doing business with South Africa," said Klein, adding that South Africa's local elite became tired of international harassment. Klein said the boycott should target the Israeli state and Israeli institutions, not the Israeli people.