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Yassin al-Haj Saleh

Writer

Istanbul

Born in 1961 in Raqqā, Syria
Studied Medicine at the University of Aleppo

PROJECT

Modes of Mass Murder: a Comparative Study

In what ways does mass killing in Syria differ from other well-known examples of mass murder in Rwanda, Cambodia, and before them Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and the Armenian Genocide? Variables like bureaucratization, the role of labor in concentration camps, and a theory of supremacy (of race or class) are either lacking in the Assadist mode of killing, in contrast to the Holocaust and the Gulag, or they are not systematic. Physical contact between the victims and the perpetrators was almost absent in the Soviet and Nazi killings, but this is not the case in Syria and Rwanda. The Daesh mode of killing preferably involves physical contact between the killer and the killed. What are the roles of religion, sect, and ethnicity in this mode? Can we differentiate between violent violence like what we experienced in Syria at the hands of the regime and Daesh, and the more organized and less violent violence of Israel against Palestinians for instance? Is it possible also to speak of historical progress in modes of killing, the way Marx talked about modes of production in his days? What are the relations between modes of killing and political systems, social structures, and cultural organization in specific countries? Are contemporary modes of killing understandable on the basis of individual countries: Syria, Sudan, Rwanda, Cambodia, etc.? What are the forms of articulation between violent and less violent modes of killing on the global level? Is it possible for us to interpret the contemporary world order (as it is institutionalized in the UN, many other organizations, and especially the UNSC) as a global organization of death, violent death? Finally, is politics without violence, even organized and legitimately monopolized violence, possible?

Recommended Reading

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