

Neil LESLIE

BIG ISSUES AND BIG OPINIONS, ONLY IN YOUR

IRISH DAILY
STAR

Time for U2 really call out this horror, Bono

I CAN'T believe the news today.

The opening line a young Bono wrote in the 1980s to U2's Sunday Bloody Sunday.

The words were inspired by the indiscriminate shooting of civilians in Derry by heavily armed troops.

He sang them again last week as U2 collected a lifetime Ivor Novello award.

Bono also used the occasion to belatedly raise his voice on the 600 days of slaughter that have followed from the October 7 massacre of Israeli civilians by Hamas.

He declared: "Hamas release the hostages, stop the war. Israel be released from Benjamin Netanyahu."

It was a somewhat muted take, coming as it did during the dire hours in which multiple agencies, world leaders and activists were warning that thousands of Gazan children were about to die from forced starvation.

Not even so much as a "tonight thank God it's them instead of you."

But then as Bono later explained to RTE, these things are "complex."

The frontman also lamented the "competitive empathy" of those who think "my emergency is more important than your emergency."

It wasn't clear which emergency was competing with the plight of Gaza's children that day.

Israel's vengeful assault would equate to 4,000 Bloody Sundays committed against civilians in Ireland over the past 600 days.

It would be comparable to the ethnic cleansing of northern Catholics by forcibly removing them over the border.

And akin to the slaughter during the Troubles of hundreds of aid workers, paramedics and journalists.

Bono also defended the medal of honour he accepted from former US President Joe Biden, whose country has bankrolled much of that horror.

"I kind of get the realpolitik of the situation that Joe Biden found himself in... I took that medal on behalf of all



REALPOLITIK Bono



MASSACRE Little Verd al-Sheikh Khalil, 7, sits in rubble after an Israeli airstrike; inset, another wounded child

Vocal activist has muted take on Gaza slaughter

those people who don't get medals: the activists, the people who are getting killed now in Gaza ... it's deeply ironic.

Indeed it is.

Almost as ironic as this column wanting to hear more from Bono after years wishing he would just shut up.

Wanting to hear him now use his pulpit in the US to forcefully call out the slaughter in Gaza – purely on its own merits.

To sing: "I can't believe the news today" and sing it just for

seven-year-old Verd al-Sheikh Khalil. Verd survived this week's Bloody Sunday on the strip – or was it the early hours of another Bloody Monday – after an Israeli shell was fired at the Fahmi al-Jarjawi School where she was sheltering.

Her five siblings and her mother all died. Verd can be seen in a video emerging from the flames of another day's unforgettable fire.

BODIES

It would be welcome too to hear Bono sing... "I can't close my eyes and make it go away"... and dedicate it only to Doctor Alaa al Najjar.

The lifeless bodies of nine of her 10 children arrived at the Nasser Medical Complex, in Khan Younis, while she was on her own shift tending the dying and maimed.

Yahya, Rakan, Raslan, Gebran, Eve,

Rival, Sayden, Luqman and Sidra – aged from a few months to 12 years.

In Benjamin Netanyahu's twisted world they would be classed "on the wrong side of humanity", like the world leaders who dared to challenge this genocidal campaign.

To even utter the words "Free Palestine" – as an honourable roll call of Irish artists have – is "the new Heil Hitler" the blue-rinsed butcher of Gaza absurdly declared.

It is in these dark hours that Bono told us he is stepping back from his activism because it is hard to keep up with the complexities of it all as a "single issue" guy.

In that he is wrong. It's not hard. It's as simple as it has always been.

You forget the realpolitik. And remember what it feels like when you can't close your eyes and make it go away.



WINNER Trailer for new doc

RTE doc's an epic canvas of footie insights

I WAS fortunate this week to get a sneak preview of RTE's lavish new documentary charting the story of Gaelic Football.

The five-part series provides an epic canvas for some of the greatest to ever play and wonder about the game to tell its extraordinary history.

It includes the last ever interviews with legends like Mick O'Dwyer and Micheal O'Muircheartaigh.

And insights from stars like David Clifford and Brian Fenton.

Beyond sport, it is also the story of life, culture and survival on a small island off the coast of Europe.

But the game itself is the undisputed star of the show.

Some of the film-quality sequences rival scenes of that other well known GAA player Paul Mescal on screen in *Gladiator*.

Its timing is also perfect as Sunday Game host Joanne Cantwell pointed out at its launch in Dublin's IFI cinema on Tuesday night.

After five years in the making, it is coming to air just as the country is falling back in love with Gaelic football following a bit of a rocky patch.

Hell For Leather tells how the game began with two parishes meeting on neutral ground and then literally "kicking the other side back home" to their territory.

Those original players wouldn't have recognised the suffocating no-risk game of possession it had become in recent years.

But you get a sense they'd feel right at home playing the new attack minded sport we have seen this summer.

THE House of Pain is a famous book detailing Mayo GAA's hard-luck history since they last won Sam Maguire in 1951.

It's a title Mayo County Council director of services Tom Gilligan could borrow if he ever writes a memoir.

Mr Gilligan sparked a storm by calling for a boycott of holiday home owners in the county and was forced to apologise.

Maybe a curse would have been a more effective policy measure.